

## History 2901 Historiography

**Course Description and Objectives:** Majoring in history requires the development of both a sophisticated approach to analyzing primary and secondary sources and an understanding of the process of researching and writing history. While all of your courses in this major will focus on the first requirement, this course will explicitly address the second. Historiography is the history of writing history, and in this class we will particularly focus on why people write history and on the different methods historians have used to collect evidence and construct historical narratives. By exploring these questions and examining the purposes to which historians have explicitly and unconsciously directed their work, I hope you will become more conscious of the choices you make when writing your own historical analyses.

### Readings:

Nearly all of the readings in this class will be handouts and/or available on e-reserve. We will examine many of them as both secondary and primary sources. They are secondary sources in that they offer interpretations of events that were already history at the time the historians wrote their documents, but we will also look at these documents as products of their own time and consider how the interpretations these histories offer represent the time during which they were written as much as the time they were written about.

There will only be one book required for purchase in this class. It is easily and cheaply available from a variety of online vendors:

Natalie Z. Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*

I also recommend that you purchase the third edition of *American Negro Slavery*, edited by Allen Weinstein, Frank Otto Gatell, and David Sarasohn.

### Course Requirements

**1. Participation and Reading:** All students are expected to be active participants in this course. This means you must attend class regularly and on time (students will not be allowed into class if they arrive more than five minutes late), complete all reading assignments in a timely fashion, and come to class prepared to engage your fellow classmates in a lively discussion. In addition, on a rotating basis students will be required to present their writing to the class and assist me in leading the discussion on those days. Your performance in the classroom will serve as the primary basis for your class participation grade.

**2. Attendance and Classroom Behavior:** In order to succeed in this class, you must be present at nearly all of the class sessions. Habitual absenteeism negatively impacts both you and your classmates. Consequently, I have a strict attendance policy in my class. You are allowed one absences over the course of the semester. I make no distinction between excused and unexcused absences, and leaving class early counts as an absence. After this one absence, you will receive a

1/3 of a grade penalty on your class participation grade for every additional absence. After three absences you will be placed on probation and after five absences I will remove you from the class. If this attendance policy will be a problem for you, come see me **IN ADVANCE**. I will not consider explanations or requests for leniency after the fact.

In addition to attending class, you must also behave in a mature and respectful manner in the classroom. To help facilitate this process, please turn off all handheld electronic devices at the beginning of class and drop them at the front of the room; you may pick them up again at the end of class. As a general rule, I will not allow the use of laptops in class; if you have a particular reason why you need to use your laptop, you may ask for permission. Holding private conversations during the class is also unacceptable. Students who violate these standards of behavior will receive a significant penalty in their class participation grade.

**3. Writing Assignments:** Students will write one essay of 1250-1500 words explaining the historiography of an American history topic of their choice. This assignment will be broken down into three parts. First, students will submit a bibliography of potential sources for their paper. Second, students will submit a rough draft of their essay, and after receiving feedback from me, you will then submit a revised version of the paper. During the last two sessions of the class, each student will make a 10 minute presentation on their paper, which will be followed by a question and answer session.

**4. Exams:** There will be a take-home midterm and a take-home final in this class. These will be essay exams addressing issues we cover in class. More details will be forthcoming on these exams.

### **5. Grading and Assessment:**

The final grade will be computed from a weighted average of the individual grades you earn for your class participation (including your questions submitted to the class website), written assignments, and exams. Your class participation will be determined both from the quality and quantity of contributions to the class.

The course requirements will be weighted as follows in determining your final grade for the course:

Midterm Exam	10%
Bibliography for Paper	P/F but required
Rough Draft of Paper	20%
Final Draft of Paper	10%
Oral Presentation	10%
Take Home Final	30%
Class Participation	20%

### **6. The Fine Print**

1. This syllabus is a road map for this class but it is not set in stone. I reserve the right to make changes in the syllabus with proper advance notice given to you.
2. You must complete all assignments to receive a passing grade.

3. All papers are due at the times stated below. You should submit papers electronically, but all responsibility for technical problems such as e-mails not received by me lies with you. Late papers will automatically be marked down 1/3 of a grade for each day they are late (the first day begins at the time they are due and weekend days count) unless you have written documentation from your advisor, an academic Dean, or from University medical services. Computer problems are **never** an acceptable excuse for late work.

4. If you have a question about a grade you receive on a paper, test, or for the course, please come to my office hours or make an appointment. I will not discuss grades over the phone or e-mail. However, I am happy to discuss questions about the course material via e-mail.

5. Academic Honesty: The work you submit for this course should be completely and solely your own. This means that any and all quotations from the words and thoughts of others must be appropriately acknowledged in your assignments. To do anything less is stealing. If you have any questions about plagiarism, please talk to me about them in advance. I will be happy to help you sort through any confusion. Any evidence that you have failed to follow these rules will be immediately and thoroughly investigated, and any violations of the honor code will be submitted to the Honor Court. Be forewarned: I consider cheating to be a very serious and utterly avoidable offense. Expect no leniency from me in cases of suspected cheating/plagiarism.

6. Special Needs: High Point University is committed to meeting the needs of students with disabilities. If you have a diagnosed disability that provides for you to have accommodations in the classroom or testing environment, contact Disability Support, 405 Smith Library. It is the student's responsibility to inform, request, and communicate accommodation support.

Accommodation arrangements should be made at the beginning of the semester.

Accommodations are not retroactive.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

M Oct 25 Introduction

### **Part I: Intro to Historical Methods**

T Oct 26 Why Study History?

Reading: Sam Wineburg, "Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts" (handout)

Th Oct 28 How Do We Know the Past?

Reading: David Lowenthal, "How We Know the Past" from *The Past is a Foreign Country* (handout)

MTTh Nov 1, 2, 4 What Historians Do

Reading: Natalie Davis, *Return of Martin Guerre*

M Nov 8 What Historians Do II

Reading: Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Midwife's Tale* (handout)

**Midterm Exam Handed Out**

## **Historiography Paper Bibliography Due**

### **Part II: Historiography and Historical Methods: American Slavery**

T Nov 9 Early Historiography of Slavery I

Reading: Ulrich B Phillips, *American Negro Slavery* (handout)

Th Nov 11 Early Historiography of Slavery II

Reading: W.E.B. Dubois, *Black Reconstruction* (handout)

### **M Nov 15 Midterm Exam Due**

T Nov 16 The Study of Slave Culture

Reading: Melville Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (handout)

Th Nov 18 The Beginning of Modern Historiography of Slavery

Reading: Kenneth Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution* (handout)

M Nov 22 The Exceptionalism of American Slavery

Reading: Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional Life* (handout)

T Nov 23 Slave Agency

Reading: John Blassingame, *The Slave Community* (handout)

Th Nov 25 Thanksgiving- NO CLASS

M Nov 29 Marxist Analysis of Slavery

Reading: Eugene Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll* (handout)

### **Rough Draft of Historiography Paper Due**

T Nov 30 Statistical Analysis of Slavery

Reading: Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman, *Time on the Cross* (handout)

Th Dec 2 Politics and History: The Black Family

Reading: Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom* (handout)

M Dec 6 Material Culture and Slavery

Reading: Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia* (handout)

### **Final Draft Historiography Paper due**

T Dec 7 Atlantic History and Slavery

Reading: Ira Berlin, "From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the Origins of African American Society in Mainland North America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 53 (1996): 251-288

Th Dec 9 Gender and Slavery

Reading: *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs* (handout)  
**Final Exam Handed Out**

**M Dec 13 Paper Presentations I**

**T Dec 14 Paper Presentations II**

**F Dec 17 Final Exam Due**