

HIST-UA 70: History in the Headlines
NYU “Big Ideas” Course Series
Fall 2021: Weds. 4.55-6.10pm EST

Instructor

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Course Assistants (CAs)

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Course information

History in the Headlines | HIST-UA 70 | 2 credits

A 2-credit course showing how the past can shed light upon the present. This online course entails a pre-recorded lecture by a different historian each week, followed by a live conversation with that historian driven by students’ observations and questions. Each lecture is paired with readings of news articles and/or historical work, and over the course of the semester students will choose to write about at least five different subjects.

Prerequisites

None – students from all schools, sites, years, and majors are welcome!

Course description

The events you read about each day are never without precedent. *Thinking historically* means, in part, making sense of these events by situating them in their deeper temporal contexts. In this lecture series, a dozen of NYU’s historians take you on a tour behind world events, in order to help you better understand the world around you.

Learning objectives

Students will:

- learn about a dozen current events.
- deepen their historical knowledge.
- hone their analytical and writing skills.

Course materials

All readings, videos, and podcasts will be made available through the course website.

Resources

Course materials: [NYU Brightspace](#)
Writing support: [NYU Writing Center](#)

24/7 tech support: [IT Help Desk](#)

Assessment

Participation	10%
Midterm essays (3)	20% (x3)
Final portfolio	30%

- See [here](#) for an explanation of the grading scale.

Weekly format

In addition to the formal meetings, students are welcome to visit us during office hours.

- Each pre-recorded lecture will be made available on the website no later than (and usually before) the weekend before it is discussed. Students are required to view all lectures before the guest lecturer's visit on Wednesday.
- When class begins, half of the students will participate in a 25-minute conversation, driven by student questions, with the guest lecturer. The other half will discuss that week's material/ assignment with the Course Assistant.
- After 25 minutes the two groups will rotate, so that everyone will attend (1) a conversation with the guest lecturer, and (2) a discussion with the Course Assistant.
- Once both discussions are complete, the professor will remain in the Zoom room until at least 6.10pm EST to answer any student questions.

Course policies

1. Midterm essays

- Each lecture will be paired with a writing prompt.
- Students will select three prompts for their midterm essays (2-3 pages each)..
- At least one essay must be completed by Fall Break (October 11).
- Essays should be double-spaced, with one-inch margins and numbered pages, following any standard reference style.
- Essays should be emailed to your Course Assistant on or before the Monday following our discussion of that material.
- Late assignments will be accepted until noon the following Wednesday, at a penalty of 1/3 grade per day.

2. Final portfolio

At the conclusion of the semester, students will assemble a "History in the Headlines" portfolio. These pdf documents will include:

- A **cover page** listing your name, instructors' names, and the course term and title;
- The **original versions** of all 3 midterm essays, with CA feedback;

- **Revised versions** of all 3 midterm essays, responding to that feedback;
- A **concluding essay** of 3-4 pages showing, with reference to at least 2 lectures not discussed in your midterm essays, how historical context can illuminate the present.

3. Moses Center for Students with Disabilities

If you are student with a disability who is requesting accommodations, contact the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities](#). You need to be registered with the Moses Center to receive these accommodations.

4. Religious holidays

NYU accommodates observances of religious holidays. In order to receive these accommodations, notify the professor during the first two weeks of the semester. Further details on NYU's policies may be found [here](#).

5. Academic honesty

Intellectual integrity is the university's foundational commitment. Plagiarism of any kind will be penalized to the fullest possible extent, without warning or exception.

Whenever you draw upon somebody else's words or ideas, be sure to give them credit. The most common causes of plagiarism are not deliberate dishonesty, but stress and confusion. You are urged to plan your work accordingly, and to consult your instructors if you have any questions about documentation requirements.

See [here](#) for further details on the university's policies.

6. Participation

Attendance will be recorded every week. There is no partial attendance, and there are no make-up assignments.

Please give this class your undivided attention for 75 minutes. Anyone emailing, browsing, or texting during class will be regarded as absent.

Assuming that students follow the Zoom policies and engage in our discussions, participation will be assessed as follows:

- 0-1 absences: A
- 2 absences: B
- 3 absences: C
- 4 absences: F (in the course)

In order to treat all students equally across a very large course, these policies apply uniformly. We do not differentiate between "good" and "bad" absences – you receive

credit for the sessions you attend. There is, therefore, no reason to clear absences with your CA.

Most illnesses and emergencies are accommodated by the fact that one absence is permitted without discussion or penalty. You are encouraged to use that absence wisely, as this does not mean that you get one “freebie” + one emergency!

7. Zoom policies

Wednesday meetings are synchronous and, to facilitate free discussion, unrecorded.

Please treat Zoom meetings as professional activities:

1. Include your full name in your Zoom window.
2. Activate your video, unless you make other arrangements with your CA.
3. Set aside your phone, and refrain from having other windows or applications open during our discussions.

COURSE SCHEDULE

September 8

Introduction

September 15

Guy Ortolano, “Brexit: Nationalism in International Perspective”

- Vox, [“The United Kingdom is leaving the EU. Here’s what that means,”](#) 24 June 2016.
- Kimberly Amadeo, [“What Was Brexit, and How Did It Impact the UK, EU, and US?”](#) *The Balance*, 12 March 2021.
- Zadie Smith, “Fences: A Brexit Diary,” *New York Review of Books*, 18 August 2016.

September 22

Katy Fleming, “Why Is Greece Always Ancient? Trump’s Executive Order”

- George Zarkadakis, [“Modern Greece’s Real Problem? Ancient Greece,”](#) *Washington Post*, 4 November 2011.
- Andrew Ferguson, [“Trump’s Beautiful Proposal for Federal Architecture,”](#) *The Atlantic*, 20 February 2020.

- *Optional:* Kai Gutschow, [“Why So Many Architects Are Angered by ‘Making Federal Buildings Beautiful Again’”](#) *Government Executive*, 12 February 2020.

September 29

Larry Wolff, “Eastern Europe in the 21st Century: Postcommunism, EU Enlargement, and Contemporary Populism”

- Elisabeth Zerofsky, [“Is Poland Retreating from Democracy?”](#) *New Yorker*, 23 July 2018.
- Nicholas Mulder, [“The Revolt Against Liberalism: What’s Driving Poland and Hungary’s Nativist Turn.”](#) *Guardian*, 24 June 2021.

October 6

Elizabeth Ellis, “Stolen Children: Native American Re-education Schools”

- Ian Austen and Dan Bilefsky, “Hundreds More Unmarked Graves Found at Former Residential School in Canada,” *New York Times*, 24 June 2021.
- Nick Estes, “The U.S. Stole Generations of Indigenous Children to Open the West,” *High Country News*, 14 October 2019.

At least one midterm essay is due by Monday, Oct. 11

October 13

David Oshinsky, “COVID and History”

- David Oshinsky, [“When Epidemics Wreaked Havoc in America,”](#) *Wall Street Journal*, 13 March 2020.
- Liz Hamel *et al.*, [“KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor,”](#) 28 May 2021.

October 20

Barbara Weinstein, “WHIPLASH! The Stunning Transformation of Brazilian Politics from Lula to Bolsonaro”

- Benjamin A. Cowan, “Holy Ghosts of Brazil’s Past,” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 48, no. 4 (2016): 346-52.
- C. J. Polychroniou, [“Chomsky: Bolsonaro Is Spreading Trump-Like Fear of ‘Election Fraud’ in Brazil,”](#) *Truthout*, 16 July 2021.

October 27

Robyn d'Avignon, "When Washington Square Park Was African-Owned Farmland"

- Christopher Moore, "Chapter 1: A World of Possibilities: Slavery and Freedom in Dutch New Amsterdam," in *Slavery in New York*, eds. Ira Berlin and Leslie M. Harris (2005), 29-56.
- Jessica Leigh Hester, "[Black Gotham: Memorializing Manhattan's Earliest African Residents,](#)" *The Atlantic* (July/August 2017).
- Stephanie Johnson-Cunningham, "[How New York's Weeksville Heritage Center and Black Gotham Experience Are Preserving Black Spaces,](#)" *All Arts: On Display* (Episode 4), 13 May 2020.

November 3

Sibylle Fischer, "The Haitian Crisis of July 2021: Anatomy and Contexts"

- Edwidge Danticat, "[The Assassination of Haiti's President,](#)" *New Yorker*, 14 July 2021.
- Mamyrah Dougé-Prosper and Mark Schuller, "[After Moïse Assassination, Popular Sectors Must Lead the Way,](#)" *NACLA*, 8 July 2021.
- PBS News Hour, [Interview with Robert Fatton](#) (University of Virginia).

November 10

Andrew Needham, "The History of Climate Change and the Politics of Denial"

- Elizabeth Kolbert, "[A New Day for the Climate,](#)" *New Yorker*, 31 January 2021.
- Kate Aronoff, "[Joe Biden's Climate Policies Are a Step Back from 'Death Wish,' but We Need More than That,](#)" *Jacobin*, 16 February 2021.
- Zadie Smith, "[An Elegy for a Country's Seasons,](#)" *New York Review of Books*, 3 April 2014.

November 17

Manu Goswami, "Contemporary Hindu Nationalism"

- Arundhati Roy, "[India: Intimations of an Ending,](#)" *The Nation*, November 2019.

November 24, Thanksgiving break

December 1

Irvin Ibarguen, “Fortress America? The Surprisingly Flimsy Nature of US Border Controls”

- Rachel St. John, “Holding the Line: Fighting Land Pirates and Apaches on the Border,” *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border* (Princeton, 2011), 39-62.

December 8

Tim Naftali, “Fake News and Disinformation”

- William Samuel Stephenson, *British Security Coordination: The Secret History of British Intelligence in the Americas, 1940-1945* (New York, NY: Fromm, 1999), 102-14.
- Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999), 226-30, 244-46.
- David Shimer, *Rigged: America, Russia, and One Hundred Years of Covert Electoral Interference* (New York, NY: Knopf, 2020), 209-26.

Appendix I: Course time on task (as required by New York State)

Time on Task Type	Activity	Time (total for course)
Instructional time	Asynchronous lecture, once per week for 12 weeks, 50 minutes each	600 minutes
Instructional Time	Discussion with instructor and guest lecturer, once per week for 12 weeks, 30 minutes each	360 minutes
Instructional Time	Discussion of readings and assignments, once per week for 12 weeks, 45 minutes each	540 minutes
Supplemental Time	Required readings, weekly for 12 weeks, 2 hours per set	24 hours
Supplemental Time	Essay writing, 4 times over the semester, 9 hours per essay	36 hours

Appendix II: Misc. course policies***A note on copyright***

Materials in this course are protected by U.S. copyright law and NYU policy. Distribution of recorded or written materials associated with this course is not permitted to any information-sharing platform without written consent.

A note to international students

I encourage students based in any site that monitors internet to carefully consider how you participate. If you have any concerns about your participation, please email me so that we can discuss the best way to proceed.

A note on flexibility

In light of the pandemic, I reserve the right to modify course requirements and policies as circumstances may require. I will provide notification of any changes to all students as soon as possible. Any changes will also be posted on the class website.