

HIST-GA 2168: Approaches to History (MA)
Fall 2021
Thursdays 2-4.45pm

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Office hours: T 3.30-5, KJCC 420 or [Zoom](#), by appointment

Course description

This course serves as a triple orientation. It introduces MA students to a dozen areas of work, to the History Department, and to the historical profession. Though inevitably partial, with too many fields and approaches not covered, collectively these readings, discussions, and assignments will expose students to a variety of the discipline's preoccupations. By the end of the semester, students will have (1) expanded their historiographical literacy; (2) developed their ability to read and discuss unfamiliar work, and (3) reflected upon a range of questions and approaches that might inform their own work.

Expectations

Most weeks we will discuss about four articles (or the equivalent). The success of these discussions depends upon your informed participation.

No student with four absences will pass the course (not counting the first week).

While laptops are permitted, emailing, browsing, and smart phones are not.

Papers should be double-spaced, in twelve-point font, with one-inch margins and numbered pages, formatted according to the [Chicago Manual of Style](#) (footnotes + bibliography).

Assessment

33% Participation (includes engagement in our discussions + 2 presentations)

33% Review essays (2 essays of 1000 words, on a week other than your presentation)

33% Final paper (4,000 words on "Historiography and the Problem of _____")

Texts

Most readings are available electronically; if access is blocked, access through the library. Items marked with an * will be posted to NYU Classes. The following required books are available at the NYU Bookstore and of course online (though you might prefer to order from bookshop.org to support independent booksellers):

- Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Harvard, 1984).
- Geoff Eley, *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society* (Michigan, 2005).
- Sarah Maza, *Thinking about History* (Chicago, 2017).
- Marry Lynn Rampolla, *Pocket Guide to Writing in History* (any edition).
- William Strunk Jr., *The Elements of Style* (any edition).
- Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers* (any edition).

Week 1, September 2
Introduction

Week 2, September 9
Public History

→ This class meets via [Zoom](#).

Maza, *Thinking about History*, “Popular and Public History,” 124-137.

* Graphic novel: Pierre Christin and Olivier Balez, *Robert Moses: The Master Builder of New York City* (London, 2014), 1-56.

* Journalism: Robert Caro, “The City Shaper,” *New Yorker*, 5 January 1998, pp. 38-55.

Documentary film: *Citizen Jane*, dir. Matt Tyrnauer (Altimeter Films / Just Films, 2016).

* Museum exhibition: Robert Fishman, “Revolt of the Urbs: Robert Moses and His Critics,” *Robert Moses and the Modern City: The Transformation of New York*, eds. Hilary Ballon and Kenneth T. Jackson (2007), 122-129.

Week 3, September 16
Writing History

* Louis Menand, “The Politics of Slavery,” *The Metaphysical Club* (2001), 1-22.

William Strunk Jr., *The Elements of Style* (1959 – but any edition works).

* Jason Gutekunst Perlman, “Words and Stones, Roots and Bones: Processing the History of Race in Africa and the Diaspora” (2019).

→ Bring a typed paragraph (about 250 words) explaining Menand’s argument.

→ Come prepared to explain two of Strunk’s most helpful or important tips.

Week 4, September 23
A History of Historiography

Eley, *A Crooked Line* (2005).

Week 5, September 30
Social History

Maza, "The History of Whom?", *Thinking about History*, 10-44.

E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 50:1 (1971): 76-136.

*Shahid Amin, "Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP, 1921-1," *Subaltern Studies* 3 (1984): 1-61.

Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, "The Mysterious Case of the Missing Men: Gender and Class in Early Industrial Medellín," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 49 (1996): 73-92.

Week 6, October 7 **Cultural History**

Maza, "Causes or Meanings?", *Thinking about History*, 157-198.

Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (Basic Books, 1984), 75-104.

Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* (California, 2005), 9-37.

Alon Confino, "Why Did the Nazis Burn the Hebrew Bible? Nazi Germany, Representations of the Past, and the Holocaust," *Journal of Modern History* 84:2 (2012): 369-400.

+ **Discussion of the final paper.**

Week 7, October 14 **Microhistory**

Maza, "Facts or Fictions?", *Thinking about History*, 199-234.

Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1984).

Robert Finlay and Natalie Zemon Davis, "Forum: The Return of Martin Guerre," *American Historical Review* 93:3 (1988): 553-603.

Week 8, October 21 **Gender & Sexuality**

Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91:5 (1986): 1053-1075.

Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (California, 1987), 277-296.

Matthew H. Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, 2000), 114-165.

Kritika Agarwal, [“What Is Trans History? A Field Takes Shape.”](#) *Perspectives*, 1 May 2018.

Week 9, October 28

Race & Diaspora

Jonathan Glassman, “Slower than a Massacre: The Multiple Sources of Racial Thought in Colonial Africa,” *American Historical Review* 109:3 (2004): 720-754.

Jennifer L. Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic* (Durham, 2021), 1-27.

Tiffany Patterson and Robin D. G. Kelley, “Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World,” *African Studies Review* 43:1 (2000): 11-45.

H. Reuben Neptune, “Throwin’ Scholarly Shade: Eric Williams in the New Histories of Capitalism and Slavery,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 39:2 (2019): 299-326.

Week 10, November 4

Political History

Susan Pedersen, “What is Political History Now?”, in *What is History Now?*, ed. David Cannadine (New York, 2002), 36-56.

Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (2004; Berkeley, 1984), xi-xvi, 52-86.

Julilly Kohler-Hausmann, “‘The Attila the Hun Law’: New York’s Rockefeller Drug Laws and the Making of a Punitive State,” *Journal of Social History* (Fall 2010): 71-95.

Gregory P. Downs, “The Mexicanization of American Politics: The United States’ Transnational Path from Civil War to Stabilization,” *American Historical Review* 117:2 (2012): 387-409.

- Discussion on identifying and working with advisors.

Week 11, November 11

Oral History

Alessandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different?” (1979), reprinted in *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, 1991), 45-58.

Barbara M. Cooper, "Oral Sources and the Challenge of African History," in *Writing African History*, ed. John Edward Phillips (Rochester, 2005), 191-215.

Kathleen M. Blee, "Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics: Lessons from Oral Histories of the Klan," *Journal of American History* 80:2 (1993): 596-606.

Orlando Figes, "Private Life in Stalin's Russia: Family Narratives, Memory, and Oral History," *History Workshop Journal* 65 (2008): 117-137.

Week 12, November 18 **History of Technology**

Maza, "The History of What?," *Thinking about History*, 83-108.

Langdon Winner, "Do Artifacts Have Politics?," *Daedalus* 109:1 (1980): 121-136.

Mar Hicks, "[Computer Love: Replicating Social Order through Early Computer Dating Systems.](#)" *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology* 10 (2016).

David Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old: Technology and Global History since 1900* (2007): 1-27.

Week 13, November 25 **Happy Thanksgiving!**

Week 14, December 2 **Environmental History**

Maza, "The History of What?," *Thinking about History*, 108-116.

Joyce Chaplin, "The Other Revolution," *Early American Studies* 13:2 (2015): 285-308.

Alan Mikhail, "Climate and the Chronology of Iranian History," *Iranian Studies* 49:6 (2016): 963-972.

Brett Walker, "Meiji Modernization, Scientific Agriculture, and the Destruction of Japan's Hokkaido Wolf," *Environmental History* 9:2 (2004): 248-274.

Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35:2 (2009): 197-222.

Week 15, December 9 **Supranational Histories**

Maza, "The History of Where?", *Thinking about History*, 45-82.

C. A. Bayly, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol, and Patricia Seed, "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History," *American Historical Review* 111:5 (2006): 1441-1464.

Sujit Sivasundaram, *Waves across the South: A New History of Revolution and Empire* (2020), 1-15, 40-78, 332-350.

David Bell, "Questioning the Global Turn: The Case of the French Revolution," *French Historical Studies* 37:1 (2014): 1-24.

- To ensure that you get sufficient feedback on your writing before the final paper, do not write a weekly review about this material.

Final papers due via email on Thursday, Dec. 16.