History 503: Grad Core II, 20th century US historiography
Monday, 4-6:40p, 532 Park Hall

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Office hours: Wednesday noon-2p & by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The graduate core is a survey of U.S. historiography in the long 20th century (i.e., since the Civil War). We will read books and articles that introduce us to some of the major topics and fields, themes and issues, and research and analytical methods from this time period.

The goal is not primarily to increase your factual knowledge of U.S. history, but to get a sense of the relationship between history and historians. What kinds of questions do historians ask of the past? How do they go about answering them? What kinds of evidence do they look at, how do they choose, and how do they interpret it? How do historians build on and/or challenge each others’ work and interpretations? If history only happened once, why does history as written by historians change over time? What are some of the most active and exciting subjects and approaches in 20th century U.S. history today? These kinds of questions are central to critical reading and thinking, i.e., figuring out how to take apart and (hopefully) put back together again the kinds of narratives—stories—that we are all familiar with as the stuff of “history.”

A note on what this course is not: it is not a history survey. We will not read or discuss every major event in the time period, and we will not always proceed chronologically. When we approach an area unfamiliar to you, I strongly recommend consulting a college U.S. history textbook. (It doesn’t matter too much which one; I have some and can lend if necessary.)

Finally, in order to keep some coherence to our explorations, and to maintain some common ground for discussion from week to week, I have selected and assigned most readings in pairs.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Books are available at the UB Bookstore and on reserve at the Library. Articles are available online via course reserve from the UB Library or UB Learns.

Steven Hahn, Nation under Our Feet
Paige Raibmon, Authentic Indians
Kristin Hoganson, Fighting for American Manhood
Nan Enstad, Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure
Mae Ngai, Impossible Subjects
Margot Canaday, The Straight State
Suzanna Reiss, We Sell Drugs: The Alchemy of US Empire
Thomas Sugrue, Origins of the Urban Crisis
Lizabeth Cohen, Consumers’ Republic
Jefferson Cowie, Stayin’ Alive
Bethany Moreton, To Serve God and Wal-Mart
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

I expect you to attend every class, complete all required readings, and hand in all assignments on time.

ASSIGNMENTS

A mixture of small assignments and a longer historiography review essay. Please choose only one small assignment for any given week. There will be a sign-up sheet on the first day of class. Limited changes will be possible after that if your interests and/or schedule changes.

Class participation (30% of your grade): You will be assigned a letter grade for your preparation and participation, based on the quality and quantity of your participation in class discussions.

Historiography essay (30% of grade): Eight page historiographical review essay on a topic of your choosing. Plan to read 3-5 additional books and 2-3 additional articles on your chosen topic. More details to come. The paper can be handed in any time after Spring Break.

Four short papers (30% of your grade): These are relatively formal, critical reviews of the week’s reading, 2-3 pages. These are fairly formal in structure, consisting of three main parts:

  Introduction. One or two paragraphs: a clear, concise statement of the book’s most important overall argument or thesis. This will not be a summary of the book’s plot (what it’s “about”) or a statement of fact. It should be the most important point(s) an author makes that someone could conceivably disagree with—i.e., an interpretation. It should also give a quick preview of (1) why that argument is important (2) what story (history) the author conveys the argument through and (2) any major critique you plan to offer.

  Book summary. At least one full page: a complete, scrupulously fair summary of the book’s overall structure and topic, including main narrative sequence including where it takes place and when; major claims and logic that support the central thesis; primary sources of evidence; and anything else that would give readers an accurate idea of what the author intended (i.e., not your critique). One good way to evaluate this section: would the author agree that you have represented her/his book fairly and (given the brevity) fully?

  Analysis. One page or so: your analysis of the book, including—for example—new perspectives it introduced you to, comparisons to other scholarly books you have read (for this course or otherwise), questions the book raised in your mind, present-day significance of the argument, or particularly strong or weak aspects of the book. The analysis does not have to be its own separate section of the essay; you can mix it in with the narrative summary, as long as the summary remains fair and accurate.

Small assignments (10% of your grade total):

- Two sets of discussion questions: Choose two weeks in which you will (1) finish the readings a day early; (2) post two discussion questions on the class blog; and (3) participate in any blog-based discussion before class. One question is a history question (i.e., about the past) while the other is a historiography question (i.e., about historians and their approaches, methods, theories, etc., and/or how scholarship about the past changes over time).

- One footnote detective report: Choose a week in which you will find an example of two types of footnotes: to a primary published source and to an unpublished (archival) source. Report to the class, and be prepared to discuss, two aspects of each source: how
a historian might locate and actually use it; and how the author used it to prove or illustrate a point in the book. There is no writing involved in this assignment.

- **Primary evidence assignment:** Pick a week in which you bring in a piece of primary evidence related in any way to the week’s topic / reading, and be prepared to lead a brief discussion of your piece of evidence.

- **Discussion leader assignment:** Pick a week in which you are prepared to lead discussion of the nitty-gritty of ONE SECTION of a book (usually more than one chapter) at the appropriate moment in our overall conversation.

- **“Classic text” assignment:** For students in the PhD program, or who intend to pursue a PhD in the future, pick at least one week to read the suggested additional book and present it briefly (5-10 minutes) to the class.

**PLAGIARISM & EXTERNAL SOURCES POLICY:**

All students are expected to be familiar with and abide by the University's academic integrity policies, available in the Undergraduate Catalog (http://undergradcatalog.buffalo.edu/policies/course/integrity.shtml) or the Graduate School Policies and Procedures Manual (http://www.grad.buffalo.edu/policies). I use plagiarism detection software to aid in determining the originality of student work—all papers will be handed in digitally through UB Learns as well as in hard copy.

What is plagiarism? Briefly, it is using the work and words of another writer (whether from print sources, from the Web, or from another student) without giving clear credit to her/him. Plagiarism is unacceptable in any course assignment, big or small, and will result in an “F” grade for the entire course. If you have any questions or doubts, ASK.

There are endless sources available for the study of U.S. history, but I expect students to engage with the materials I have selected for this course. In your written work, therefore, do not refer more than briefly to sources other than those assigned for the course unless: (1) you have fully engaged all relevant course materials (including readings, lectures and discussion) and wish to add more to an already complete essay; and (2) you have received prior approval from me to bring in the additional source. This is particularly important for Web sources: **absolutely no use of any Web sites for written work unless you have specifically cleared the Web site with me in advance.**

**ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES:**

UB’s Accessibility Resources Office coordinates services and accommodations to ensure the accessibility and usability of all UB programs, services, and activities by people with disabilities. To receive accommodation for physical and learning disabilities, students are required to register with that office; more information can be found at http://www.student-affairs.buffalo.edu/ods/. 
COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course entails learning goals from three distinct yet interrelated categories:

1. *Acquisition of historical and historiographical knowledge:* Students in the American History Core II will become familiar with the main outlines of American History from Reconstruction to the present, including the main historiographical trends in the scholarship along with some of the most recent work in particularly active and innovative fields of inquiry.

2. *Development of advanced analytical thinking skills:* Students in the American History Core II will engage in oral and written analysis of historical and historiographical material over the course of the semester.

3. *Refinement of critical writing skills:* Students in this course will write in several different academic and scholarly styles including expository, analytical and historiographical.

Learning Outcomes Chart

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<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Weekly Readings</th>
<th>Critical Reviews</th>
<th>Class Discussion</th>
<th>Longer Essay</th>
<th>Discussion Questions</th>
<th>Primary Material</th>
<th>Footnote Detective</th>
<th>Discuss Leader</th>
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<td>Historical Knowledge</td>
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<td>Historiographical Knowledge</td>
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<td>Writing Skills</td>
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COURSE SCHEDULE

Jan 26: Introduction

First pairing: Reconstructing race, reconstructing the nation
Feb 2: Hahn, A Nation Under Our Feet
Feb 9: Raibmon, Authentic Indians

Second pairing: Gender in unexpected places
Feb 16: Hoganson, Fighting for American Manhood
Feb 23: Enstad, Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure

Third pairing: Remaking citizenship / the modern state
March 2: Mae Ngai, Impossible Subjects
March 9: Margot Canaday, The Straight State

SPRING BREAK!

Fourth pairing: Superpower America
March 23: Suzanna Reiss, We Sell Drugs
March 30: Cold War articles
   Cultural, political, and economic origins of U.S. world order
      Christina Klein, “Family Ties and Political Obligations”
      Michael Adas, “A Colonial War in a Postcolonial Era”
      Thomas McCormick, “Crisis of the New Order”
   New perspectives on U.S. and the globe
      Mary Louise Roberts, “The Price of Discretion”
      Nick Cullather, “Miracles of Modernization”

Fifth pairing: Rethinking the 1950s
April 6: Thomas Sugrue, Origins of the Urban Crisis
April 13: Lizabeth Cohen, Consumers’ Republic

April 20: New perspectives on civil rights & feminisms
   Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past”
   Payne, “Strong People Don’t Need Strong Leaders”
   Enke, “Finding the Movement”
   McGuire, “It was like all of us had been raped”
   Levenstein, “Don’t Agonize, Organize”
   Dudziak, “Brown as a Cold War Case”

Sixth pairing: Neoliberalism in America?

April 27: Jefferson Cowie, Stayin’ Alive
May 4: Moreton, To Serve God and Wal-Mart