

**HISTORY 485**  
**SENIOR SEMINAR**  
 Fall, 2012

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Office Hours: M, W 2:00 - 3:30  
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**Course Description:** The college requires that all majors have a “capstone” course to bring together theory, skills, and content of the major into one final assessment. In many departments, the Senior Seminar experience is centered on an original research paper. In history, you have already had that experience (and perhaps still are doing so) in other 400-level seminars. So our Senior Seminar is designed to

- (1) hone your critical and analytical skills about how and why a wide range of historians have designed their research and constructed their written works in the way that they have;
- (2) enhance your ability to cogently discuss the merits of a work and articulately disagree with others in the seminar, including the instructor;
- (3) improve your essay writing, both its construction and its clarity;
- (4) test your ability to lead the seminar discussion;
- (5) develop a philosophy of history;
- (6) enjoy being part of a smart and savvy cohort.

**Attendance & Other Basics:** Attendance at Sr. Sem is required. Period. Since each class equates to a week of college work, every absence over one will result in a drop of one letter grade per absence on the final grade. Three absences will result in withdrawal and failure (WF) unless the student presents medical issues and files for an Incomplete.

**Assessment of performance:** Your grade will be determined on these assignments and you will be able to track your grades on Moodle. Additionally, students may be required to attend guest lectures.

5 essays @ 10% each	50%
Consistent Class Contribution	30%
Discussion Leader	10%
Oral Report (final project)	<u>10%</u>
	100%

**Essays:** Essay prompts for each book assignment will be posted on Moodle. Your essay will be evaluated on how well you address the prompt, grammar and construction of the essay, originality of thought. The instructor will make every effort to return your written work before the next assignment is due so that you can improve your writing skills. Late work cannot be accepted for obvious reasons: you need to lay claim to your ideas before you are influenced by the class discussion. Even if your essay is unfinished, you will have to turn it in and have it graded accordingly.

**Discussion Leaders:** This assignment will be done in pairs and demands advanced planning! Do background reading on the historical method under study for that day. You must go beyond the discussion in Green & Thorpe. The instructor will advise on additional readings if you need assistance. You will both present additional information to the seminar AND lead the discussion of the assigned essay. You will

need to explain how the historical approach under discussion supplements or contradicts previous approaches studied. You are responsible for preparing questions that stimulate discussion, for calling on class members who volunteer and for drawing out those who do not.

You must set a meeting with the instructor a week or more before you are due to lead the discussion. Remember that our focus is not so much on the historical content of the essay, but rather on how the historian has chosen to frame his argument, what kind of evidence she has selected, and how valid his conclusions seem. Consider what the author could have done differently and how you might get class members to talk about that.

Provide the instructor with the outline that you used to provide information and lead the discussion. Include the questions you asked including follow up questions. Include the sources you read to prepare for the class.

**Final Report (oral):** In lieu of a final exam, you will select a topic with which you have some familiarity (from a previous or a current class). Rather than write a research paper, you will explain to the class HOW you would do it. Which one(s) of the historical methodologies studied this term would you use to guide your research? What primary sources are available? What challenges would you face?

You will have 20 minutes to present your idea and to answer questions from the seminar.

**Courtesies:** These you already know. Promptness. Preparedness. Attentiveness. Prior notification if you must miss class or leave early. Enough said.

**Books for Purchase** (in order assigned)

**Green & Troup**, *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in 20<sup>th</sup> Century History & Theory* (Manchester U.P., 1999)

Peter **Hoffer**, *Historian's Paradox: A Study of History in Our Time* (NYU Press, 2008)

Michael **Parenti**, *History as Mystery* (City Lights, 1999)

Sheila **Skemp**, *Making of a Patriot: Benjamin Franklin at the Cockpit* (Oxford U Press, 2013)

Lauren **Ulrich**, *The Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary* (Random House, 1990)

Paul A. **Cohen**, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth*

John **Demos**, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (Random House, 1994)

James **Laine**, *Shivaji: Hindu King of Islamic India* (Oxford U Press, 2003)

Other readings found on Moodle

### WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

\*\* indicates reading found on Moodle

DATE	TOPIC(s)	ASSIGNMENTS
Week 1 Aug 28	What Is History?	E.H.Carr, <i>What Is History</i> , Ch 1 ** (read ONLY Ch 1)
Week 2 Sept 4	Empirical History, I	1. G&T, Ch. 1 & essay (pp 1-32) 2. Hoffer, <i>Historian's Paradox</i> , Ch 1 & 2 3. Parenti, Ch. 5 "In Ranke's Footsteps" <b>Empiricism</b>

Week 3 Sept 11	Empirical History, II	Skemp, <i>Making of a Patriot</i> Guest: Dr. Sheila Skemp, U of Mississippi <b>Essay 1 due</b>
Week 4 Sept 18	Lies We Tell Each Other?	Parenti, <i>History as Mystery</i> , Ch 1- 4 <b>Talking points (2 pages)-</b> everyone
Week 5 Sept 25	Marxist history and history "from the bottom up"	1. G&T, Ch 2, pp 33-58 2. Darton, "The Great Cat Massacre" ** 3. Hobsbawn, "On History from Below" ** <b>Marxist:</b> _____ _____
Week 6 Oct. 2	Community Studies, social	Ulrich, <i>The Midwife's Tale</i> Hoffer, Ch. 5 "One of Us Is Lying" <b>Essay 2 due</b>
Week 7 Oct 9	Community Studies, demographic	1. G&T, Ch 6, pp 141-150 only 2. Karlson, "The Demographic Basis of Witchcraft" ** <b>Quantitative :</b> _____ _____
<b>FALL BREAK</b>		
Week 9 Oct 23	Developing a Philosophy of History	Cohen, <i>History in Three Keys</i> Guest: Dean Michael Drompp <b>Essay 3 due</b>
Week 10 Oct 30	Feminist History	G&T, Ch 10, pp. 253-275 Collins, "Black Feminist Thought" ** <b>White Feminist:</b> _____ _____
	<b>4:00 guest speaker Orgill Room</b>	Lynching as performance <b>Reaction paper due</b>
Week 11 Nov 6	Creative Non-Fiction (NOT historical fiction)	Demos, <i>The Unredeemed Captive</i> Review Hoffer, Ch. 5 <b>Essay 4 due</b>

Week 12 Nov 13	Oral History	G&T, Ch 9, pp 230-252 McKinney, "Finding Fannie Corbett" ** Guest: Dr. Charles McKinney <b>Oral history theory:</b> _____ _____
Week 13 Nov 20	Post-Colonial History	G&T, Ch 11, pp 277-285 Laine, <i>Shivaji</i> Guest: Dr. Lynn Zastoupil <b>Essay 5 due</b>
Week 14 Nov 27	Public History: Film & museums	Foner, "Ken Burns" ** Kohn, "Historical Risk: Enola Gay Controversy" ** Parenti, Ch 6, "Strange Death of Zachary Taylor" <b>Field of Public History:</b> _____ _____
Week 15 Dec 3 & exam period		<b>ALL: individual reports, 20 min. each</b>