

HISTORY 485
SENIOR SEMINAR
Spring, 2012

Prof. Gail S. Murray
Office: Buckman 202
Phone, O: 901 843-3289
C:901 359-1813

Office Hours: **M, W** 1:30-2:45
Tues 12:30 – 1:45 (unless Dept. mtg.)
Friday 3:00-4:00
murray@rhodes.edu

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> (includes preliminary written topic)
	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.

Parenti critique (1st day of class): Read the Prologue & Ch. 1-4. Michael Parenti is a journalist who thinks historians do a poor and even dishonest job of writing history. To facilitate our discussion of his critique on the 1st day of class, bring in your critical evaluation of Parenti. On one page (typed), describe

points with which you agree. You may do this in bullet points and include pg. numbers. On the second page, describe points with which you disagree and why and also include pg. numbers.

Discussion Leaders: This assignment will be done in pairs and demands advanced planning. You are expected to go beyond the readings assigned for the day and find additional materials on the topic that you will bring into the discussion. The instructor can advise on additional readings if you need assistance, or may ask you to specifically cover a particular author or perspective. Thus you will be both presenting additional information to the seminar AND leading the discussion of the assigned essay(s). You will 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.

The quality of the class's response will improve if you distribute some thought-provoking questions to the class well before they undertake the reading.

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 one of the historical approaches/methods/philosophy that intrigues you. Then select a research topic with which you have some familiarity and speculate on how you could use that approach to investigate the topic. You will NOT actually write the research paper; you will explain to the class HOW you would do it. Which of the historical methodologies studied this term would you use to guide your research? How would you frame the problem? What challenges would you face? What sources would you use?

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

Courtesies: These you already know. Promptness. Preparedness. Attentiveness. Respect of others' opinions. Prior notification if you must miss class or leave early. No electronics. Enough said.

Books for Purchase (in order assigned)

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

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

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

Laurel **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* (Columbia U. Press, 1997)

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

Fred **Hobson**, *But Now I See: The White Southern Racial Conversion Narrative* (Louisiana State U Press, 1999).

**Other assigned readings will be found on Moodle

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

** indicates reading found on Moodle

DATE	TOPIC(s)	ASSIGNMENTS
Week 1 Jan. 15	What Is History?	Parenti, <i>History as Mystery</i> 2-page typed critique due (see p.1) Sign up for Team presentation
Week 2 Jan. 22	(1) Empiricism (2) Critique of Empiricism	Green & Troupe, Ch. 1 (including Elton essay) ** R.G. Collingwood, "Limits of Historical Know."
Week 3 Jan. 29	Further Empirical Critique TEAM 1	**E.H.Carr, <i>What Is History</i> , Ch 1 only "The New Historicism" found at http://www.cla.purdue.edu/english/theory/newhistoricism/modules/foucaulthistory.html
Week 4 Feb. 5	Micro History & Creative Nonfiction	Demos, <i>The Unredeemed Captive</i> Essay 1 due
Week 5 Feb 12	Marxist history & Feminist history TEAM 2	1. G&T, Ch 2 2. **Rosenberg, "19 th C World of Love & Ritual" 3. **Scott, Introduction to <i>Feminism & History</i>
Week 6 Feb 19	Micro-history & Women's History	Ulrich, <i>The Midwife's Tale</i> Essay 2 due
Week 7 Feb 26	Quantitative History	1. G&T, Ch 6 (including Wall essay) 2. **Karlsen, "Demographic Nature of Witchcraft"
Week 8 March 5	Demythologizing History	Cohen, <i>History in Three Keys</i> Guest: Dean Michael Drompp Essay 3 due

SPRING BREAK

Week 9 March 19	Post-Colonial History & History from below TEAM 3	1. G&T, Ch 11 (including Whiteman essay) 2. **Darton, "The Great Cat Massacre" 3. **Johnson, <i>Soul by Soul</i> , Ch. 1
Week 10 March 26	Cultural & Religious History	Laine, <i>Shivaji</i> Guest: Dr. Lynn Zastoupil Essay 4 due

Week 11 April 2	Oral History TEAM 4	G&T, Ch 9, pp 230-252 ** Abrams, <i>Oral history Theory</i> , Ch 1 & 2 ** edited interview with Berneice Robinson Guest: Dr. Charles Hughes
Week 12 April 9	Biography	Hobson, <i>And Now I See</i> Essay 5 due
Week 13 April 16	Public History	**Kohn, "Historical Risk: Enola Gay Controversy" **Nathan Bedford Forrest Statue **Flores, "The Alamo" Guest: Dr. Tim Huebner
Week 15 April 23	Film as History TEAM 5	**Foner, "Ken Burns" **Grossman, "Lincoln" Guest: Dr. Dee Garceau
Final Exam May 1 (Wed), 5:30 p.m.		Individual oral reports, 15 min. each See details on p. 2 of Syllabus