

History 200  
Professor Mike LaRosa

Spring 2007  
Rhodes College, History Dept.  
Office Hours: T, R 8:30-11; W 10-12  
Office: 311 Clough Hall

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**Introduction:** History 200 is a course designed to study of how history is created—or studied, interpreted and re-considered; we will understand history as a moving, fluid discipline structured around interpretation rather than memorization of facts. As such this seminar will focus on reading, writing and discussing history.

**Structure:** We will meet on MWF; Monday will be a formal “lecture” where the professor will present the material, themes, and/or a brief outline of important concepts for the week. On Wednesday there will be a discussion on week’s reading, led by students (two groups of two); these presentations will be brief, about ten minutes each. Each student will come to class on Friday with a 500 word essay (one page, ss); this paper will analyze the weeks’ reading, but should not be a mere “summary” of the reading. About half of the class will be asked to present their papers (by reading it, and defending its content) on Friday; these papers will be collected and about half of them will be graded during the semester.

**Texts:** There are five books required for this course. One is a historical novel that students will review and the others are a series of essays exploring historical research, teaching and methodology. They’re all engaging, student-friendly books.

García Márquez, Gabriel. *The General in His Labyrinth*.  
Loewen, James W. *Lies My Teacher Told Me*.  
Toplin, Robert Brent. *History by Hollywood*.  
Wineburg, Samuel S. *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*.  
Zinn, Howard. *The Future of History*.

**Course goals and requirements:** The course will move topically—each week, we will cover a different “theme” or topic in order to show the complexity of historical production and interpretation. We will study the work of painters, poets, novelists and photographers to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of “history.” There will be a midterm and final exam, and students will hand in one short paper (about 4-6 pages) during the semester. In-class work will constitute one quarter of the grade for this course and the paper and exams will constitute the other ¾ of the course grade. Part of the grade will be determined by student participation; a student’s grade will be shifted by about ten percent determined by the extent and quality of participation. Students who miss an unreasonable number of classes can not expect a satisfactory grade in the class and all assignments must be handed in, and handed in on time for successful completion of the

course. I do not accept late assignments under any circumstances but I reserve the right to modify any and all policies of this course on a case by case basis. All work must be handed in on paper—I do not accept any work via electronic submission.

**On emails, office hours and visits:** I prefer to visit students in my office. I'm not a big fan of email relationships between student and faculty—especially on a small 100 acre campus! You can send me an email, but I might not respond. If you visit during my office hours, or at some other time that's convenient for both of us, you can guarantee a much more thorough response.

**Outline of topics, assignments, readings and workshops:**

Week One: Introduction to the course.

Reading: Wineburg, part I.

Week Two: Some of the historic basics—citation, book reviews and journals.

Reading: Loewen, Introduction.

No class on Monday—Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

Week Three: Interpreting away from the status quo.

Reading: Zinn, Sections I- IV.

Week Four: Literature as history: the historic novel.

Reading: Begin *The General in His Labyrinth*.

Week Five: Literature, continued

Reading: Finish García Márquez.

Bring in article dealing with literature as history for discussion.

Week Six: Textbooks and History

Reading: Zinn, section V; Loewen, chapters 1-2, 5; Wineburn, chapter 3

**Paper due on Monday. (Dealing with literature as history)**

Week Seven: Travelers Accounts and-or scientific explorations as history.

Reading: Wineburg, chapter 6

Find accounts from magazines, preferable from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. How accurate/useful are these accounts?

Week Eight: Film as history.

Reading: Start *History by Hollywood*.

View one film from the book

Week Nine: Film and History, part II

Reading: Finish *History by Hollywood*

**Mid-term exam on Friday of this week.**

Week Ten: Spring break, no class.

Week Eleven: Images as history.

Reading: Wineburg, chapter 5

Bring in and discuss images--pre-photography--that have shaped our understanding history.

Week Twelve: Urban History: How to tell the story of our city—or any city?

Reading: Levine (hand out) from *Cuban Miami* or *Newark's Little Italy*.

Week Thirteen: Oral History.

Reading: Read sections of *Bloods* by I. Wallace plus hand-out from Oral History Anthology

Bring in recent “oral history” for discussion.

Week Fourteen: Biography or hagiography?

Reading: Loewen, chapter 6, Wineburg, chapter 4, Zinn, part VI

Week Fifteen: Teaching history

Reading: Loewen, chapters 11, 12, Wineburg, chapters 9, 10

Week Sixteen: Final review.

Read sections of *Past Imperfect*

n.b. The **final exam for this course will be held during the regularly scheduled exam time.**