

# WHAT IS HISTORY?

## History 101

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### **Course overview**

You might think you know what history is: it's what happened in the past—the names, dates, and events that fill textbooks and high school classes. But think again. What actually happened in the past is not always clear. The past is the subject of intense conflicts—from “history wars” among academics and politicians to actual military confrontations between nations. History, then, is not about memorizing facts. It is about asking questions about the past, finding clues, and piecing those clues together into stories. Telling these stories forces us to make choices about what to put in and what to leave out; about main plots and subplots; about lead and supporting characters; and about how to connect the dots with our imaginations when information is lacking.

Does this mean history is fiction? Who gets to do history—whose stories should we listen to and accept as true? How are ideas and practices of history different in different parts of the world? How do political struggles, in the United States and around the globe, shape the way people see the past and use it in their everyday lives? Can history predict or improve the future, and if not, what is history for? Must histories only be written in books, or can myths, movies, music, art, or fairy tales fulfill a similar purpose? This course will introduce you to various ways in which scholars and societies in different global contexts have approached the past. But above all, it will teach you new ways of thinking critically about the world you live in—its past, present, and future.

This course is structured into two lectures per week, supplemented by a weekly discussion section. The discussion section will be conducted by your Graduate Student Instructor (GSI). Weekly section meetings complement lectures and can involve separate readings and exercises. These weekly meetings in smaller groups are an opportunity to discuss and further delve into material presented in lectures and course readings.

Since History 101 meets the Race and Ethnicity (R&E) requirement, we will do a lot of thinking about how ideas about race are formed and reproduced in different global contexts and with what effects. We will make frequent connections in our lectures, sections, and assignments between ideas of race, ethnicity, culture, and power in other places and times and in the present-day United States. We fully encourage students to further develop these connections and to share your thoughts about how studying the construction of racial and ethnic differences in other places and times helps you understand your present-day society.

This course is designed to help you develop a key set of competencies that will serve you well no matter what your further pursuits. These include:

- Critical inquiry and analysis
- Develop empathy through historical and cultural understanding
- Understand the complexity of the historical record, and thus of all experience
- Generate significant questions about the past, and develop strategies to answer them
- Craft (historical) narrative and argument
- Practice historical thinking as central to engaged citizenship

### Required Texts

- Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Harvard U. Press, 1983).  
Available for purchase at campus bookstores; a few copies on reserve at UGL.
- All other readings are in the coursepack.

Students must bring all required texts to lecture and section.

### Assignments and Grading Criteria

- A 3-4 page essay (due at the end of Unit I)..... 15%
- Two reading quizzes..... 5%
- Three take-home exams (for Units II, III, and IV)..... 45%
- Lecture Participation: ..... 15%
- Section Participation: ..... 20%

All major assignments (essays, quizzes, and take-home exams) are also clearly marked throughout the syllabus with this icon: ❖.

Participation grades will be based on attendance in lecture and section, online posts for section, and engaged, thoughtful participation in lecture and section discussions. **This course uses iClickers for in-class exercises in the lecture sessions**, so please be sure to bring one to class every day. Points earned through responses to iClickers are part of your participation grade (15% of course grade—see above). iClicker questions will be based on course readings and other materials prepared in advance and/or material presented in class. 1 point will be awarded for each correct answer (there are usually 2-3 questions per session). In addition, iClicker responses will be used for attendance; you will receive an attendance point by responding to all iClicker questions for a session (whether your answers are correct or not).

All coursepack readings are numbered on the syllabus to match numbers in the coursepack, and they correspond to specific lectures. You must complete the required readings before the stated lecture.

The best way to prepare for class is to read actively—that is, read all of the assigned texts with a critical eye, take notes, and come to sections and lectures ready to pose questions and engage the ideas presented. We will post reading guides to help you focus your reading and to draw connections between readings and lectures.

**Important:** Students must fulfill the requirements in all grading areas of this course. In other words, you cannot sacrifice a percentage of your grade by choosing not to hand in a particular assignment or failing to attend/participate in lecture or section and still expect to pass the course.

## **Unit I: Foundations**

### **1.1| Introduction**

### **1.2| Thinking Our Way into the Past**

1. Ian Crouch, "Instagram's Instant Nostalgia," *New Yorker*, April 10, 2012.
2. Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (Columbia U. Press, 2000), pp. 37-39, 45-60, & 109-114.

### **2.1| History's Ingredients I: Time and Space**

3. Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Cornell U. Press, 1990), pp. 241-50.

### **2.2| History's Ingredients II: Evidence and Narrative**

4. Mary Lynn Rampolla, "Working With Sources," from *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012), pp. 6-21.

### **3.1| History's Ingredients III: Visual Sources Workshop**

No readings. Begin reading Bernal in preparation for Essay.

### **3.2| A History of History**

5. Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. R. Waterfield (Oxford, 1998).  
Book 1, Chapters 1-13 (pp. 3-8)  
Book 2, Chapters 35-45 (pp. 108-114) and 142-147 (pp. 152-154).

### **4.1| Foundations Revisited**

- ❖ ESSAY on assigned section of Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* due before lecture.

6. Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afro-Asiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, Vol. I (Rutgers U. Press, 1987), pp. xii-xviii, “maps and charts,” and pp. 1-38.

## **Unit II: The Modern Discipline**

### **4.2| History and the Nation-State**

7. Leopold von Ranke, “Introduction” to *The History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations* [1824], in Roger Wines, ed., *Leopold von Ranke: The Secret of World History* (Fordham U. Press, 1981), pp. 55-59.

### **5.1| History and Empire I: The British in India**

8. Thomas Babington Macaulay, “Minute on Indian Education,” in Harlow and Carter, eds., *Archives of Empire* (Duke U. Press, 2003), Vol. I, pp. 227-38.

### **5.2| History and Empire II: The Black Legend**

9. Tony Horwitz, “Immigration—and the Curse of the Black Legend.” *New York Times*, July 2008.

### **6.1| Can Fiction do History?**

- ❖ READING QUIZ 1 on “The Highland Widow” to be completed before lecture.

10. Walter Scott, “The Highland Widow,” from *Chronicles of the Canongate* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, [1827]), pp. 91-164.

### **6.2| New Histories I: Gender and Culture**

11. Lynn Hunt, “The Many Bodies of Marie Antoinette: Political Pornography and the Problem of the Feminine in the French Revolution,” in Gary Kates, ed., *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and New Controversies* (Routledge: 2006 [1998]), pp. 201-218.

### **7.1| New Histories II: Race and Power**

12. Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Harvard, 2004), Ch. 4, “Fire in the Cane.”
13. Selection from “Masters and Their Slaves During the Insurrection,” in Jeremy Popkin, ed., *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection* (U. of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 176-177.

### **7.2| New Histories III: Microhistory**

- ❖ READING QUIZ 2 on Davis’ book to be completed before lecture.

14. Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Harvard U. Press, 1983).

### **Unit III: Thinking Outside the Book**

#### **8.1| Can Movies do History?: The Case of Martin Guerre (I)**

15. Natalie Zemon Davis, "Movie or Monograph? A Historian/Filmmaker's Perspective," *The Public Historian*, 25:3 (2003), pp. 45-48.

In-class viewing of *Le retour de Martin Guerre* (Director: Daniel Vigne, 1982).

#### **8.2| Can Movies do History? The Case of Martin Guerre (II)**

❖ EXAM on Unit II due.

Finish in-class viewing of *Le retour de Martin Guerre*.

#### **9.1| Oral History**

16. John Byng-Hall interviewed by Paul Thompson, "The Power of Family Myths," in Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson, eds., *The Myths we Live by* (Routledge, 1990), pp. 216-24.

#### **9.2| Embodied Pasts: History and the Senses (Guest Lecture)**

17. Marcel Proust, "The Cookie." Excerpt from *Remembrance of Things Past. Volume 1: Swann's Way*. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, trans. (New York: Vintage, 1982), pp. 48-51.

#### **10.1| Different Cultures, Different Experiences of History**

18. Lisa Lindsay, *Captives as Commodities: The Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Pearson, 2008), pp. 1-2 and 84-96.

#### **10.2| The Double Helix of History and DNA (Guest Lecture)**

19. Priscilla Wald, "Cells, Genes, and Stories: HeLa's Journey from Labs to Literature," in *Genetics and the Unsettled Past: The Collision of Race, DNA and History*, edited by Keith Wailoo, Alondra Nelson, and Catherine Lee (Rutgers U. Press, 2012), pp. 247-65.

\* For the second reading for this week, go to <http://www.monticello.org/site/plantation-and-slavery/thomas-jefferson-and-sally-hemings-brief-account> to read a brief account of the history of the relationship between Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings. Pay particular attention to the role of DNA in helping to uncover this story and revise longstanding historical narratives.

**11.1| Music as History (Guest Lecture)**

20. Richard Taruskin, "Music's Dangers and the Case for Control," *The New York Times*, Dec. 9, 2001.

**Unit IV: History in the Present****11.2| History Wars**

21. Ann Curthoys and John Docker, *Is History Fiction?* (U. of Michigan Press, 2005), Chapter 11, "History Wars."

**12.1| The Public Life of History**

Before lecture, watch the following documentary about South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission: "Long Night's Journey into Day" (Directors: Deborah Hoffman and Frances Reid, 2002).

**12.2| Haunted Histories**

❖ EXAM on Unit III due.

22. Tiya Miles, *Tales of the Haunted South: Dark Tourism and Memories of Slavery from the Civil War Era* (UNC Press, 2015) [excerpts].

**13.1| Fairy Tales as History?**

23. Marina Warner, *Once Upon a Time: A Short History of Fairy Tale* (Oxford University Press, 2014): xiii-xxiv.

**13.2| Remembering and Representing War (I)**

24. Kenneth T. Jackson, "Gallipoli," in Ted Mico, et al, eds., *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies* (Henry Holt, 1996), pp. 182-85.

In-class viewing of *Gallipoli* (Director: Peter Weir, 1981).

**14.1| Remembering and Representing War (II)**

25. Alistair Thomson, "The Anzac Legend," in Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson, eds., *The Myths we Live by* (Routledge, 1990), pp. 73-82.

Finish in-class viewing of *Gallipoli*.

**14.2| The Future of History**

❖ EXAM on Unit IV due.

26. Daniel L. Smail, "When does history begin?", from <http://www.powells.com/essays/smail.html>.