

## History 2800H

### INTRODUCTION TO THE DISCIPLINE OF HISTORY

Autumn 2012

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**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:** Attendance at all class meetings and participation in all class discussions; 3 chapter précis; book review and oral presentation of the results; analysis of an academic journal and oral presentation of the results; website review and oral presentation of the results; brief history from primary sources and oral presentation of the results.

**INTRODUCTION:** This course has four main goals. First, it is designed to introduce students planning to major in history to contemporary historical methodology, i.e., how historians do their work. As part of this introduction to history as a discipline, the course gives students a sense of how historical methodology has evolved over time. Second, the course gives students practice in the analysis of historical sources. Third, the course helps students develop logic and clarity in both oral and written exercises. Fourth, the course is designed to introduce students to the history major at Ohio State University. At all times the course will emphasize and depend on student participation. The ultimate success of the class will depend entirely on the willingness of students to read closely and carefully, to work hard at improving their writing and speaking skills, and to participate actively in the discussions that will occupy most of the time in each class session.

**KEY QUESTIONS:** The course will acquaint students with some of the central questions historians face as they seek to understand the past. Among those questions are the following:

1. How should the historian select and connect facts? Is "objective" history possible?
2. Is the course of history determined by the actions and choices of individuals or by the operation of social forces?
3. Does history repeat itself, allowing us to predict the future if we understand the past?
4. Should historians praise or blame the conduct of historical actors, or simply confine themselves to explaining those actors' motives?
5. How do we explain the causes of major historical events? How important is chance in determining historical outcomes?
6. What does history tell us about human nature? Is human behavior constant throughout history or is it the result of specific kinds of social conditioning?
7. Is history a record of progress?

8. What sorts of historical questions can be answered by using quantitative methods?
9. How do historians judge the worth of another's work? What is good history? What is bad history? How do historians reward the first and punish the second?
10. Who or what are the major historical agents of change: nations, armies, governments, social groups, exceptional individuals, the people as a whole, or something else?

## READING ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments should be completed prior to the class meetings. Students are expected to purchase all five required books, which are available for sale at SBX, 1806 North High Street.

Aug. 22 Introduction

Aug. 24 Josephine Tey, The Daughter of Time

Questions to consider: 1)What kinds of evidence does the book discuss in trying to solve the mystery? 2)How would you rate each type of evidence in terms of its reliability? 3)Why did the version of the story that is most common today prevail over the other possible explanations?

Aug. 29 James Romm, Herodotus

Questions to consider: 1)Why is Herodotus considered the originator of the Western historical tradition? 2)What aspects of his Histories seem to have had an enduring influence on other historians? 3)What problems do you see with his approach to the study of the past?

Aug. 31 E. H. Carr, What is History?, chaps. 1-3

Questions to consider: 1)What should an historian do with the facts he or she collects on a specific subject? 2)Which matters more in history: the individual or larger social forces and movements? 3)Should historians pass judgment, or leave that to the reader?

Sept. 5 Carr, What is History?, chap. 4; first précis due

Questions to consider: 1)What should an historian do with the various causes (of a specific event) that he or she collects? 2)What is the proper relationship between causes and an historian's interpretation of a specific historical event?

Sept. 7 Carr, What Is History?, chap. 5; second précis due

Questions to consider: 1)Do you think history is going somewhere, and if so, where? 2)What are the most popular views today of where history is going?

Sept. 12 Individual conferences on book reviews

Sept. 14 Carr, What is History?, chap. 6; third précis due

Questions to consider: 1)How did advances in reasoning and science from the 1750's through the 1950's affect the study of history?

Sept. 19 No class meeting

Sept. 21 David Cannadine, ed., What is History Now?, preface, chaps. 1-4

Questions to consider: 1)How has the historical profession changed since the early 1960's? 2)How have the fields of social, political and religious history changed since then?

Sept. 26 Cannadine, What is History Now?, chaps. 5-9

Questions to consider: 1)How have cultural, gender, intellectual and imperial history changed since the early 1960's? 2)What are the strengths and weaknesses of "the new history?"

Sept. 28 No class meeting.

Oct. 3 Student presentations of book reviews; all book reviews due

Oct. 5 Individual conferences on journal analyses

Oct. 10 Elliott Gorn, Randy Roberts and Terry Bilhartz, Constructing the American Past, 7<sup>th</sup> ed., Vol. 1, chap. 1

Questions to consider: 1)How did Columbus view the indigenous peoples that he encountered in the Caribbean? 2)What did the Spanish conquistadores want to accomplish in Mexico? 3)Why did they succeed?

Oct. 12 Gorn, Roberts and Bilhartz, Constructing the American Past, chap. 2

Questions to consider: 1)Why did the colonists at Jamestown suffer so much hardship during the first twenty years of settlement? 2)Why did the colony eventually succeed? 3)Why did the Massachusetts Bay colony succeed more quickly than the one at Jamestown? 4)How did the success of the Massachusetts Bay colony affect the religious beliefs of its Puritan inhabitants?

Oct. 17 Gorn, Roberts and Bilhartz, Constructing the American Past, chap. 4

Questions to consider: 1)What were the most important reasons why residents of the Thirteen Colonies rebelled against British rule? 2)Were those reasons persuasive ones?

Oct. 19 Student presentations of journal analyses; all journal analyses due

Oct. 24 Individual conferences on website reviews

Oct. 26 Gorn, Roberts and Bilhartz, Constructing the American Past, chap. 5

Questions to consider: 1)Why did the Founders adopt a new Constitution in

1787-88? 2)What were its strengths? 3)Its weaknesses?

Oct. 31 Gorn, Roberts and Bilhartz, Constructing the American Past, chap. 6  
Questions to consider: 1)Why did evangelical Christianity grow stronger in the U.S.A. during the early decades of the 1800's? 2)How did older, so-called mainline Christian denominations view evangelical Christianity then?

Nov. 2 Student presentations of website reviews; all website reviews due

Nov. 7 Individual conferences on histories from primary sources

Nov. 9 "Guilty by Suspicion" (film) – I

Nov. 14 "Guilty by Suspicion" (film) – II

Nov. 16 "Guilty by Suspicion" (film) – III  
Questions to consider: 1)How complete an account of the Hollywood blacklist is this film? 2)What are the most important events and perspectives left out of the film? 3)How much of what is in the film is entirely accurate, do you think?

Nov. 21 first drafts due of histories from primary sources due

Nov. 23 No class meeting

Nov. 28 first drafts of histories from primary sources returned and discussed

Nov. 30 Student presentations of histories from primary sources; all histories from primary sources due  
 from primary documents

## WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

### Assignments 1-3: Summary analysis (précis)

You will be expected to complete a summary analysis, or précis, of E. H. Carr's fourth, fifth and sixth chapters in What is History?. Each précis is to be no more than one double-spaced typed page, or about 250 words. Your paper must have one and a quarter inch margins on all sides and be in 12-point font (the same as this syllabus).

The purpose of a précis is to summarize the author's writing in your own words. Quotations of more than a word or two or a very short phrase are not acceptable. Your précis must summarize the logic of the author's argument. That is, you should not merely string together a series of unconnected sentences. Rather, you must write an organized essay that follows and explains Carr's arguments and the reasoning behind them. Writing a good précis is very difficult; sloppy or careless work will not be accepted.

### Assignment 4: Critical Book Review

1. The review may be of any historical work relevant to the course and approved by the instructor. (It is not permissible to use a work of historical fiction.)
2. The review must be a critical one; that is, it must discuss and analyze both the positive and negative aspects of the book. Under no circumstances should it merely be a summary of the contents.
3. If you are not well read in the subject that you choose, go to the library and look up other reviews of the book (the reference librarian in the Main Library will explain how) and discuss these as well as your own conclusions. However, if you use other reviews to help you shape your own comments and conclusions these reviews should be listed in a brief bibliography, specifying the date and source of the reviews. All quotations and paraphrases from the reviews should be carefully cited in the text of your own review.
4. Every review should contain an introduction and conclusion, and every quotation should be footnoted with an accurate page reference.
5. Unless some intractable problem exists students should also hand in the book reviewed when handing in the review itself.
6. The review should be 3-5 typed, double-spaced pages in length, with one and a quarter inch margins on all sides and 12-point font (the same as this paper).

#### Assignment 5: Academic Journal Analysis

1. In this paper you are to discuss and analyze the contents of an academic journal. You should examine the issues from the first year of publication and issues from a recent year. (If the publication has been published for a long time, also look at issues from a year about halfway between the journal's founding and the present.)
2. As was true of the book review, this paper should be treated as an analytical and critical exercise. Your paper should describe the journal and also critique it.
3. Basically you are to treat the journal as a potential source and should try to give your reader as complete a picture of it as possible. Some questions that you should consider, but are not limited to, are the following:
  - a. Who edits the journal? Is there any clearly stated editorial policy or any other kind of indication of the rationale for the selection of certain articles?
  - b. What types of articles appear in the journal? Is there any discernible pattern such as military or social history, or an evident political or ideological bias?

- c. Who writes the articles and reviews, if any? Is there any discernible pattern to the authorship (the pattern might be one of academic rank, specialty, geographic location, etc.)?
- d. Does the journal have book reviews? If there are reviews, are they critical reviews, such as you are being asked to write, or just notices?

In this paper, as in all papers, a clearly defined introduction and conclusion are essential. In the conclusion, you may deal with any issue you wish, but you should, in any event, be sure to include a consideration of the usefulness of the journal in question for a historian, a history major, and for an educated general reader. The paper should be 3-5 typed, double-spaced pages in length, with one and a quarter inch margins on all sides and 12-point font (the same as this syllabus).

#### Assignment 6: Website Review

1. In this paper you are to discuss and analyze the contents of a website devoted to an historical topic or topics. You should examine the contents of the website, looking in particular for an explanation of its overall purpose, when it began, and then survey the contents.
2. As was true of the book review and journal analysis, this paper should be treated as an analytical and critical exercise. Your paper should describe the website and also critique it.
3. Basically you are to treat the website as a potential source and should try to give your reader as complete a picture of it as possible. Some questions that you should consider, but are not limited to, are the following:
  - a. Who edits the website? Is there any clearly stated editorial policy or any other kind of indication of the rationale for the selection of what is published there?
  - b. What types of items appear on the website? Is there any discernible pattern such as military or social history, or an evident political or ideological bias?
  - c. Who writes what is published on the website? Is there any discernible pattern to the authorship (the pattern might be one of academic rank, specialty, geographic location, etc.)?
  - d. Does the website have book reviews? If there are reviews, are they critical reviews, such as you are being asked to write, or just notices?

In this paper, as in all papers, a clearly defined introduction and conclusion are essential. In the conclusion, you may deal with any issue you wish, but you should, in any event, be sure to include a consideration of the usefulness of the website in question for a historian,

a history major, and for an educated general reader. The paper should be 3-5 typed, double-spaced pages in length, with one and a quarter inch margins on all sides and 12-point font (the same as this syllabus).

### Assignment 7: A Brief History from Primary Sources

In this assignment you are to construct a brief history of an event, chosen by the instructor, from the "raw materials"--a collection of sources, largely primary but including some secondary sources, distributed in class. You should not hurry off to the library to see what other historians have written about this event and borrow their conclusions--to do so would defeat the purpose of the assignment. Instead, you should weigh the evidence and decide for yourself what conclusions it justifies. Your paper should be organized as a narrative, i.e., one that tells a story containing facts and interpretation. Your paper's title should convey briefly your interpretation. When you give your oral presentation about the paper in class, be prepared to answer questions about the sources you have used if they seem to contradict your interpretation. As you prepare the paper, keep the following guidelines in mind:

1. Review the discussions in Carr, What is History? regarding issues of evidence, and the dangers of present-mindedness. Keep in mind also the many ways illustrated in Constructing the American Past by which historians compel documents to yield meaning. In other words, this final exercise should make use of the skills and concepts discussed from the beginning of the course.
2. Make clear in your essay how the evidence derived from the various sources reinforces your interpretation or conflicts with it. In the case of contradictory evidence, be sure to make clear how you have resolved the conflict.
3. Remember that this exercise requires you to develop not just a story (what historians like to call a narrative), but also an interpretation based on your analysis and comparison of the sources.
4. The paper should be 5-7 typed, double-spaced pages in length, with one and a quarter inch margins on all sides and 12-point font (the same as this syllabus).

**ENROLLMENT:** All students must be officially enrolled in the course by the end of the second full week of the quarter. No requests to add the course will be approved by the department chair after that time. Enrolling officially and on time is solely the responsibility of each student.

**GRADING POLICIES:** The course assignments are weighted for grading purposes as follows: three summary analyses (précis) of chapters in E.H. Carr, What is History?: 15%; book review: 15%; analysis of a scholarly journal: 15%; website review: 15%; brief history written entirely on the basis of the primary documents distributed in class: 25%; participation in class discussions: 15%. The importance of regular attendance and

participation cannot be overstated. Students are expected to be present at – and on time for – every class meeting. Attendance will be taken at every class meeting. Students who miss a class meeting without a legitimate reason recognized by university rules will have their grade for the course lowered by a full letter grade for each such absence. (Job interviews, employment-related activities, social events, etc. are *not* legitimate reasons to miss class under university rules.) Students who are late for class without a legitimate reason recognized by university rules will have their grade for the course lowered by half of a letter grade for each such offense. Careful, correct writing is also highly important. *Papers must be written in clear correct prose that follows the rules for writing papers that are attached to this syllabus.* Carelessly or sloppily written papers will be returned for revision, and your final grade for such work will be penalized. Assignments are due in class on the date specified. Late assignments will not be accepted (and will be given a zero), unless the student obtained permission for an extension from me ahead of time. (Note: When you use the ideas of others, you must so indicate in a footnote. If one borrows the ideas or words of others without acknowledgement, one is guilty of plagiarism. The penalty for the first such offense is a zero for the assignment in question. The penalty for a second offense is a failing grade in the course and may also bring additional penalties such as suspension or expulsion from the university.) Students in need of extra help with their writing skills are encouraged to use the University Writing Center, 485 Mendenhall Lab, 125 S. Oval Mall, (688-5865 or 2-5607).

**ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:** It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct ([http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info\\_for\\_students/csc.asp](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp)).

**DISABILITY SERVICES:** Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu>