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21H.931 Seminar in Historical Methods
Spring 2004

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21H.931
Spring, 2005
W 3-5

Instructor: David Ciarlo

SEMINAR IN HISTORICAL METHODS

This course is designed to engage students with the wide variety of recent approaches used to study the past. The books and essays we will read have all made significant contributions to the field of history as a whole, and will cover as wide a methodological, geographical, and chronological field as possible in the span of a mere semester. In our discussions over the next few months, we will explore how historians conceive of their object of study, how they use primary sources as a basis for their accounts, and how they structure the narrative and analytic discussion of their topic. We will also discuss and debate the advantages and drawbacks of each of these various approaches, and ultimately, the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments.

Readings

The following books are available at the MIT Bookstore and on reserve in the Hayden Library:

Natalie Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1983)
Laurel Thatcher-Ulrich *A Midwife's Tale* (1991)
Alfred Crosby, *A Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences*, (2003 & 1972)
Jonathon Glassman, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion, & Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856-1888* (1995)
Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (1995 ed., orig. 1977)
Joyce Appelby, Lynn Hunt, & Margaret Jacobs, *Telling the Truth About History* (1994)

Requirements

The main written assignment for this course is a substantial research paper, on any reasonable subject of interest to you. These papers should be between 15-20 pages long, and should explore the given topic in substantial depth. (History majors might use this paper to explore a possible thesis topic.) The paper will be crafted in the following stages:

February 23	Statement of topic interest and research proposal
March 16	Annotated Bibliography
April 20	Draft
May 11	Class presentation
May 12	Final Paper Due

You will also be expected to bring to class each week a brief (and informal) commentary of a page or so on the assigned reading. (Also bring your copy of the reading with you to class so that you can participate fully.) Each week one or more students will use their commentary as the basis for introducing the class discussion; these student also think of several additional questions to circulate to the class via email the night before the discussion.

Class participation is an essential component of this course, and therefore will comprise a significant portion of the final course grade.

Research paper	50%
Weekly response papers	20%
Seminar participation	30%

Please note: plagiarism of any kind—that is taking another's words or ideas from a book, another student, or from the internet without full and complete citation—will not be tolerated regardless of the circumstances, and will result in an "F" for the assignment.

Class Schedule

February 2	Introduction
February 9	Narrative and history Natalie Davis <i>The Return of Martin Guerre</i>
February 16	Sources and History Laurel Thatcher-Ulrich <i>A Midwife's Tale</i>
February 23	The Larger View Alfred Crosby, <i>A Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences</i>

***Statement of topic interest and research proposal due**

March 2	NO CLASS Individual meetings to review research proposals
March 9	Social history E. P. Thompson "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century" <i>Past and Present</i> , No. 50. (Feb., 1971), pp. 76-136. and "Moral Economy Revisited" (from Thompson, <i>Customs in Common</i>) Anne McCants, "The Not-So-Merry Widows of Amsterdam, 1740-1782", <u>J. of Family History</u> , V 24, n 4, 1999.

**Additional essay/article, to be announced

March 16 Culture and History
Robert Darnton, "The Great Cat Massacre"
Harold Mah, "Suppressing the Text: the Metaphysics of Ethnographic History in Darnton's Great Cat Massacre," History Workshop, V 31, Spring 1991

***Annotated Bibliography due**

March 23 (NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK)

March 30 Hegemony and Identity
Jonathon Glassman, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion, & Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856-1888* (1995)

April 6 Thinking about Doing History
Appelby, Hunt, & Jacobs, *Telling the Truth About History*

April 13 Power, "Truth," and History: Post-structuralism
Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, 3-228, 293-308

April 20 Film and History (*film to be announced*)
***Drafts due**

April 27 NO CLASS: Individual Meetings

May 4 Class presentations

May 11 Class presentations

Final Paper Due on May 12

(May 16-20 Final Exam Week) *There is no final for this class.*