



HIST 587: U.S. Social/Cultural History Methods

Professors Caleb McDaniel and Fay Yarbrough

Spring 2016

Class: Wednesdays 1:00-3:30 p.m., Duncan Masters House
Professors: [Dr. Caleb McDaniel](#) and [Dr. Fay Yarbrough](#)

Contact Information

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Course Description

The primary objective for students in this research seminar will be to write a full-length draft of an historical article based on original research and suitable for submission to a professional history journal.

Our related objective will be to consider the methods of—and methodological dilemmas posed by—cultural and social history. Readings in the first half of the course will be focused on methodological problems that routinely face historians in this field. The remainder of the course will be devoted to collaborative seminars, discussions of useful writing and research strategies, and feedback sessions designed to support the progress of your independent research and writing projects.

These independent research and writing projects will be based on a topic of your choice, which you should begin thinking about right away. Since most of our common readings and discussions will revolve around methods and problems in U.S. social and cultural history, the course will be most useful to those students who are somehow interested in or engaged in those fields, broadly defined.

Assignments and Assessment

Grades for the course will be based equally on (1) general participation in seminar discussions, including feedback on other students' projects; and (2) the article draft submitted at the end of the semester.

Your goal for the article should be to write a complete rough draft of an essay that you intend to submit to a professional journal. This essay will still be a *draft* in the sense that after the semester you will probably wish to write further drafts and make additional revisions, based on comments received in the seminar, before submitting it to a journal. But it should be a *complete* draft in the sense that it (a) presents a coherent, well-developed argument based on original research in primary sources; (b) contains complete bibliographical citations formatted according to the latest edition of the Chicago Manual of Style; and (c) is between 10,000 and 14,000 words, including endnotes.

Schedule

Please read the articles and books listed before coming to class. Other assignments may be distributed later in the semester, and the schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be announced by email to the entire class.

January 13: Source Scarcity

Nancy Shoemaker, "An Alliance between Men: Gender Metaphors in Eighteenth-Century American Indian Diplomacy East of the Mississippi," *Ethnohistory* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1999), 239-263, [link](#)

Wendy Anne Warren, "'The Cause of Her Grief': The Rape of a Slave in Early New England," *Journal of American History* 93, no. 4 (March 2007), 1031-1049, [link](#)

Please read these articles before our first meeting. Be prepared to discuss their specific arguments as well as these general questions:

1. What source problems did the authors confront in crafting these articles, and how did they overcome them?
2. What strategies does each author use to show the broader significance of the particular stories told in these articles?
3. What larger historiographical changes do the authors mention and reflect that explain the appearance of these articles in 1999 and 2007?

You should also come to class prepared to talk some about your research interests and share any ideas you have for the paper you will write this semester.

January 20: Source Abundance

Dror Wahrman, "Change and the Corporeal in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Gender History: Or, Can Cultural History be Rigorous?", *Gender and History* 20, no. 3 (November 2008), 584-602, [link](#)

Carol Lasser, "Voyeuristic Abolitionism: Sex, Gender, and the Transformation of Antislavery Rhetoric," *Journal of the Early Republic* 28, no. 1 (2008), 83-114, [link](#)

Cameron Blevins, "Space, Nation, and the Triumph of Region: A View of the World from Houston," *Journal of American History* (June 2014), 122-147, [link](#)

January 27: Periodizations Big and Small

David Armitage and Jo Guldi, *The History Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), revised edition (February 5, 2015), <http://historymanifesto.cambridge.org/>

"Introduction to *The History Manifesto* Exchange," *American Historical Review* 120, no. 2 (2015), 527-529, [link](#)

Deborah Cohen and Peter Mandler, "*The History Manifesto*: A Critique," *American Historical Review* 120, no. 2 (2015), 530-542, [link](#)

David Armitage and Jo Guldi, "*The History Manifesto*: A Reply to Deborah Cohen and Peter Mandler," *American Historical Review* 120, no. 2 (2015), 543-554, [link](#)

February 3: Prospectus Presentations, Part 1

Before class, you should pre-circulate, at least 24 hours in advance, two things pertaining to your individual research project for this semester:

1. An abstract of 300 words summarizing the question you want to explore and a tentative thesis, and briefly explaining why the question and thesis will be historiographically significant. Imagine that you are writing the abstract in response to a Call for Papers to be presented at the Annual Meeting of a professional society such as the OAH, the AHA, or the SHA.
2. An annotated bibliography of primary *and* secondary sources you plan to consult this semester for your project. Annotations should be in the form of a brief paragraph below each source explaining why it is relevant and summarizing, as best you can at this juncture, what you expect to find in it. When annotating secondary sources, you should summarize briefly the author's main scholarly contribution or argument. Your bibliography should be focused (only those sources *most* relevant to your work are included) but also broad enough to persuade the reader of the topic's significance to a wide range of scholars.

February 10: Explaining Historical Change

Thomas Bender, ed., *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation* (University of California Press, 1992).

“AHR Conversation: Explaining Historical Change; or, The Lost History of Causes,” *American Historical Review* 120, no. 4 (2015), 1369-1423, [link](#)

February 17: Borders and Boundaries

Alice Baumgartner, “The Line of Positive Safety: Borders and Boundaries in the Rio Grande Valley, 1848-1880,” *Journal of American History* 101, no. 4 (2015), 1106-1122, [link](#)

Juliana Barr, “Geographies of Power: Mapping Indian Borders in the ‘Borderlands’ of the Early Southwest,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (January 2011), 5-46, [link](#)

Sean M. Kelley, “‘Mexico in His Head’: Slavery and the Texas-Mexico Border, 1810-1860,” *Journal of Southern History* 37, no. 3 (2004), 709-723, [link](#)

February 24: One-on-One Meetings

We will not be meeting as a group this week. Instead, we will schedule one-on-one meetings with each of you to talk about your research projects. You should submit to us, at least 24 hours before your meeting, a rough draft of whatever you have completed for the prospectus that you will present after the break (see below on March 9).

March 2: SPRING BREAK

March 9: Prospectus Presentations, Part 2

At least 24 hours in advance before class, you should pre-circulate an essay of 4-7 pages (double spaced, with footnotes/endnotes) presenting the thesis of your paper and explaining its historiographical significance. Imagine this as a chunk of your final draft, modeled on the thesis sections we have found and analyzed in the articles by graduate students we have read earlier this semester. Be sure to incorporate feedback you have received from other members of the seminar after your first prospectus presentation.

Workshops

For our meetings on **March 16**, **March 23**, **March 30**, and **April 6** plan to pre-circulate some piece of your research project to members of the seminar **AT LEAST 24 HOURS** before we meet on each of these days. You may be asked to circulate your paper to only a smaller sub-set of the class, depending on whether natural peer reviewing groups emerge around certain topics.

For these workshop weeks, you should share whatever you most wish to get feedback about. Examples of material you might wish to circulate for discussion include, but are not limited to, a

rough draft of a section of your article, a primary source or group of primary sources that you are puzzling through along with some comments about them; a secondary source by another scholar with whom you want to engage, along with some of your thoughts about strengths or weaknesses in the work; or an outline of a piece of your article.

Depending on the way topics and research projects develop, you may be assigned as a “respondent” to the work of one of your peers in order to jumpstart discussions during these workshops.

The purpose of these sessions is to help you improve your work, so take full advantage of them by circulating something substantial enough to get useful feedback about. The more you have done each week, the better the feedback you will receive.

March 23 You will have an additional brief assignment on **March 23**. We will give you the name of a current or former Rice doctoral student who has written a journal article, and you will interview that person outside of class to find out about the article’s evolution from idea, to seminar paper, to finished product. In our March 23 session, you will present briefly to the class about what you learned.

April 10: Complete draft of article due at 11:59 p.m.

April 13 and 20: In-seminar discussion of articles

Please read papers circulated the week before in preparation for these discussions.

May 4: Deadline for final draft

Note on Disability Support Services

If you have a documented disability that will impact your work in this class, please contact one of us outside of class to discuss accommodations confidentially. You will also need to contact and register with the Disability Support Services Office in the Allen Center.