



HIST 588: Readings in 19th-Century U.S. History

Prof. Caleb McDaniel

Fall 2018

Thursdays, 1:00-3:30 pm, Humanities 327

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Objectives

The major objectives of this seminar are (a) to introduce graduate students to some of the major recent problems and questions in the field of nineteenth-century American history; (b) to learn to identify the historiographical issues that recent works of scholarship address and connect their individual arguments to larger debates in the field.

The second goal is arguably more important than the first. It would be impossible in a semester-long course to provide an exhaustive survey of historiography on the nineteenth-century United States, so you should not consider the list of readings for this course comprehensive for this field. For example, the reading list this semester tilts away from the early republic towards the Civil War and its aftermath.

Instead of covering everything, my objective is to help you learn *how* to familiarize yourself with the historiography in a new field; there will always be new material to catch up with, so what you need are the skills to identify major questions and get a lay of the land, regardless of the specific topic.

Assignments

All seminar participants will be assigned two historiographical essays from the list provided at the end of this syllabus. On the days in the schedule marked for "Presentations," you will give a presentation to the class about your article to help your fellow students get up to speed on the debates discussed therein.

You will also create a one-page handout (front-and-back) to distribute to your peers, which should include a short overview of debates in the field, including a summary of major authors and positions, and a list for further reading. A draft of these handouts is due to me 48 hours before

your presentation, so that I can suggest any changes. The week before the presentation, you will also have a chance to meet with me one on one to talk about the article and plan your handout.

We will devote more time in class to talking about these presentations. Below are some questions you should consider as you read your assigned article:

- What is the main historical **question** addressed?
- What have been the main answers that historians have given to that question in the **past**?
- What are the remaining “live” **debates** over the main historical question?
- What is the author’s own **position** on what needs to be done now, and why?
- What books or articles would someone most need to be **read** in order to get a handle on the major positions in those debates?
- Are there any **new** historical questions or methods arising from this field that need more attention?

For the remainder of the weeks on the schedule, we will all be reading a recent book on nineteenth-century American history and discussing it in class. The focus will be on positioning the work in relation to the debates you have presented on, as well as analyzing the book and seeing how its arguments, methods, and sources work. Before each of these weeks, you should send me an email with a brief (500 words) response to the book by noon on the day of class. We will be talking more in class about how to approach these assignments.

The final assignment for the semester is to write a more formal, 12-15 page (double spaced) historiographical essay. I’m open to different topics for these papers, but they should be in some way inspired by questions or readings that we’ve done this semester. The best approach might be to expand one of your presentation handouts into an argument-driven essay, using the articles you’ve read as a model for how to develop a historiographical argument.

Your grade will be based on a holistic evaluation of your work on all of the assignments. I will follow the grading guidelines provided in the official graduate handbook for the history department:

The grade of (A) indicates outstanding work; (A-) good work; (B+) work with potential that needs improvement; (B), work that, however competent, lacks originality or promise; (B-), unsatisfactory work which falls short of acceptable graduate standards; and (F) or (U) failure due to insufficient, incomplete, or late work.

Schedule of Readings

August 23

Please read these articles before coming to class:

- Frank Towers, “Partisans, New History, and Modernization: The Historiography of the Civil War’s Causes, 1861-2011,” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 1, no. 2 (June 2011), <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/435089/>
- W. E. B. DuBois, “The Propaganda of History,” from *Black Reconstruction* (PDF provided)

August 30

NO GROUP MEETING: One-on-one meetings with Dr. McDaniel

September 6

Presentations

September 13

Tiya Miles, *Dawn of Detroit* (New Press, 2017)

September 20

Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts* (Yale, 2008)

September 27

NO GROUP MEETING: One-on-one meetings with Dr. McDaniel

October 4

Presentations

October 11

Matt Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire* (Harvard, 2016)

October 18

Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause* (Yale, 2016)

October 25

Tera Hunter, *Bound in Wedlock* (Harvard, 2017)

November 1

Lisa Tetrault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls* (UNC, 2014)

November 8

Martha Jones, *Birthright Citizens* (Cambridge, 2018)

November 15

Stacey Smith, *Freedom's Frontier* (UNC, 2015)

November 22 (NO CLASS)

November 29

Kelly Lytle Hernandez, *City of Inmates* (UNC, 2017)

You should also turn in a draft or outline of your final paper.

December 12

Final papers due by 5 p.m.

Article List

Richard Bell, "The Great Jugular Vein of Slavery: New Histories of the Domestic Slave Trade," *History Compass* 11, no. 12 (December 2013), 1150-1164.

Corey Brooks, "Reconsidering Politics in the Study of American Abolitionists," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 8, no. 2 (June 2018).

Laura F. Edwards, "Sarah Allingham's Sheet and Other Lessons from Legal History," *Journal of the Early Republic* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2018).

Carole Emberton, "Unwriting the Freedom Narrative: A Review Essay," *Journal of Southern History* 82, no. 2 (May 2016), 377-394.

Pekka Hamalainen and Samuel Truett, "On Borderlands," *Journal of American History* 98, no 2 (2011), 338-361.

Catherine A. Jones, "Women, Gender, and the Boundaries of Reconstruction," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 8, no. 1 (March 2018), 111-131.

Walter Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 1 (2003): 113-124.

Peter Kolchin, "Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America," *Journal of American History* 89, no. 1 (June 2002), 154-173.

Carol Lasser, "Introduction: Politics in and of Women's History in the Early American Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 36, no. 2 (Summer 2016), with accompanying articles by Lori Ginzberg, Patricia Cline Cohen, Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, Amy Dru Stanley, and Jennifer Morgan.

Anna Pegler-Gordon, “Debating the Racial Turn in U.S. Ethnic and Immigration History,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 36, no. 2 (Winter 2017), 40-53.

Seth Rockman, “What Makes the History of Capitalism Newsworthy?” *Journal of the Early Republic* 34, no. 3 (Fall 2014), 439-466

Ariel Ron and Gautham Rao, eds, “Taking Stock of the State in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2018), with articles by Hannah Farber, Ryan Quintana, Rachel St. John, Stephen Skowronek, and Richard R. John.

Caitlin Rosenthal, “Seeking a Quantitative Middle Ground: Reflections on Methods and Opportunities in Economic History,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2016), 659-680.

Nina Silber, “Reunion and Reconciliation, Reviewed and Reconsidered,” *Journal of American History* 103, no. 1 (June 2016), 59-83.

Stacey L. Smith, “Beyond North and South: Putting the West in the Civil War and Reconstruction.” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 6, no. 4 (November 3, 2016): 566–91.

Kidada Williams, “Maintaining a Radical Vision of African Americans in the Age of Freedom,” *Journal of the Civil War Era*, <https://journalofthecivilwarera.org/forum-the-future-of-reconstruction-studies/maintaining-a-radical-vision/>