Objectives

The 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; and (c) to write about these issues for a public audience using individual blogs.

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 this list of readings comprehensive for this field. For example, the reading list this semester tilts away from the early republic towards the Civil War and its aftermath, and also focuses on slavery, emancipation, capitalism, race, violence, and the state.

Assignments

The semester is roughly divided into two parts. In the first half of the semester, all seminar participants will complete a “common reading”—usually a journal article or set of articles that deals with a major problem in the field—as well as an individual reading assignment of one book or article that somehow addresses the debate(s) introduced by the common reading.

In these weeks, all seminar participants are responsible for:

• completing both the common reading and the individual reading and preparing notes that will enable you to participate in a classroom discussion focused on the common reading, but informed by the individual readings;
• **writing a blog post** by midnight on the Sunday preceding class that provides a brief precis of the individual reading’s major arguments, points, and sources, and also discusses how the individual reading speaks to, expands on, or addresses the problems outlined in one or more of the common readings;

• **reading** the blog posts of the other participants in the seminar in preparation for the in-class discussion on Monday, and (if appropriate) adding **comments** to those posts.

Assignments of the individual readings and further guidelines for blogging will take place on the first day of class.\(^1\)

In the second half of the semester, we will all read the same book(s) each week. In this half, all participants are responsible for reading the week’s common reading and writing a blog post about it. But on the first day of class, each week’s book will also be assigned to **two** seminar participants who will be responsible for **leading that week’s discussion** of the book in class. The final writing assignment for the semester is to write a more formal, 12-18 page 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. Your blog posts will be useful for beginning to plan your paper, which will be due on **Wednesday, May 6**.

**Schedule of Readings**

**January 13**

Organization; assignment of readings; introduction to Wordpress

**January 20**


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\(^1\)If you would like to read more about how to maintain a blog or website for your professional work, see Ryan Cordell’s [Profhacker post](#), “Creating and Maintaining a Professional Presence Online: A Roundup and Reflection.” Some examples of good history blogs maintained by graduate students or junior faculty members are [Religion in American History](#), [U.S. Intellectual History](#), and [The Junto](#).


**January 27**


Elizabeth Varon, *Disunion! The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789-1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010)

February 3

http://jah.oxfordjournals.org/content/101/2/503.full

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

Timothy Shenk, “Apostles of Growth,” *The Nation* online, November 5, 2014,
http://www.thenation.com/article/188369/apostles-growth


February 10


Keith: Matthew Guterl and Christine Skwiot, “Atlantic and Pacific Crossings: Race, Empire, and ‘the Labor Problem’ in the Late Nineteenth Century,” Radical History Review 91 (Winter 2005), 40-61


February 17


W. Fitzhugh Brundage, Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930 (University of Illinois Pres, 1993)


Ashley: David Oshinsky, “*Worse Than Slavery*: Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice” (New York, Free Press, 1996)


**February 24**

NO CLASS: Meet with me one-on-one to discuss paper ideas

**March 3**

NO CLASS: Spring Break

**March 10**

March 17


March 24


March 31


April 7

NO CLASS. Work on final papers

April 14


April 21


May 6

Final Papers Due by 5 p.m.