

History 180  
Spring 2009  
Wed. 2:45-5:30  
Humanities 202

Professors Aisenberg and Liss  
Hum. 213 and 214  
Office hrs: AA: W 12-1; JL: M 2-3, Th. 3-4

### Proseminar: What is History?

This course is designed to introduce students to the varieties of historical research, interpretation, and writing. Through a focus on recent and prominent works of history, drawn from different historical specialties and representing different methodological approaches, the course will address fundamental questions such as: Why do we study and write history? What defines history as a unique discipline of investigation and knowledge? What constitutes historical evidence, and what are the debates about the criteria for recognizing historical facts and evidence? What is the relationship between politics and historical writing (for example, race, colonialism, or gender)? Are pre-established ideas and values necessary for, commensurate with, or antithetical to the pursuit of historical research and writing?

The following books are available at Huntley's Bookstore and on reserve at Honnold Library

Richard Hofstadter, Anti-Intellectualism in American Life

Annette Gordon-Reed, The Hemingses of Monticello

Thomas Bender, The Antislavery Debate

Niall Ferguson, Empire

Dipesh Chakrabarty, Provincializing Europe

Jonathan Spence, The Question of Hu

David Nirenberg, Communities of Violence

John Demos, Entertaining Satan

Natalie Davis, The Return of Martin Guerre

Joan Scott, The Politics of the Veil

Course requirements and grades:

This class will be run as a seminar. This means you should come to class prepared to discuss the readings. Written responses to the reading are due at the beginning of class. Each student will be allowed to turn in one late without penalty. Students will also be responsible for introducing course material; we will discuss the logistics for this in class.

Participation (including class intro): 30%

Weekly reading responses: 30%

Final essay (due May 13): 40%

- I. Jan. 21 Introduction
- II. Jan. 28 Richard Hofstadter, Anti-Intellectualism in American Life
- III. Feb 4 Annette Gordon-Reed, The Hemingses of Monticello
- IV. Feb 11 Thomas Bender, The Antislavery Debate
- V. Feb 18 Niall Ferguson, Empire
- VI. Feb 25 Dipesh Chakrabarty, Provincializing Europe
- VII. Mar 4 Jonathan Spence, The Question of Hu
- VIII. Mar 11 David Nirenberg, Communities of Violence
- Spring Break
- IX. Mar 25 John Demos, Entertaining Satan
- X. Apr 1 Natalie Davis, The Return of Martin Guerre  
Finlay, "The Refashioning of Martin Guerre" (Sakai)  
Davis, "On the Lame" (Sakai)
- XI. Apr 8 no class: final paper proposals due (conferences tba)
- XII. Apr 15 Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" and "Preface"  
AHR Forum: "Revisiting 'Gender'" (Sakai)
- XIII. Apr 22 Joan Scott, The Politics of the Veil
- XIV. Apr 29 presentations
- XV. May 6: presentations (graduating seniors' papers due in class)
- Final papers due: May 13