

HONOURS SEMINAR: HISTORICAL METHODS

SPRING 2010

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This course introduces students to various analytical frameworks that have shaped contemporary historians' work. Students will examine both the theoretical justifications historians have given, and the practical concerns historians have faced, in selecting these frameworks for analysis. Perhaps the most important question with which students will grapple is: How have historians mined their sources in order to give credence to their representations of the past? Students will discover that, regardless of the contexts they are examining and the sources they are employing, particular problems of interpretation and representation arise time and time again among practitioners of the discipline.

Evaluation:

Weekly responses 25%

Book review (due February 12, 2010) 25%

Thesis proposal (due April 16) and annotated bibliography (due March 19) 30%

Class participation 20%

Weekly responses: Students are expected to write a 500-word response to each week's readings, and submit that response by e-mail attachment to the professor **by noon on the Thursday before each class**. Please submit the response **in Microsoft Word format only**. The response may venture to critique the readings, ask questions about ideas contained therein, or simply identify points of particular interest that the student thinks worthy of discussion in class. What are the author's concerns? What are the assumptions that inform the work? What are the author's sources, and how has the author used those sources?

Book review, annotated bibliography, and thesis proposal: Through the term, in consultation with the professor, History 400 students will develop proposals for their honours theses. The proposal, **due on April 16, 2010**, will identify the research materials upon which the student intends to draw, as well as the analytical frameworks that have dominated historical writing in the particular area of the student's research. Having discussed these frameworks, students will then propose how they intend to engage with and move beyond previous approaches to their area of research, with reference to the works discussed in the seminar. The book review, **due on February 12, 2010**, will offer students an opportunity to examine in-depth one of the recent, dominant works in their field of research. The annotated bibliography, **due on March 19, 2010**, will ensure that students are concerned not only with the depth but, further, with the breadth of their research.

Presentation: Students will give fifteen-minute presentations on their thesis proposals during one of the final two seminars. Presentations will be followed by ten- to fifteen-minute question-and-answer sessions in which peers are encouraged to offer constructive criticism.

Class participation: Discussion and debate are the foundation of the work students will undertake in this course. Students are expected to arrive each Friday having carefully scrutinized the readings for the week, and prepared to offer an analysis and critique of each of those readings. The function of the professor is to moderate debate, to offer suggestions for directions of discussion, and to provide context for the readings. The professor expects students to leave no received notion or conventional wisdom unchallenged. Attending class is, thus, understandably, an integral part of the course. Unexcused absences from class will lead to a failing grade in the course as a whole. Please consult the instructor BEFORE SEMINAR should you have to miss classes for health or family reasons. Completion of the readings before class and a consistent effort to contribute to class discussions will be rewarded with high marks in this category. Lateness and poor preparation for class will be penalized.

Course regulations: I will not tolerate cheating or plagiarism. These are extremely serious academic offences which may lead to loss of credit, suspension, expulsion from the University, or the revocation of a degree. In student papers, it is essential that there be correct attribution of authorities from which facts and opinions have been derived. If you are having trouble with a concept or assignment, meet with the instructor well before the relevant deadlines. Keep in mind that poor, but legitimate, performance in a given assignment is far preferable to jeopardizing your academic career through fraud. All students in this class are to read and understand SFU policies on plagiarism and academic honesty. Ignorance of such policies is no excuse for violations.

Term schedule:

January 8, 2010 • **Introduction**

History “in the Raw”?

January 15, 2010 • **Thick Description**

The Night Battles by Carlo Ginzburg

January 22, 2010 • **Memory**

The Drowned and the Saved by Primo Levi

January 29, 2010 • **Narration**

The Orange Trees of Baghdad by Leilah Nadir

Theorizing History

February 5, 2010 • **Materialism**

The Communist Manifesto by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/index.htm>

“Estranged Labour,” *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* by Karl Marx

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm>

February 12, 2010 • **World Systems**

World Systems Analysis: An Introduction by Immanuel Wallerstein

February 19 and February 26, 2010 • **No Classes**

March 5, 2010 • **Commodity as Case Study**

Sweetness and Power by Sidney Mintz

March 12, 2010 • **Race**

The Problem of Race in the 21st Century by Thomas Holt

March 19, 2010 • **Gender**

The Family Romance of the French Revolution by Lynn Hunt

March 26, 2010 • **Power**

Discipline and Punish by Michel Foucault

April 2, 2010 • **The Historian’s Role**

Representations of the Intellectual by Edward Said

April 9 and April 16, 2010 • **Presentations**