U.S. History Graduate Colloquium, 1890 -present

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University of Notre Dame, Fall 2008  
Office Hours by appointment #631-6642  
100 O'Shaughnessy

All class sessions are in 207 O'Shag, Fridays, 2-4 pm

The colloquium is an intensive survey of historical writing on American history from the late nineteenth century forward. My interests obviously shape the syllabus, and this means that certain vital topics—such as economic history, foreign relations, environmental history and demographics—are underplayed. Still, the reading should introduce you to many of the most important discussions now shaping the historiography.

This course presumes no prior knowledge but a solid general sense of U.S. history is obviously necessary. Consult a good textbook occasionally—I like America: Past and Present by Divine et al. and The Great Republic, Bailyn et al—if you find yourself fuzzy on the details. Also, a terrific resource for any student of American history is A Companion to American Thought, Richard Wightman Fox and James Kloppenberg, eds. The library has a copy in the reference area, but you should buy it.

I. Requirements:

A. Students will be expected to attend each session, prepare for the week’s reading and participate in class discussion. All absences **must** be excused.

B. Each week, one or two student(s) will begin that week’s discussion by preparing a 15 minute presentation (no longer—try it out first) that assesses why the book/article is (or is not) important; vital issues in the literature on that topic and methodological questions presented by the reading. The student beginning the discussion will also look at the supplementary readings and (briefly) integrate those works into his/her presentation. The final result should be a roughly 7-10 page essay, but you will be graded primarily on your oral presentation.

C. Two eight page historiographical essays will also be due over the course of the term. These essays will use at least two and perhaps more of the readings to address particular themes or issues that strike you as important. The essays are of the sort that one might find in Reviews in American History or the New York Review of Books. (Look at each journal if you are unsure.) Due dates are not negotiable, beyond family illness or a serious matter of that sort.
Books are available at the bookstore and on reserve at Hesburgh Library. Most articles are available for download (or in a few instances we will make copies). Please bring reading materials to class.

II. Course Schedule:

August 29: Global History


September 5: Reform


Supplementary Reading:

Linda Gordon

Theda Skocpol


September 12: Modern Thinking

Supplementary Reading:


Robert Westbrook, John Dewey (biography)

**September 19: No Class**

**September 26: Workers and Race** (Guest hosts: Gail Bederman and Marc Rodriguez)

Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture*, (Berkeley, 1997); Eric Arneson, “Whiteness and the Historians’ Imagination,” *International Labor and Working Class History* 60 (Fall 2001), 3-92; Robin Kelly, “‘We are Not What We Seem’: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South,” *Journal of American History* 80 (June 1993), 75-112

Supplementary Reading:


Bruce Nelson, *Divided We Stand*, (New York, 2001)


**October 3: America Assessed**


Thomas Haskell, *The Emergence of Professional Social Science: the American Social Science Association and the Nineteenth Century Crisis of Authority*, (Urbana, 1977)

**October 10: Workers and Consumers**


**Supplementary Reading:**


**Essay #1 Due**

**October 17: Belief**


**Supplementary Reading:**


**October 24: No Class—Fall Break**
October 31: New Deal Liberalism


Supplementary Reading:


Bruce J. Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Farm Belt*, (1991)

November 7: The Cold War and the New International History


Supplementary Reading:


November 14: Race, City and Suburb


**Supplementary Reading:**

Mike Davis, *City of Quartz*, (1992)


**November 21: Liberalism Challenged**


**Supplementary Reading:**


**November 28: No Class—Thanksgiving**

**December 5: Citizens and Americans** (evening session at 1010 N. Notre Dame Avenue)

Supplementary Reading:


**Essay #2 Due**