

**History 535: Historiography
(Online Graduate Seminar)
Fall 2020
Dr. Alexander Olson
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Office hours: any weekday by appointment

Course Description:

This course will offer a critical introduction to historiography, which is the study of historical scholarship and how it has changed over time. In other words, historiography is the history of history. We will examine the historical profession—both in the United States and around the world—and how its debates, methodologies, modes of publication, and relationship to the public have shaped ideas about the past. In particular, we will focus on texts that unsettle conventional wisdom about the past and illuminate the contested nature of historical knowledge. In addition to laying the groundwork for graduate study in the History M.A. program, this course will prepare students to incorporate historiographical debates into their teaching and research across a range of geographic and chronological fields.

Required Texts:

- Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).
- Garrett Graff, *The Only Plane in the Sky: An Oral History of 9/11* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019).
- Tiya Miles, *Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005)
- Tamara Giles-Vernick, *Cutting the Vines of the Past: Environmental Histories of the Central African Rain Forest* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002).
- Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013 ed.).
- Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).
- Shana Bernstein, *Bridges of Reform: Interracial Civil Rights Activism in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- Renee Romano and Claire Potter, eds., *Historians on Hamilton: How a Blockbuster Musical is Restaging America's Past* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018).
- All other readings will be scanned and posted to Blackboard.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Situate historical knowledge within the shifting historiographical and methodological contexts that produced it.
2. Practice graduate-level analytical and writing skills.
3. Develop skills to identify and organize the scholarship of historical subfields in preparation for the History M.A. program's comprehensive exams.
4. Incorporate historiography into history teaching at the secondary and college levels.
5. Build connections to the historiographical debates that you have learned about, or are currently learning about, in other graduate history classes.

Assignments and Grade Breakdown:

The assignments for this class add up to exactly 1000 points. This allows you to calculate your final grade using the following scale. No grades will be rounded up or rounded down.

- A (90-100%, or 900-1000 points)
- B (80-89%, or 800-899 points)
- C (70-79%, or 700-799 points)
- D (60-69%, or 600-699 points)
- F (0-59%, or 0-599 points)

Assignments are broken into two broad categories, each worth half of your grade:

1) Discussions

Weekly discussion of reading—420 points (42% of grade)

Each week, you must write one 500-word-minimum original post (due by Wednesday at 11:59pm) and three shorter responses to your classmates' posts (due by Friday at 11:59pm). Please wait until Thursday to respond to your peers, which will give everybody time to post their opening remarks. Each week's discussion is worth a total of 30 points. Since this is a graduate course, I expect graduate-level work in discussion that demonstrates careful, critical, and constructive engagement with the readings as well as the posts of your classmates.

Engagement with peers—80 points (8% of grade)

At the end of the semester, I will go back through all fourteen discussion forums and assess the overall quality of your engagement with other students' ideas.

2) Essays

Starting point essay—worth 50 points (5% of grade)

Summarize, in one polished page of writing, your memory of how history was taught to you in high school. Was it presented more as a set of facts, or as an ongoing conversation? **Due 9/4**

Oral history essay—worth 100 points (10% of grade)

In the early weeks of the class, we will be reflecting on the challenges of using primary sources. For this essay, you will use an event in the lives of your own family or friends to investigate the benefits and pitfalls of oral history. Select any event, either light-hearted or serious, that was experienced by five members of your personal network who are willing to be interviewed and recorded separately. After all five interviews are complete, compare the recordings and write a short essay (600-650 words) reflecting on how and why their stories diverged. **Due 9/18**

Teaching essay—worth 100 points (10% of grade)

Write a 500-525 word reflective essay on how this semester's work might influence your approach to teaching a history class in the future. What assumptions are disrupted by paying attention to historiographical debates? Any students who do not plan to pursue careers in teaching can work with me to develop an alternative version of this assignment. **Due 12/4**

Final historiographical essay—worth 250 points (25% of grade)

Write a 2500 to 3000-word essay drawing upon at least seven readings from our course. How do these readings reflect changing methodologies, objects of analysis, and intellectual priorities in the historical profession over the past several decades? **Due 12/9**

Policies

Online Policies:

Keeping up with the material is essential to doing well in this course. Be sure that you are prepared for a graduate-level workload; if you fall behind, it is very difficult to catch up. If you run into problems during the semester, be sure to talk to me as soon as possible. Your reading load for a typical week will include a book or several articles and chapters totaling approximately 110-180 pages. During the week, you will also contribute posts to the discussion forum on Blackboard and respond to other students' posts; it is best to think of these as short writing assignments. The technology requirements for this online class are modest. You will need access to a computer with a reliable internet connection to use Blackboard and to write and submit your assignments. You should also have a plan for an alternate way to connect to the internet in case of emergency. If you are unfamiliar with Blackboard, visit the Online Orientation for Online Learners at <http://www.wku.edu/online/orientation/index.php> before the course begins. If you have any problems using any of the online tools for this course, please contact me as soon as possible.

Academic Dishonesty:

Please contact me if you are facing a serious issue that will impede your ability to complete assignments on time. Acts of plagiarism or any other cheating will not be tolerated. Please read the relevant section of the WKU Student Handbook: www.wku.edu/handbook/academic-dishonesty.php.

ADA Notice:

In compliance with University policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center located in Downing Student Union, 1074. SARC can be reached by phone number at 270-745-5004 [270-745-3030 TTY] or via email at sarc.connect@wku.edu. Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a faculty notification letter (FNL) from The Student Accessibility Resource Center.

Sexual Misconduct/Assault:

Western Kentucky University (WKU) is committed to supporting faculty, staff and students by upholding WKU's Title IX Sexual Misconduct/Assault Policy (#0.2070) at <https://wku.edu/eoo/documents/titleix/wkutitleixpolicyandgrievanceprocedure.pdf> and Discrimination and Harassment Policy (#0.2040) at https://wku.edu/policies/hr_policies/2040_discrimination_harassment_policy.pdf.

Under these policies, discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct based on sex/gender are prohibited. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator, Andrea Anderson, 270-745-5398 or Title IX Investigators, Michael Crowe, 270-745-5429 or Joshua Hayes, 270-745-5121.

Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a faculty member, WKU faculty are "Responsible Employees" of the University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator. If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center at 270-745-3159.

Schedule

Weekly course structure:

This class includes no lectures, exams, or zoom meetings. Instead, your labor will be devoted to reading and written discussion. Each week will be structured as follows:

Monday and Tuesday: These days are reserved strictly for reading. During this time, Dr. Olson will post a set of framing remarks to guide the discussion.

Wednesday: Each student will submit a 500-word post (which can be longer if you wish) to the Blackboard discussion board.

Thursday and Friday: Each student will submit at least three comments (for a combined total of at least 500 words) responding to the posts submitted by your fellow students. Please note that you are not allowed to submit your responses early. This is to ensure that everybody has had time to write their initial post by Wednesday at 11:59pm. You are encouraged to check back several times on Thursday and Friday to keep up with the discussion.

Schedule of readings:

Aside from books required for purchase, all readings are posted in the “Content” section of Blackboard. Please contact me if you have any trouble accessing course materials this semester.

Week 1 (August 24-28): History and Historiography

- Ian Tyrrell, *Historians in Public: The Practice of American History, 1890-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 1-8 and 25-40.
- Richard White, “A Commemoration and a Historical Meditation,” *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 4 (March 2008): 1073-1081.
- Sam Wineburg, “Committing Zinns,” *Why Learn History (When It’s Already on Your Phone)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 51-71.
- Anand Giridharadas, “What to Do When You’re a Country in Crisis: A Review of Jared Diamond’s *Upheaval: Turning Points for Nations in Crisis* (2018),” *New York Times*, May 17, 2019.

Week 2 (August 31-September 4): Feminist History

- Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 1-50 and 93-112.
- Julia Mickenberg, *American Girls in Red Russia: Chasing the Soviet Dream* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 1-33.
- Brooke Blower, “V-J Day, Times Square, 1945,” *The Familiar Made Strange: American Artifacts after the Transnational Turn* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 70-87.
 - Starting point essay due by Friday, September 4, at 11:59pm.

Week 3 (September 4-11): Patrimonial Capitalism

- Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 237-242 and 377-429.
- Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *The Atlantic*, June 2014.

Week 4 (September 14-18): The Problem of Sources

- Peter Burke, "An Elusive Quarry," *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 1978), 103-130.
- Sam Wineburg, "Why Google Can't Save Us," *Why Learn History (When It's Already on Your Phone)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 139-159.
- Roy Rosenzweig, "Can History be Open Source? Wikipedia and the Future of the Past," *Journal of American History* 93, no. 1 (June 2006): 117-146.
- Martha Saxton, "Wikipedia and Women's History: A Classroom Experience" *Writing History in the Digital Age* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 86-94.
 - Oral History essay due by Friday, September 18, at 11:59pm.

Week 5 (September 21-25): Oral History

- Garrett Graff, *The Only Plane in the Sky: An Oral History of 9/11* (2019).
 - The author, Garrett Graff, will be speaking with our class by Zoom on Thursday, 9/24, at 4:00-4:45pm CT. Please let Dr. Olson know if you cannot make it to this discussion.

Week 6 (September 28-October 2): Rethinking the History of Sex and Marriage

- Sarah Pearsall, *Polygamy: An Early American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 1-17 and 115-149.
- Nancy Cott, "Monogamy as the Law of Social Life," *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 105-131.
- George Chauncey, "Trade, Wolves, and the Boundaries of Normal Manhood," *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (1994), 65-97.

Week 7 (October 5-9): Slavery in the Cherokee Nation

- Tiya Miles, *Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 1-84, 100-128, 191-203, and 207-213.

Week 8 (October 12-16): The Native New World

- Michael Witgen, "The Long Invisibility of the Native New World," *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 1-21.
- Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (Yale University Press, 2008), 1-17 and 141-180.
- Brian DeLay, "Forgotten Foes," *Berkeley Review of Latin American Studies* (Fall 2010): 14-19.

Week 9 (October 19-23): Ways of Mapping and Knowing

- Tamara Giles-Vernick, *Cutting the Vines of the Past: Environmental Histories of the Central African Rain Forest* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 1-68.
- Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire* (New York: Picador, 2019), 3-19.
- Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands," in Vijay Naidu, et al., eds., *A New Oceania: Rediscovering Our Sea of Islands* (University of the South Pacific, 1993), 2-16.
- Caroline Dodds Pennock, "Aztecs Abroad? Uncovering the Early Indigenous Atlantic," *American Historical Review* 125, no. 3 (June 2020): 787-814.

Week 10 (October 26-30): Microhistory

- Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013 ed.), 1-121.

Week 11 (November 2-6): The Politics of Murder in Eastern Europe

- Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016), 1-15.
- Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), vii-xix, 1-58 and 155-223.
- Daina Eglitis and Michelle Kelso, "Why Are So Many Eastern Europeans Suddenly Celebrating Nazi Collaborators?" *Zocalo Public Square*, May 29, 2019.

Week 12 (November 9-13): Building a Toolbox for Teaching History

- Jessamyn Neuhaus, "Strange, Specific Stuff," *Geeky Pedagogy: A Guide for Intellectuals, Introverts, and Nerds Who Want to Be Effective Teachers* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2019), 1-19.
- James Lang, "Motivating," *Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2017), 167-193.
- Create an account, browse the website, and download and examine at least one sample lesson from the Stanford History Education Group: <https://sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons>

Week 13 (November 16-20): Teaching Civil Rights History

- Barbara Ransby, "The Preacher and the Organizer: The Politics of Leadership in the Early Civil Rights Movement," *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 170-208.
- Shana Bernstein, *Bridges of Reform: Interracial Civil Rights Activism in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3-15, 60-137, and 185-207.

Week 14 (November 23-27): Thanksgiving Break

- No readings or discussion.

Week 15 (November 30-December 4): Teaching *Hamilton*

- Watch: Lin-Manuel Miranda, Performance at White House, May 12, 2009.
- Listen: *Hamilton: An American Musical* (2015). Available for free streaming.
- Renee Romano and Claire Potter, eds., *Historians on Hamilton: How a Blockbuster Musical is Restaging America's Past* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018), 1-14, 58-115, and 260-276.

Final Writing Deadlines:

- Friday, December 4, at 11:59pm: Teaching essay
- Wednesday, December 9, at 11:59pm: Final historiographical essay