

## History 535: Historiography

Fall 2024

Western Kentucky University

(Web Course)

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Office hours: any weekday by appointment

### Course Description:

This course will offer an introduction to the study of historical scholarship and how it has changed over time. If the term “history” refers to the past itself, “historiography” refers to scholarship about the past. We will examine the historical profession in the United States and how its debates, methodologies, modes of publication, and relationship to publics have shaped ideas about the past. We will focus on texts that unsettle conventional wisdom about history and illuminate the contested nature of historical knowledge. The books and articles chosen for this class offer a range of competing explanations for change over time, which often hinge on competing arguments about which categories of analysis and historical frameworks are most important for the historian’s toolkit. These arguments, in turn, raise thorny but important questions about the relationship between political activism and historical scholarship. As one of two core courses 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:

- Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife’s Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).
- Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesars Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005).
- Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).
- Brooke Blower and Mark Bradley, eds., *The Familiar Made Strange: American Icons and Artifacts after the Transnational Turn* (Cornell University Press, 2015).
- Annette Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1997).
- Alondra Nelson, *The Social Life of DNA: Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation after the Genome* (Beacon Press, 2016).
- Harriett Ritvo, *The Platypus and the Mermaid and Other Figments of the Classifying Imagination* (Harvard University Press, 1997).
- Danielle McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance* (Vintage Books, 2010).
- Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019).
- Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: NYU Press, 2011).
- All other readings will be scanned and posted to Blackboard.

## **Course Structure**

This course will be taught asynchronously, which means there is no specific time when everybody will be logged on simultaneously. You should think of this class as a graduate-level book club where we will analyze, critique, and discuss the readings.

**Monday and Tuesday:** These days are reserved strictly for reading. On Tuesday night, I will post a set of framing remarks to guide the discussion.

**Wednesday:** Each student will submit a 500-word post to the Blackboard discussion board.

**Thursday and Friday:** Each student will post a minimum of 500 words spread across at least three comments responding to the posts submitted by your fellow students.

## **Assignments**

Grades and instructor feedback can be found in the Grade Center section of Blackboard. Please contact me if you are unable to access grades or feedback. There are 100 total points, and the grading scale is as follows: A (90-100 points), B (80-89 points), C (70-79 points), D (60-69 points), F (0-59 points).

### **1) Weekly discussion of reading—52 points (52% of grade)**

Each week, you will submit a 500-word post (which can be longer if you wish) to the Blackboard discussion board. Your post is due by Wednesday at 11:59pm. In addition, you will submit at least three comments responding to the posts submitted by your fellow students. Responses are due by Friday at 11:59pm. Each week's discussion forum is worth a total of 4 points. These points are divided between your Wednesday post (2 points) and your responses (2 points). There are 13 discussion forums this semester.

### **2) Midterm Oral Exam—8 points (8% of grade)**

Each student will sign up for a 20-minute Zoom appointment that will take place during week 8 (October 9-11). In this meeting, you should be prepared to answer questions about the reading for week 8 (4 points) as well as the first seven weeks of the class (4 points). After the meeting, students should submit a one-paragraph self-evaluation and proposed grade to the Assignments section. Note: there will be no written component of the discussion board during week 8.

### **3) Comprehensive Exam Practice—40 points (40% of grade)**

All History MA students are required to complete a comprehensive exam in their final semester. The comprehensive exam is divided into two portions (written and oral). This assignment is designed as practice for your exam. Each part is worth 20 points.

**Part 1—Written:** Please select six texts (books or articles) from this course. Then, in an essay of 1000-1200 words, explain the differences in their arguments about historical change? What does each author consider to be the driving forces of history? How is this reflected in their choice of sources? How do they view the relative significance of ideology, economics, race, gender, or other factors in shaping historical outcomes? Your essay does not require any outside sources beyond the books chosen for this essay. **Due 12/2.**

**Part 2—Oral:** Each student will sign up for a 20-minute Zoom appointment in the window of Dec. 3-5. In this meeting, you should be prepared to answer questions about any facet of the class, including follow-up questions about your essays. You will be expected to demonstrate command of the historiography. The process for signing up for a specific time will be announced later in the semester.

**Learning Outcomes:**

1. Develop skills to identify and organize scholarship in preparation for your comprehensive exams.
2. Practice graduate-level analytical and writing skills.
3. Incorporate historiography into history teaching at the secondary and college levels.
4. Build connections to the historiographical debates that you have learned about, or are currently learning about, in other graduate history classes.

**Technology Requirements:**

Students are required to have access to a computer and reliable Internet connection to write and submit your assignments. If you are unfamiliar with Blackboard, visit the [Orientation for Online Learners](#) before the course begins.

**AI Policy:**

Generative AI can be a powerful tool for helping you learn, but it can't replace the learning process. Think of the help you get from tools like ChatGPT as a much less sophisticated version of the assistance you can receive from a colleague who offers to read a draft of your writing. That person might legitimately ask you a question to jump-start your imagination or identify a poorly organized paragraph, but they should never do the writing for you. A major difference here, of course, is that ChatGPT is not a person. It is a machine which is adept at recognizing patterns and reflecting those patterns back at us.

Some key points to keep in mind when using generative AI tools:

- **Be yourself:** The core principle of the AI policy for this class is that you may not use AI tools to imitate yourself. Although this is an online class, we are a community of humans, and we expect to be interacting with fellow humans. All other guidelines flow from this principle.
- **Quality of your prompts:** The quality of its output directly correlates to the quality of your input. Practice "prompt engineering" by refining your prompts to improve outcomes.
- **Fact-checking:** Assume AI outputs are wrong unless you cross-check the claims with reliable sources. You will find (or may already know) that ChatGPT confidently and routinely provides false information. You will be responsible for any errors or omissions in your work.
- **Full disclosure:** AI must be cited like any other external source. You may not use entire sentences or paragraphs suggested by an app without providing quotation marks and a citation, just as you would for any other source. You must also cite any outputs that you have edited or paraphrased. Citations should take this form:

ChatGPT, response to prompt: "Please explain what is meant by the term historiography"  
(August 16, 2024). <https://chat.openai.com/>

If your quotation is drawn from follow-up questions, include all prompts in the chain leading up to the relevant passage, even if the citation ends up being very long:

ChatGPT, response to prompts: "Please explain what is meant by the term historiography"; "Can you explain how Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *The Midwife's Tale* fits into each of these five areas?"; "Is microhistory still a trend?"; "When did historians start using it?" (August 16, 2024). <https://chat.openai.com/>

- Be aware that other classes may have different policies and may forbid AI use altogether.

I'm assuming we won't have any problems but want to make sure that the expectations are clear so that we can spend the term learning together—and not worrying about the origins of your work.

**Late Assignments and Academic Dishonesty:**

Timely participation on the discussion board is integral to this class. Late submissions that are unexcused will result in a penalty of 10 points per day. Acts of plagiarism or any other form of cheating will result in a failing grade. Please consult the [WKU Student Handbook](#).

**RSI Statement:**

The U.S. Department of Education requires that distance education courses must include regular and substantive interaction between students and faculty. For more information about RSI at WKU, please visit the [Regular and Substantive Interaction in Online and Distance Learning](#) webpage. In this course, regular and substantive interaction will take place in the following ways:

- Assignments and assessment deadlines that are spread throughout the term of the class,
- Announcements that frame weekly discussions and/or follow up on past discussions,
- Timely assessment and explanation of grade for individual weekly discussion posts,
- Detailed and constructive feedback on essay assignments, which identifies specifically what has been done correctly, needs improvement, or guides students to the next steps of learning.

**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](mailto:sarc.connect@wku.edu). Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor without a faculty notification letter from the Student Accessibility Resource Center.

**Pregnant and Parenting Students:**

Western Kentucky University does not discriminate against any student or exclude any student from its educational programs or activities on the basis of pregnancy and/or pregnancy-related conditions such as, but not limited to, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery therefrom. Students who seek pregnancy or pregnancy-related accommodations should make their requests as soon as possible via WKU's Title IX Website at [www.wku.edu/titleix/](http://www.wku.edu/titleix/) under "Pregnancy or Pregnancy-Related Conditions." Students can also contact the Title IX Coordinator, Ena Demir, via email at [ena.demir@wku.edu](mailto:ena.demir@wku.edu) or by phone at (270) 745-6867 to request accommodations or seek assistance. We encourage students and faculty to work together to establish a plan that allows the student to complete the class without jeopardizing academic integrity and course standards. The Title IX Coordinator can help facilitate conversations between students and faculty regarding appropriate and reasonable accommodations. If you are a WKU student and believe that you have experienced an incident(s) of discrimination or harassment based on pregnancy (or pregnancy related issues), please report it to the Title IX Coordinator via email at [ena.demir@wku.edu](mailto:ena.demir@wku.edu) or by phone at (270) 745-6867. Additional resources for pregnant and parenting students can be found on WKU's Title IX Website at [www.wku.edu/titleix/](http://www.wku.edu/titleix/).

**Title IX Discrimination and Harassment**

Western Kentucky University (WKU) is committed to supporting faculty, staff and students by upholding WKU's [Sex and Gender-Based Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation](#) (#0.070) and [Discrimination and Harassment Policy](#) (#0.2040). 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 Executive Director, Office of Institutional Equity/Title IX Coordinator, Ena Demir, 270-745-6867 or Title IX Investigators or Michael Crowe, 270-745-5429. 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

Aside from required books for purchase or rental, all readings are posted in the “Content” section.

### Week 1 (Aug 19-23): History and Historiography

- Richard White, “A Commemoration and a Historical Meditation,” *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 4 (March 2008): 1073-1081.
- Katherine Lennard, “The Running Stitch,” *Journal of American Studies* 52, no. 3 (2018): 893-912.
- Franco Moretti, “The Slaughterhouse of Literature,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (March 2000): 207-227.
- Howard Zinn, “A People’s War?” *A People’s History of the United States* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 407-442.
- Sam Wineburg, “Committing Zinns,” *Why Learn History (When It’s Already on Your Phone)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 51-71.

### Week 2 (Aug 26-30): Feminist History

- Joan Wallach Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1053-1075.
- 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.

### Week 3 (Sept. 2-6): Nationalist History

- Daniel Immerwahr, “Looking Beyond the Logo Map” and “Baselandia,” *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States* (New York: Picador, 2019), 3-19 and 355-371.
- Patrick Geary, “A Poisoned Landscape,” *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 15-40.
- Brian Rouleau, “Oh! Susanna,” *The Familiar Made Strange: American Artifacts after the Transnational Turn* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 21-32.
- Nick Cullather, “That Touch of Mink,” *The Familiar Made Strange: American Artifacts after the Transnational Turn* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 116-124.

### Week 4 (Sept. 9-13): Microhistory

- Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife’s Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (Vintage Books, 1990).

### Week 5 (Sept. 16-20): Collective Biography

- Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesars Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005).

### Week 6 (Sept. 23-27): Intersectional Histories

- Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

#### Week 7 (Sept. 30-Oct. 4): Hidden Histories

- Annette Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997).
- Gore Vidal, "Was Lincoln Bisexual?" *Vanity Fair* (January 2005).

#### Week 8 (Oct. 7-11): DNA as an Archive

- Alondra Nelson, *The Social Life of DNA: Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation after the Genome* (Beacon Press, 2016).
  - **Note:** There will be no written discussion posts this week, since we will be completing the Midterm Oral Exam. Each student will sign up for a 20-minute Zoom appointment.

#### Week 9 (Oct. 14-18): The Black Freedom Movement

- Danielle McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010).
- Barbara Ransby, "The Preacher and the Organizer," *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 170-208.

#### Week 10 (Oct. 21-25): The White Power Movement

- Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019).

#### Week 11 (Oct. 28-Nov. 1): History of Science

- Harriett Ritvo, *The Platypus and the Mermaid and Other Figments of the Classifying Imagination* (Harvard University Press, 1997).
- Ellen Stroud, "Does Nature Always Matter? Following Dirt Through History," *History and Theory* 42 (December 2003): 75-81.

#### Week 12 (Nov 4-8): History of Play

- Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: NYU Press, 2011).
- Brian Rouleau, "Empire's Amateurs," *Empire's Nursery: Children's Literature and the Origins of the American Century* (New York: NYU Press, 2021), 89-118.

#### Week 13 (Nov. 11-15): History of War

- Brian DeLay, "Forgotten Foes: The U.S.-Mexican War," *Berkeley Review of Latin American Studies* (August 2010): 14-19.
- Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End* (2016), 1-15.
- Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (2010), vii-xix.
- Max Fisher, "The Forgotten Story of Iran Air Flight 655," *Washington Post*, October 16, 2013.
- John Barry and Roger Charles, "Sea of Lies," *Newsweek*, July 12, 1992.
- Watch: "Public War / Secret War," *Nightline with Ted Koppel*, ABC News, July 1, 1992.

#### Week 14 (Nov. 18-22): 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 Digital Inquiry Group (formerly known as the Stanford History Education Group): <https://inquirygroup.org/history-lessons>

#### Week 15 (Nov. 25-29): Thanksgiving Break

- No readings or discussion.

#### Finals Week (Dec. 2-5): Final Practice Comprehensive Exams

- Written essay due on Monday, December 2, at 11:59pm central time.
- Oral exams will be scheduled for Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday.