

AMH 6199

Readings in Nineteenth Century U.S. History

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Tuesdays, periods 8-10, K-F 013

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office hours: TBD

Overview

This seminar serves as one of the department's three "foundation courses" in American history. The selected readings are intended as an introduction to the wide array of topics and methodologies that are of interest to historians of the 19th century. You will note that the list of required texts and book review titles includes a few fairly old classics, several monographs that have helped frame scholarly discourse over the last several years, and quite a few very new books that reflect the current state of the field. The books also divide between those written by very senior historians and first monographs by junior scholars. Much of our time will be devoted to placing these books into various historiographic conversations.

Assignments

Each student will be responsible for all of the following:

- ***Attend each class prepared to discuss the assigned readings.*** That should include preparing written notes (as opposed to relying on underlinings). Your notes should include issues that you would like to raise in discussion: points that you found interesting, problematic, surprising, and so on. You should walk into seminar prepared to help shape the discussion, rather than simply expecting to respond to the comments of others. On any given day I might call on any member of the class to set up the discussion with an overview of the main reading.
- ***Submit 3 to 5 discussion questions in response to each reading.*** This is a very important assignment. You should submit a brief (a paragraph) comment on the book, followed by 3-5 discussion questions. These should be questions that you believe will help generate an interesting discussion in class. (Not simple factual questions or "fill in the blank" queries.) You should preface your questions with some explanation of why you feel the topics are worth pursuing. These questions should be posted on our Canvas Page under "Discussions" by 10 pm on Tuesday before class. These questions should demonstrate that you have completed a close reading of the assignment, and have a sense of the crucial issues for discussion.
- ***Write two "review essays" discussing three titles (1,000 words).*** In most cases you will be responding to two books that we have read as a class, in conjunction with a third title on a related topic. The goal here will be to work on writing skills and also to focus on how books are often in conversation with each other, even when their topics are not identical. You will be able to choose from various topics noted below. These short review essays will be due in class on the day noted in the syllabus (so plan accordingly). You should feel free to mention additional titles, and to focus on two titles from the recommended list. But you should not use the same book in more than one essay, and you must select outside titles from books that you have not already read.

- **Write a take-home final essay (10-12 pages).** The question (or questions) will be distributed in advance. These essays will be due on the final day of class.
- **Help lead one class discussion.** You will work in pairs to help frame class discussions. Partners should meet together and then with me in advance of class to discuss the themes. Of course it would be wise to integrate the historiographic essays with the classes you are leading.

Grading

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| • Preparation and participation
[Includes leading class] | 40% |
| • Weekly questions | 10% |
| • Two Short Review Essays | 30% |
| • Final Essay | 20% |

Attendance and Deadlines

Needless to say, you are expected to attend each seminar meeting (on time!). Absence from more than one meeting will result in a major grade reduction. I have never had a student miss more than two class meetings, but I imagine that the consequences would be dire.

All deadlines are final. I do not give extensions or incompletes except in extraordinary cases of unanticipated personal or medical issues.

This class will not use technology. Please turn off your phones and computers before class begins.

Required Readings [dates are generally for latest version]

Nancy Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835*, 2nd Edition (Yale 1997). This is one of the true foundational texts in the study of antebellum America. Be sure to read the 2nd edition, including the new author's preface.

Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (JHU Press, 2009). This is a model for rethinking the meaning of labor history.

Eliot West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, & the Rush to Colorado* (University of Kansas, 1998). West's book won a stack of prizes. It combines a rethinking of western history with a superb analysis of environmental history.

Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Harvard, 1999). This is an immensely creative analysis of the New Orleans slave market, and an important rethinking of the notion of "agency" within the institution of slavery. (You will read an essay by Johnson "On Agency" this week as well.

Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge University Press, 2008). A superb reconsideration of the southern plantation household before, during, and after the Civil War. {Voted the favorite book last time I taught this class.}

Rachel Sheldon, *Washington Brotherhood: Politics, Social Life, and the Coming of the Civil War* (UNC, 2015). Sheldon revisits the antebellum political narrative, as examined through the lens of the Washington political community. This is her revised dissertation.

Kate Masur, *An Example for All the Land: Emancipation and the Struggle over Equality in Washington, D.C.* (UNC, 2012). Masur looks at the complex history of race and emancipation in the nation's capital. It lends itself to comparisons with both Shelden and Rosen.

Drew Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (Vintage, 2009). A quite brilliant study about the meaning of death in wartime, by the current president of Harvard.

Kathryn Meier, *Nature's Civil War: Common Soldiers and the Environment in 1862 Virginia* (UNC, 2015). This clever first book considers the American Civil War from the standpoint of the soldier's interactions with the environment. It is also a first book.

Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (UNC, 2009). Rosen raises a host of intertwined issues surrounding gender, race, and power. And, meanwhile, this book has a fascinating architecture. It is a great book for thinking about the art of doing history.

Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (Oxford, 2009). The study of the populists had seemed to be a dead topic until Postel wrote this great book.

Class Topics and Readings (all Tuesdays)

Tuesdays

1. January 10 Introduction
2. January 17 Nancy Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835*, 2nd Edition (Yale 1997).
3. January 24 Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (JHU Press, 2009).
STUDENT LEADERS: #1
4. January 31 Eliot West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, & the Rush to Colorado* (University of Kansas, 1998).
STUDENT LEADERS: #2
5. February 7 Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Harvard, 1999).
AND: Johnson, Walter. "On Agency" *Journal of Social History*, Volume 37, Number 1, Fall 2003, pp. 113-124.
STUDENT LEADERS: #3
6. February 14 Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).
PAPER OPTION #1: Slavery (Johnson, Glymph + at least one more title)
PAPER OPTION #2: Gender (Cott, Glymph + at least one other title)

7. February 21 Rachel Shelden, *Washington Brotherhood: Politics, Social Life, and the Coming of the Civil War* (UNC, 2015).
STUDENT LEADERS: #4
8. February 28 Kate Masur, *An Example for All the Land: Emancipation and the Struggle over Equality in Washington, D.C.* (UNC, 2012).
STUDENT LEADERS: #5
PAPER OPTION #3: Urban History (Rockman, Masur + at least one other title).
- March 7 SPRING BREAK
9. March 14 Drew Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (Vintage, 2009).
10. March 21 Kathryn Meier, *Nature's Civil War: Common Soldiers and the Environment in 1862 Virginia* (UNC, 2015).
PAPER OPTION #4: The Civil War (Faust, Meier + at least one other title)
PAPER OPTION #5: Environmental History (West, Meier + at least one more title)
11. March 28 Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (UNC, 2009).
PAPER OPTION #6: Race and Gender (At least 2 of Rosen, Glymph, Masur + at least one more title)
PAPER OPTION #7: Reconstruction and the Postwar World (Rosen, Masur + at least one other title)
12. April 4 Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (Oxford, 2009).
13. April 11 Hand out final exam questions. Discuss teaching the 19th Century.
14. April 18 Conclusions
TAKEHOME ESSAYS DUE IN CLASS