

## History 2100 — The Historian's Craft – Fall 2013

Prof. Peter Baldwin

Tues. and Thurs., 9:30 to 10:45

Office Hours (225 Wood Hall): T & Th, 2:15 to 3:15, and by appointment.

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### Course Objectives:

This course introduces students to the goals, methods, and tools of the historical profession. We will consider the writing of history as an act of interpretation, and we will examine the kinds of sources that historians use in constructing an interpretive argument. Although most of the readings focus on the daily lives of nineteenth-century Americans, the course is not "about" American history. It is about how history is written.

### Course requirements:

Plagiarism quiz: All students must receive at least an **80%** on the online quiz. Students will be given opportunities to repeat the test, but will not pass the course without successfully completing the test.

Ten Homework Assignments (30% of course grade): Students will complete at least ten of the homework assignments. If you submit more than ten you will be graded on your ten best, and you might get some extra credit. Homework assignments will be marked as "full credit" (two points), "half credit" (1 point), or "no credit."

Homework grades will be calculated as follows:

- 20 points = A
- 19 points = A-
- 18 points = B+
- 17 points = B
- 16 points = B-
- 15 points = C
- 14 points = C-
- 13 points = D
- 12 points = D-
- 11 points or fewer = F

(Extra credit: If you receive full credit on 11 or more assignments you will be marked as A+)

Midterm Exam (10% of course grade): The midterm will cover some of the fundamentals of researching and writing historical essays. (What is the difference between a primary and a secondary source? How do you write a proper footnote? What is a good thesis statement?)

Three short essays (40% of course grade): Students will complete at least three of the four short essays. Your two best essays will each count for 15%. Your third best will count for 10%. Students will have the option of rewriting one of their essays and resubmitting it at the end of the semester. Students cannot pass the course without receiving passing grades for at least two essays

Class Participation (15% of course grade): Students are expected to participate regularly, actively, and constructively in class discussions. Their class participation will be graded. Students will receive high grades for class participation only if they express informed judgments, pose questions, and respond to other students' comments. Students who rarely speak, or who show a lack of familiarity with the material, will not receive high grades. Perfect attendance and complete silence will merit a grade of "D." Students who spend class time attending to their electronic devices will see their grades significantly reduced; they also may be asked to leave the class. Students who do not regularly attend class or who are disruptive will not receive passing grades. No student will pass the course without receiving a passing grade for class participation.

Final Exam (5% of course grade). The final exam will cover material similar to the midterm.

### Books Available for Purchase:

- Benjamin, *A Student's Guide to History*
- Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett*
- Sandweiss, *Passing Strange*

## Ground Rules:

The syllabus sets out the basic requirements and schedule for the course, but students are responsible for any changes announced in class and on HuskyCT

Attendance at every class is expected. Frequent absence will inevitably affect your grade for class participation.

No disruptions, please. Students who are inattentive or who cause disruptions may be asked to leave the class session and will have their grades reduced. It is much better to be absent than to be inattentive or disruptive.

Please turn your electronic devices off. Class time is not to be used for talking on the phone, texting, playing games, listening to music, or using your computer in any way (unless otherwise directed). Inattention of this sort will result in sharply reduced grades. Students who cause repeated problems will be asked to leave the class.

Punctuality is important and expected. By arriving late, you cause a minor distraction for everybody. By doing so repeatedly, or by leaving before the end of class without notifying me in advance, you are likely to annoy me and reduce your grade for class participation.

Drinks are OK, but please don't eat in class unless you bring enough for everyone. Otherwise I might take away your food and eat it myself if it looks good.

Wandering out during class time is rude and disruptive. Please plan ahead to avoid unnecessary "personal breaks."

Students are expected to behave themselves in a way that shows courtesy to the instructor and to fellow students. Disagreements should be expressed in a respectful and constructive manner. Language or behavior that demeans or harasses other students will not be tolerated.

If you e-mail me with any questions, I will almost always respond within twenty-four hours. I will answer questions until 10:00 p.m. on the evenings before essays are due. Please be aware that e-mail is a form of professional correspondence that should be handled in a courteous manner. Please address me by name ("Dear Prof. Baldwin"), and close by giving your own name. Try to write in full sentences, with correct punctuation and spelling. (This is good practice for the real world). Etiquette is important, so choose your words carefully. If you are upset about something pertaining to class, e-mail is probably not the best way to discuss it. Please make an appointment to see me in person.

Late homework submissions will be penalized. Yes, I'm sure you have an excellent reason for being unable to submit your homework on time. (Your computer died, your cat died, your brain was eaten by zombies, etc.) It's not the end of the world if you don't get credit for it. There are fifteen homework assignments, and you will be graded only on your ten best. If you insist on submitting your homework late, it will receive half credit at best.

Students who encounter an emergency that prevents them from submitting an essay on time are required to discuss the matter with me in advance, if at all possible, or to notify me by voice mail (486-3854). For each weekday that an essay is late without permission, the grade will be reduced by a third of a grade (for instance from an A- to a B+). No essays will be accepted more than a week late without prior arrangement; students submitting essays more than a week late will receive an F for that assignment.

All essays must be typed, double-spaced, and in a normal-sized font. Please number the pages. Title pages, footnotes and endnotes do not count in the suggested page limits. Homework assignments may be written longhand, but must be plainly legible.

Please edit written work carefully for style, spelling, and grammar. Error-ridden writing will lower your grade.

All papers must be fully documented with endnotes (or footnotes) in Chicago style. In-text citations are not acceptable. Chapter 8 in Benjamin's *A Student's Guide to History* should be an adequate guide for citing the kinds of sources that you will be using in this class.

Students must produce their own, original work for this course. They should not recycle any part of their own work produced for any other course. Re-use of work from other courses is grounds for failing either the assignment or the entire course.

This should be obvious, but... plagiarism or academic dishonesty of any sort will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is the use of the ideas, organization, or words of another writer without giving proper credit. Any student found to have committed what I consider a serious act of plagiarism WILL FAIL THE COURSE. This rule is supported by the policy on academic integrity in the University of Connecticut's student code, and by the administration. I take this requirement very seriously and I actively hunt for plagiarism. If I catch you, I will not care about any excuses you may have. Don't plagiarize in this course! It's not worth the risk.

**Schedule** (please come to each class session having done the readings and assignments listed for that day)

Tues., Aug. 27: Introduction

Thurs., Aug. 29: Historical argument

- Read: Benjamin, *A Student's Guide to History*, pp. 1-13
- Read: Excerpts from Roosevelt and Boyer
- **Homework #1: Historians' interpretation of conflict on the frontier**

Tues., Sept. 3: Primary and Secondary sources

- Read: Benjamin, *A Student's Guide to History*, pp. 36-47, 62-66

Thurs., Sept. 5: The research process

- Read: Nelson, *Steel Drivin' Man, John Henry*, chaps. 1 and 2
- **Homework # 2: Questions on Nelson**

Tues., Sept. 10: Originality and plagiarism

- Read: David Plotz, "The Plagiarist: Why Stephen Ambrose is a Vampire," *Slate*, Jan. 11, 2002.  
<http://www.slate.com/id/2060618>
- American Historical Association, "Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct," (2005), sections 1 through 4  
<http://www.historians.org/pubs/free/professionalstandards.cfm>
- Stanley Fish, "Plagiarism is Not a Big Moral Deal," on "Opinionator," *New York Times*, Aug. 9, 2010.  
<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/08/09/plagiarism-is-not-a-big-moral-deal/>
- **Homework #3: Identifying the author's main point**

Thurs., Sept. 12: Citations

- Read: Benjamin, *A Student's Guide to History*, pp. 71-74, 79-80.
- **Plagiarism quiz via HuskyCT**
- **"Homework" #4 (to be done in class): Citations**

Tues., Sept. 17: Uncertainty

- Read: Trotti, "What Counts: Trends in Racial Violence in the Postbellum South"
- **Homework # 5: Questions on Trotti**

Thurs., Sept. 19: Newspapers as primary sources I

Tues., Sept. 24: Newspapers as primary sources II

- Read: Patricia Cline Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett*, chapters 1 and 2
- **Homework #6: Questions on Cohen**

Thurs., Sept. 26: Letters and diaries as primary sources I: Reading old handwriting

- Read: Benjamin, *A Student's Guide to History*, pp. 81-84, 98-109.
- **ESSAY #1: Newspaper articles**

Tues., Oct. 1: Letters and diaries as primary sources II: Analysis

- Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett*, Chapters 7, 12, and epilogue
- **Homework #7: More questions on Cohen**

Thurs., Oct. 3: Archives

- **Class meets at Dodd Center, Room 162. Bring your student ID.**

Tues., Oct. 8: Archives

- **Class meets at Dodd Center, main reading room.**
- **"Homework" # 8 (to be done in class): Questions on a document**

Thurs., Oct. 10: Discussion of Context

- Read: Separate assignments, by research area
- **Homework # 9: Contextualizing your document**

Tues., Oct. 15: MIDTERM EXAM

Thurs., Oct. 18: Archives (Optional)

- Class meets at Dodd Center, main reading room.

Tues., Oct. 22: Using databases

**ESSAY #2: Analysis of letters or diary entries**

Thurs., Oct. 24: Evaluating a Monograph I: What do reviewers do?

- Find and read reviews of Cohen, *Murder of Helen Jewett*
- **Homework # 10: Questions on book reviews**

Tues., Oct. 29: Genealogical sources

- **Homework # 11: Find that ancestor!**

Thurs., Oct. 31: Genealogical sources

- Read: Martha A. Sandweiss, *Passing Strange*, pp. 1-96
- **Homework # 12: Questions on Sandweiss**

Tues., Nov. 5: Evaluating a monograph II: Use of primary sources

- Read: Martha A. Sandweiss, *Passing Strange*, pp. 97-157
- **Homework # 13: More questions on Sandweiss**

Thurs., Nov. 7: Evaluating a monograph III: Use of context

- Read: Martha A. Sandweiss, *Passing Strange*, pp. 158-306

Tues., Nov. 12: Visual sources

- **ESSAY #3: Analytical book review**

Thurs., Nov. 14: Photographs

- Borchert, excerpt from *Alley Life in Washington* (HuskyCT).
- **Homework # 14: Questions on Borchert**

Tues., Nov. 19: Political cartoons

- **Homework # 15: Analysis of a political cartoon**

Thurs., Nov. 21: Illustrations

- Read: Brown, *Beyond The Lines*, chap. 3 (via HuskyCT)
- Review and select an illustration; come prepared for "show and tell"

Tues., Dec. 3: Material culture

- **ESSAY #4: Analysis of an illustration**

Thurs., Dec. 5: Revising an argument

**Rewrites due at the time of the Final Exam.**