

	Course	HIST 6300 – Historical Methods
	Professor	Natalie J. Ring
	Term	Fall 2025
	Meetings	Tuesday, 4:00-5:45 pm

Professor Contact Information

Phone: 972-883-2365

E-mail: nring@utdallas.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday, 2:00-3:30 pm in JO 5.102 or by appointment

Course Description

HIST 6300 is a required course for students pursuing the M.A. or PhD in History or an elective for students seeking an MA and PhD in the Humanities. The course is designed to introduce students to the study of history as a question-framing and problem-solving discipline. Historians do more than tell stories; they interpret what happened in the past using archival material, primary source texts, and scholarly works written by other historians. This course is designed to introduce students to an assortment of methodological approaches, research strategies, and theoretical frameworks used by historians. The course will also focus on how the field of history has developed as a discipline. Occasional guest professors from the history faculty at UTD will participate in the discussion and share their expertise.

Required Books

You are encouraged to buy a hard copy of the book or purchase an ebook that allows you to identify page numbers and footnotes easily. Kindle or ebook type readers will not serve you well in the course as we will frequently be analyzing sections of a book or a footnote together in class—you should be able to move quickly back and forth within a book.

1. Claire Rydell Arcenas, *America's Philosopher: John Locke in American Intellectual Life*. University of Chicago Press, 2024. ISBN # 978-0226820415
2. Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States 1880-1917*. University of Chicago Press, 1996. ISBN # 978-0226041391
3. Aaron Freundschuh, *The Courtesan and the Gigolo: The Murders in the Rue Montaigne and the Dark Side of Empire in Nineteenth-Century Paris*. Stanford University Press, 2017. ISBN # 978-1503600829
4. Marisa Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. ISBN # 978-0812224184
5. Sara Maza, *Thinking About History*. University of Chicago Press, 2017. ISBN # 978-0226109336

6. Michel-Rolph Truillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (20th Anniversary Edition) ISBN # 978-0807080535

7. Daniel Lord Smail, *On Deep History and the Brain*. University of California Press, 2007
ISBN # 9780520258129

8. C. Vann Woodward (and William S. McFeely with the afterword), *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. Oxford University Press, commemorative edition, 2001. ISBN #978-0195146905 (It is imperative that you purchase this edition as they are all substantially different from one another).

Required articles/essays

For access, click on the links in the course schedule. The syllabus is available on eLearning.

Semester Schedule

August 26 **Introduction**

Sept. 2 **Research Discussion with Natalie Ring regarding the final paper**

Sept. 9 **What is History?**

Readings: Maza, *Thinking About History*

Sept. 16 **Temporality**

Readings: Smail, *On Deep History*

[Daniel Lord Smail, "Neurohistory in Action: Hoarding and the Human Past," *Isis* 105, \(March, 2014\): 110-122](#)

Sept. 23 **Microhistory – guest visit by Michael Wilson**

Readings: Freundsuh, *The Courtesan and the Gigolo*

Sept. 30 **Memory and Power**

Readings: Truillot, *Silencing the Past*

[Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, "Still Unthinkable? The Haitian Revolution and the Reception of Michel-Rolph Truillot's *Silencing the Past*," *Journal of Haitian Studies* 19 \(Fall 2013\): 75-103](#)

Oct. 7 **Gender and Race (plus Foucault!) – guest visit by Dr. Anne Gray Fischer**

Readings: Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*

[Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91 \(1986\): 1053-1075](#)

[Joan Meyerowitz, "AHR Forum: A History of "Gender," *American Historical Review* 113 \(December 2008\): 1346-56](#)

Oct. 14 Oral History – guest visit with Dr. Paula Cuellar Cullar

Readings: [Keynote, 2024 Oral History Australia Conference, Prof. Allesandro Portelli \(video\)](#)

[Oral History Association Principles and Best Practices, Adopted 2018](#) (click on each section to read)

Prospectus is Due Friday, October 17 on eLearning by 6:00 pm

Oct. 21 Intellectual History (guest visit Dr. Daniel Wickberg)

Readings: Arcenas, *America's Philosopher*

[Daniel Rodgers, "Paths in the Social History of Ideas," in Joel Isaac et al., *The Worlds of American Intellectual History* \(New York: Oxford University 2017 Press\), 307-323](#)

Oct. 28 The Limits and Expansive Possibilities of the Archives

Readings: Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*

[Ashley Farmer, "In Search of the Black Women's History Archive," *Modern American History* 1 \(2018\): 89-93](#)

[Interview with Marisa J. Fuentes, *Black Perspectives*, African American Intellectual History Society](#)

[Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 26 \(June 2008\): 1-14](#)

Nov. 4 No Class – Work on Final Paper

Nov. 11 Presentism in History

Readings: Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*

[Howard Rabinowitz, "More Than the Woodward Thesis: Assessing the Strange Career of Jim Crow," *Journal of American History* 75 \(December 1988\): 842-56](#)

[C. Vann Woodward, "Strange Career Critics," *Journal of American History*, 75 \(December 1988\): 587-868](#)

Nov. 18 History, Politics, and Writing for the Public

Readings: [Joanne Freeman, "I'm a Historian. I See Reason to Fear—And to Hope" *The Atlantic*, August 17, 2020](#)

[Matthew Karp, History as End, 1619, 1776, and the Politics of the Past," *Harper's Magazine*, July 2021](#)

[James Sweet, "Is History History? Identity Politics and Teleologies of the Present," *Perspectives on History*, August 17, 2022](#) (read the author's note at the top only **after** you have read the piece)

[Malcolm Foley and Priya Satia, "Responses to 'Is History History,'" *Perspectives on History*, Sept. 7, 2022](#)

[Daniel Bessner, "The Dangerous Decline of the Historical Profession," *New York Times*, January 14, 2023](#)

Nov. 25 NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING BREAK

Dec. 2 How is AI Changing the Humanities and What Effect Will This Have on the Discipline of History?

Readings: To be determined. You can find these in a folder on eLearning

Dec. 9 Final Paper due at 5:00 pm and Dinner Celebration

Articles/Essays/Reviews

These are accessible by link in the course syllabus except for the last week. Just open the syllabus in eLearning and click on the title of the assignment you need. It is best to print these articles out and bring to class or have them available on your laptop for reference.

Course Requirements

A Note on "Artificial Intelligence and LLMs"

You are advised not to use AI or LLMs in any capacity (for research, brainstorming ideas, or help with writing such as the model Grammarly Plus). Basic spelling/grammar check on MS Word is allowed. Please note that MS Word may now be integrated with the AI system pilot so be careful of what you find.

Attendance and Participation

I will not be taking official attendance in this course. **However, you are strongly encouraged to attend class meetings as the success of a seminar depends on collective participation.** Your

class participation is worth 20% which is a fair amount of your final grade. Each student is expected to discuss the readings in an informed, thoughtful way and listen respectfully to the contributions of your colleagues. If you miss more than 1 class your attendance/participation grade will suffer. Each student should come prepared to offer at least two positive remarks and two criticisms of the readings.

Discussion Questions

Part of your participation grade includes submitting 3 questions about the readings that demonstrate you have thought about the material carefully. If there is a book assigned, you should derive at least 2 of your questions from the book. If there are more than 3 articles/essays/websites assigned you may choose which to focus on in crafting your questions

What makes a good question? Your question should not be a yes/no question or something you desire an answer to that is outside of the assigned readings. It should not be a question of curiosity. Questions should be interpretive in focus. Imagine that you are teaching the book/article and need to ask questions that enable students to understand the significance of the text. Craft questions that get at the specifics of the historian's interpretation, methodology, significance of source material etc. Fact questions can be asked verbally in class. These are worth 5% of your grade.

Questions should be submitted to eLearning by 3:00 pm on each Tuesday

Précis

Students will choose one of the books assigned this semester in the schedule and write a 750-1,000 word paper focusing on the analytical argument and themes. You will submit your précis via eLearning before we discuss the book in class. Please do not write on a book you have read before. All books are eligible for review. The précis is worth 15% of your grade.

Prospectus/Bibliography

You will be required to submit a 2-3 page prospectus/bibliography outlining the material you will consult for your final paper. Before submitting the paper you are responsible for scheduling a meeting with the professor in person or on Teams. The prospectus is then due on Friday, October 17 by 6:00 pm via eLearning. The prospectus/bibliography is worth 10% of your grade.

Final Paper

For your final assignment for this course, you will write a 12-14 page essay that examines and evaluates the work of one groundbreaking historian *of the modern era* in light of what we have studied this semester. The purpose is for you to acquaint yourself with the work of one major figure in the discipline of history and to gain a greater understanding of how historians work and think. The assignment can be found at the end of the syllabus. More information will be forthcoming.

The final paper is due **Tuesday, December 9 by 5:00 pm** on eLearning. Your final paper will be run through www.turnitin.com which detects plagiarism. The paper is worth 50% of your grade.

Additional Information

Health: UTD specific information can be found [here](#). Please speak with the professor as soon as possible if you have any difficulties this semester with covid or illness. My hope is that you and yours will remain healthy this semester. If you are sick, particularly with a respiratory illness it is best that you stay home. If you miss class due to illness or other family matters, please inform me ahead of time.

Comet Creed and Plagiarism

This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:

“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”

I expect students to abide by the comet creed, particularly when it comes to honesty and integrity. Cheating (plagiarism) is not allowed and breaks the Comet creed.

If you have questions or are confused about what plagiarism looks like please consult this excellent resource, [Harvard Guide to Using Sources](#).

Papers that include any text from an artificial intelligence tool (such as ChatGPT or others) are considered plagiarism.

According to university policy, if you engage in plagiarism, I am required to report you to the Office of Community Standards and Conduct. The OCSC has ruled that students who engage in this practice must fail the assignment even if they did not realize what they were doing was wrong. Please think twice before plagiarizing in this class.

Grades

Final grades in this seminar will be assigned based on the following work:

Participation	20%
Weekly Questions	5%
Précis #1	15%
Prospectus	10%
Final Paper	50%

Late work is penalized $\frac{1}{3}$ letter grade per day unless you speak to me ahead of time. If you need an extension it is always best to ask in advance.

The above descriptions, timelines, requirements, and regulations are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.

University policies and procedures relevant to this course can be found at:

<https://catalog.utdallas.edu/2013/undergraduate/policies/appendices/appendix1>

HIST 6310 - Final Paper Instructions

“...when we take up a work of history, our first concern should not be with the facts which it contains, but with the historian who wrote it.” – E.H. Carr

For your final assignment for this course, you will write a 15 page essay that studies and evaluates the work of one groundbreaking historian *of the modern era* in light of what we have studied this semester. The purpose is for you to acquaint yourself with the work of one major figure in the discipline of history and to gain a greater understanding of how historians work and think. Below, I have provided a list of historians from which you may choose. This list is not comprehensive, so you may select a historian not on the list, but please discuss it with me first.

Your paper should do the following:

- Present a brief intellectual biography of the historian: Where did he or she live and work? What topics did he or she research? What major historical works is she or he known for? What were the major (non-historiographical) influences on this historians' work? **This should account for no more than one page of your paper.**
- Place this historian in historiographical context: What were the major theoretical or scholarly influences on this historian? What school of thought or theoretical grounding does this historian emerge from? And/or: what school of thought did this historian help forge? What central historiographical interventions or contributions did this historian make? How has this historian shaped the field of history or his or her sub-discipline.
- Summarize and analyze two or three books written by this historian: What is this central argument of the works? How do these works make manifest the historian's theoretical approach, his or her influences, and/or his or her contributions to the field? What kinds of sources does this historian use and why? Do they have an identifiable methodological approach? You may choose to focus on one foundational book, but I want to see that you have read and thought about more than just one book written by your historian.
- Evaluate this historian's work by placing it in relationship to other historians who are in "direct conversation" (not literally but part of a methodological, theoretical, and historiographical approach) with your chosen historian's work. Are there other historians who have come before or after that are in agreement or disagreement with your historian? What is the central argument of the other historians? What strengths and/or weaknesses do they see in the main historian's work? In short, you are being asked to think about the historiography surrounding your main historian; in what ways are historians influential and how do historians talk about other historians?

In addition to any works written by your selected historians, you should use historiographical essays, book reviews, and other tertiary work written about your historian to complete your paper. It is best not to cite tertiary works in your paper.

Your paper should be structured like any good paper, with an introduction, body, and conclusion. You should not answer the questions listed above methodically; rather, they are there to guide your thinking. It is your choice how to organize your thoughts. You should include a title that offers a sense of what the paper is about. You should strive for clear and lively prose. You should use Chicago Manual of Style footnotes, as well as a bibliography (CMS style). Your pages should be

numbered and stapled together. Your final paper should be 3,500-4,000 words (roughly 15 pages). If you go over the word count you will not be penalized.

You will arrange for meeting with the professor during office hours or an independent MS Team meeting with the professor on Teams during the week of **September 22-28**. The meeting will be relatively brief. You should already have some idea of what historian you wish to work on (although it does not have to be definitive).

You will submit your 2-3 page prospectus (includes your description of the main historian by **October 17** on eLearning. Your prospectus should identify your main historian, the two books by other historians, what themes/arguments/issues you think are relevant to the historiography, and a tentative bibliography. At this point you will be locked into your choice. But please expect that you might end up adding additional material to the bibliography as you proceed.

The final paper is due **December 9** by **11:59 pm** on eLearning. Your final paper will be run through www.turnitin.com which detects plagiarism.

List of Historians (and some historically-minded scholars in other fields):

US Historians

Herbert Aptheker
 Bernard Bailyn
 Charles Beard
 Ira Berlin
 William Cronon
 Carl Deglar
 John Demos
 William Archibald Dunning
 Eric Foner
 Elizabeth Fox Genovese
 John Hope Franklin
 Eugene Genovese
 Steven Hahn
 Jacquelyn Dowd Hall
 Richard Hofstadter
 Robin Kelley
 Christopher Lasch
 T. Jackson Lears
 Jill Lepore
 Gerda Lerner
 Lawrence Levine
 Patricia Limerick
 Edmund Morgan
 Gary Nash

Mary Beth Norton
Nell Painter
David Roediger
Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr.
Carroll Smith-Rosenberg
Warren Susman
Laurel Ulrich
William Appleman Williams
Richard White
Sean Wilentz
Gordon Wood
C. Vann Woodward
Howard Zinn

European Historians

Benedict Anderson
Jacques Barzun
David Blackbourn
Marc Bloch
Christopher Browning
Jacob Burckhardt
Peter Burke
Peter Brown
Caroline Walker Bynum
R.G. Collingwood
Robert Darnton
David Brion Davis
Georges Duby
Geoff Eley
Sheila Fitzpatrick
Francois Furet
Peter Gay
Edward Gibbon
Wendy Goldman
Raul Hilberg
Christopher Hill
Gertrude Himmelfarb
Eric Hobsbawm
Lynn Hunt
Jonathan Israel
Paul Johnson
Tony Judt
Diane Koenker
Claudia Koonz

Thomas Kuhn
Theodor Mommsen
Peter Novick
Detlev Peukert
Richard Pipes
J.G.A. Pocock
Sarah Pomeroy
Donald Raleigh
Michael Rostovtzeff
Simon Schama
Joan Scott
Jonathan Sperber
Lawrence Stone
E.P. Thompson
Immanuel Wallerstein
Ulrich Wehler

Non-Western Historians

William Beezley
Dipesh Chakrabarty
Kenneth Dike
John Dower
Joseph Esherick
Carlos Fuentes
Ranajit Guha
Ping-ti Ho
Albert Hourani
Friedrich Katz
Philip Kuhn
Joseph Levenson
Ilan Pappé
Louis A. Pérez
André Raymond
Walter Rodney
W.W. Rostow