

Instructor: Caroline Marris
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Office Hours: *TBD*

Writing the Past: Historiography, Narrative, and Craft
CLASS DAY, TIME, & ROOM

Course Description

This course will introduce students to some of the great works of historiography – ancient texts, tomes on the Roman Empire, and crucial books on the French Revolution, among others – which are some of the most classic examples of history ever written. We will trace some of the many changes over time in how history has been told, from the ancient period through to the twenty-first century. As we read, we will embark on a deep study of the craft that is involved in writing history: how we arrange our evidence, how we construct our arguments, and, above all, how we can tell truthful and meaningful stories about the past. In this we will not only be reading academic works: creative nonfiction, pieces of journalism, historical fiction, and other artistic forms will all play a role in our coming to understand the various possible methods of 'doing' history. By the end of the semester, you will have chosen a research topic and experimented with at least three different narrative modes or styles in order to tell a historical story you are interested in, culminating in an extended final project. All of the syllabus readings will be available in excerpt/in full on Canvas (C), and in full on Reserve at Butler Library.

Assessment Criteria

- 25% participation** – attendance and speaking thoughtfully in class.
- 15% in-class writing assignments** – 5 in total, 3% each; see below for more details.
- 10% style experiment #1** – 2-3 pages, due at the start of class in Week 7.
- 10% style experiment #2** – 2-3 pages, due at the start of class in Week 10.
- 10% style experiment #3** – 2-3 pages, due at the start of class in Week 14.
- 30% final project** – at least 10 pages, due at the end of finals week.

All out-of-class writing assignments should be double-spaced in 12pt Times New Roman, have 1" margins, and use Chicago Style footnotes where necessary/appropriate.

My Policies

- **Attendance is mandatory.** If you miss a class because of illness, please obtain a doctor's note if you are able. Classes missed with a doctor's note or due to a documented personal emergency or religious observance will be considered excused absences, and your participation credit can be made up if you meet with me during my office hours or at another time to discuss the material you missed. You may also meet with me to make up credit for an unexcused absence, but you will only receive half-credit for the class. After two unexcused absences, your academic advisor will be informed and your grade will most likely suffer.

- **Communication makes the wheels go ‘round.** If you are ill, have an emergency, or cannot for any other reason attend class, please email me ASAP – even just a line or two – so I am aware of your situation and we can work out a plan going forward. The same goes for any questions you may have about class or assignments. I will always respond within 24 hours.
- **The purpose of a seminar is to participate!** I will keep an informal record of whether you are speaking, or not, in each session; it will be my goal and task to make our classroom as welcoming and stimulating as possible. If you feel uncomfortable participating for any reason, please let me know so we can better accommodate and encourage you.
- If you miss a class because of illness, a doctor's note would be appreciated (although I don't want you to be dragging yourself to the Health Center if you are very sick). Classes missed with a doctor's note will be considered excused absences, and your participation credit for them can be made up by answering a series of questions on that week's topics in writing. For any other types of absence, you may meet with me during my office hours or at another time to discuss the material you missed, which will make up half of your participation credit for that week.
- **You can use up to five ‘grace days’ this semester;** i.e. you can hand in assignments late with no penalty or explanation if you need extra time, totaling no more than five days (calculated by the half-day/every twelve hours). You may use all five on one paper, or spread them out to give you breathing room on smaller assignments. Just let me know in advance, if you can, if you intend to use them. These days will take the place of formal extensions.
- If you would like to dispute a grade you receive on any assignment, you may; but you must wait for 24 hours after receiving the grade before you email me to talk about it.
- You may use laptops in class, as we will be using them to write and/or you may read your PDF materials on them. If, however, I see that you are looking at or using any non-class related websites and applications during class time, I will ask you to put your computer away. Phone use will not be permitted during our discussions at any time.
- Our classroom will be one free of discrimination or hostility based on race, gender, religion, orientation, disability status, political outlook, age, class, or dress. University policies on these issues, as well as reporting mechanisms, can be found at <https://eoaa.columbia.edu/>.

University Policies

Columbia's Statement of Academic Integrity

The intellectual venture in which we are all engaged requires of faculty and students alike the highest level of personal and academic integrity. As members of an academic community, each one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity.

Any breach of this intellectual responsibility is a breach of faith with the rest of our academic community. It undermines our shared intellectual culture, and it cannot be tolerated. Students failing to meet these responsibilities should anticipate being asked to leave Columbia.

Disability Student Rights and Responsibilities

In order to ensure their rights to reasonable accommodations, it is the responsibility of students to report any learning-related disabilities, to do so in a timely fashion, and to do so through the Office of Disability Services. Students who have documented conditions and are determined by DS to need individualized services will be provided a DS-certified 'Accommodation Letter'. It is students' responsibility to provide this letter to all their instructors and in so doing request the stated accommodations.

Resources

- Columbia Links on avoiding plagiarism:
 - <http://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/dishonesty-plagiarism>
 - <http://library.columbia.edu/subject-guides/social-sciences/plagiarism.html>
- Chicago Citation Guide: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html
- Columbia Libraries: <http://library.columbia.edu/>
- Undergraduate Writing Center: <http://www.college.columbia.edu/core/uwp/writing-center>
- Encyclopedia Britannica: <http://www.britannica.com/>
- Wikipedia – **you may not directly cite a Wikipedia page as a source.** But it does have useful resources, including citations on each page and often very thorough timelines.

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Week 1: Introduction - History, Sources, Writing

How do we write 'history?' What does history consist of, and how do we structure the telling of it?

- Read: Peter Gay, "Style in History" (C)
- Read: Hayden White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact" (C)
- Read: R. G. Collingwood, excerpt of The Idea of History (C)

Week 2: Herodotus and the Ancients

Who wrote the 'first' histories, and how? How do we write about events so distant from our reality?

- Read: Herodotus, excerpt of The Histories (C)
- Read: Nino Luraghi, excerpt of The Historian's Craft in the Age of Herodotus (C)
- Read: Marguerite Yourcenar, excerpt of Memoirs of Hadrian (C)
- **In-class assignment #1:** write a description of a historical subject/place/person in the style of Herodotus. ~250 words.

Week 3: The Middle Ages and the Renaissance

Where did our concepts of the 'dark' ages, the 'middle' ages, and the 'modern' come from? Are these useful and sensible paradigms? How did historians view history and write it before and during the Renaissance?

- Read: Alfred Andrea, "The Myth of the Middle Ages" (C)
- Read: The Venerable Bede, "Life of St. Cuthbert" (C)
- Read: Olaus Magnus, excerpt of History of the Northern Peoples (C)

Week 4: The Enlightenment and Gibbon

What were the major changes in history during the 17th and 18th centuries?

- **THIS WEEK: tell us in class what topic you have chosen to focus on for the rest of the semester and your final project. This can be an historical event, person/group of people, movement, artifact, etc.**
- Read: Jerome Rosenthal, "Voltaire's Philosophy of History" (C)
- Read: David Hume, excerpt of The History of England (C)
- Read: Edward Gibbon, excerpt of The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (C)
- Read: Georg W. F. Hegel, excerpt of Lectures on the Philosophy of World History (C)

Week 5: Antiquarianism

Collecting and the organization of material items has had a huge impact on history for centuries. How do we organize knowledge and objects to the point where we can assemble them into a readable history?

- Read: Arnaldo Momigliano, "Ancient History and the Antiquarian" (C)
- Read: Horst Bredekamp, excerpt of The Kunstkammer and the Evolution of Nature, Art, and Technology (C)
- Read: examples from Lu Dalin's Kaogotu (C)
- **In-class assignment #2:** write an 'antiquarian' list of objects that exist in the world of your topic. What could they tell us about your subject? ~250 words.

Week 6: Writing Revolution

How do we tackle the great upheavals and world-changing events of history?

- Read: Robert Carlyle, excerpt of The French Revolution (C)
- Read: Jules Michelet, excerpt of Histoire de France on the Revolution (C)
- Read: William Sewell, excerpt of Logics of History, on the 'event' (C)
- **In-class assignment #3:** describe an Event with the drive and passion that we see in Carlyle and Michelet. ~250 words.

Week 7: The Nineteenth Century

The 19th century saw the rise of crucial movements such as Marxism, nationalism, and the professionalization of disciplines which drastically affected the writing of history... how?

- **DUE AT START OF CLASS: style experiment #1.**
- Read: Friedrich Nietzsche, excerpt of On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life (C)
- Read: Leopold van Ranke, excerpt of History of the Latin and Teutonic Peoples (C)
- Read: Joseph Roth, excerpt of The Radetzky March (C)

Week 8: Turns, Part 1 – Society, Gender, and Postcolonialism

How did major global changes in the twentieth century affect the writing of history? We will focus this week on the rise of sociology and women's/gender studies and the breakdown of European empires.

- Read: from *History Today*, “What Is Social History?” (CW, online)
- Read: Joan Kelly, “Did Women Have a Renaissance?” (C)
- Read: Edward Said, excerpt of Orientalism (C)
- **In-class assignment #4:** write about a figure or event in the historical field/topic you are studying that hasn't or wouldn't have received much attention before – a woman, life in a lower-class setting, a member of a minority or colonized community, etc. ~250 words.

Week 9: Turns, Part 2 – Culture, Memory, and Numbers

More on how history as a discipline has changed, and how we write now: this week, we focus on cultural histories, the field of memory studies, and the use of numbers and quantification in historical writing – or lack thereof.

- **DUE AT START OF CLASS: style experiment #2.**
- Read: Geoffrey Eley, “What Is Cultural History?” (C)
- Read: Martha Hodes, excerpt of My Hijacking (C)
- Read: Peter Coclanis, “History by the Numbers: Why Counting Matters” (C)

Week 10: The Biggest Questions – World History

Should we even try to write world or ‘global’ history? What are the advantages and the pitfalls of attempting such a monumental feat?

- Read: Arnold Toynbee, excerpt of A Study of History (C)
- Read: William H. McNeill, excerpt of The Rise of the West (C)
- Read: Kenneth Pomeranz, excerpt of The Great Divergence (C)

Week 11: History Without Evidence

What happens when we desperately want to tell a story, but we can't find the exact documentation we need to prove how it happened? Can writing up to, around, and behind histories can be as rich and provocative a project as having all the answers at your fingertips?

- Read: Jonathan Spence, excerpt of The Question of Hu (C)
- Read: John Demos, excerpt of The Unredeemed Captive (C)
- Read: Stephanie Smallwood, excerpt of Saltwater Slavery (C)
- **In-class assignment #5:** write about how you would tackle a problem of missing evidence to do with your topic. What could you write about instead to contextualize it? ~250 words.

Week 12: History With Too Much Evidence

Why do historians return again and again to the same topics – the Tudors, World War II, the American Civil War, etc.? How do we tell new stories with evidence that has been used many times over?

- Read: Christopher Browning, excerpt of Ordinary Men (C)
- Read: David W. Blight, excerpt of Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory (C)
- Read: Hilary Mantel, excerpt of Wolf Hall (C)
- In class: watch selection of Joyeux Noël, dir. Christian Clarion (2005)

Week 13: Alternative Formats

The dusty old tome is dead! How is history communicated and taught in innovative formats such as comics, musicals, film, documentaries, and TV? What are the challenges of 'writing' in each of these media?

- Read & watch: Terry Deary and the BBC, excerpts of Horrible Histories (C)
- Read: Jonathan Walker, excerpts of Pistols! Treason! Murder! The Rise and Fall of a Master Spy (C)
- Listen: Lin-Manuel Miranda, "Cabinet Battle #1" from Hamilton (C)
- In class: watch selection of The Mill and the Cross (2011), dir. Lech Majewski

Week 14: Looking Ahead

How is history written in the 21st century, freer than it's ever been of schools and 'isms'? What role does it play, and should it play, in modern societies?

- **DUE AT START OF CLASS: style experiment #3.**
- Read: John Clive, "The Use of the Past" (C)
- Read: Jill Lepore, "Joe Gould's Teeth" (C)