HIST 380-05/580-01: History and Historiography (Or: how does history get made?)

Illinois Tech
Spring 2020
(Meets weekly for 2 hours and 40 minutes)

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(photo from my research in UK National Archives)

Course description:

How do we know what we think we know about the past? Where do we get our ideas about the past from? This course introduces students to the field of historiography—the study of how history gets written. We will read both well-known and less-well-known histories and investigate what went into writing them, and think about why certain stories haven't been written up until now. We will investigate how archivists decide which documents to preserve for historians to use, how those documents encourage and preclude certain histories, and how historians frame and explain the past based on available sources. This course will invite you to think about history as a dynamic, changing set of narratives and ideas about the world, rather than simply a static, unchanging record of "what happened" in the past.

Throughout the course we will read academic histories, popular news articles, and primary sources. We will also study how journalists, filmmakers, and artists popularize certain versions of the past, making them part of our everyday culture—and making it seem like we've known these stories all along. Class members will have the opportunity to respond to course materials in writing as well as using other means of communication (audio, graphical, etc.), and will have the chance to write their own miniature "hidden history" from primary sources.

Graduate students can take this course by signing up through the graduate section (HIST 580-01). Graduate students will be expected to complete the work assigned to undergraduates and in some cases do more in-depth versions of the assignments given to undergraduates or do other assignments that are helpful to their degree progress. We will discuss these variations throughout the semester. I encourage graduate students to get in touch with me if there is a particular project they are working on as part of their degree that they would like to try to integrate into their work for this course.

Required Texts:
1. H. Carby, *Imperial Intimacies* (Verso, 2019)
2. C. Ford, *Think Black* (Amistad, 2019)
3. L. Gutterman, *Her Neighbor's Wife* (U Penn Press, 2019)
4. M. Hicks, *Programmed Inequality* (MIT Press, 2017)

These books will be on reserve at the library, but for the first four books I highly recommend either purchasing copies OR requesting them through ILL (interlibrary loan) in advance so that you will have access to your own copy to read at your own pace.

Other readings will be on Blackboard or linked from the syllabus. Here is a **short reading guide** you may find helpful as you read for this class: http://marhicks.com/syllabi/ReadingTipsforHistoryClassesv2.pdf

Note about the readings and assignments:
You are responsible for doing the reading before class for the day it is listed so that we can all discuss what you've read. There may be short in-class writing exercises or "pop quizzes" on the readings certain days. These will form part of your class participation and/or small assignments and homework grades (see breakdown below). Please note that regular class attendance and engagement with the readings and other assignments is essential to your success in the course.

While I am happy to field general questions about the class or assignments via email, I am unable to individually let students know what they have missed in the event a student misses class. If you miss class, please email one of your fellow students to find out about the content or assignments you have missed. If you have further questions after you have talked to a fellow student, or need clarification about what they've told you, then feel free to ask or email me.

Class participation: 20%
Small assignments/homework (in class or assigned in class): 20%
Midterm exam: 30%
Final take-home exam/project (slightly longer paper for grad students): 30%

Class conduct:
Cheating, plagiarism, and academic dishonesty are serious offenses and will not be tolerated. They will result in a failing grade on the assignment and possibly in the course (at my discretion) and the University will levy sanctions as well. If you are in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, reread the code of student conduct and the sections on academic honesty in the student handbook: http://www.iit.edu/student_affairs/handbook/pdfs/handbook_fy13.pdf (page 27). If you are still confused, speak with me *before* you pass in an assignment. Remember that it is never appropriate to use someone's ideas or words without giving them credit, and that copying text from sources or peers—in addition to being plagiarism and cheating—short-circuits the learning process and is the exact opposite of what I want to see.

Special needs:
Accommodations will be made for students with disabilities. In order to access these resources or get special provisions in class please register with the Center for Disability Resources at the beginning of the semester and speak with me so we can plan ahead for the needed accommodations.

Class schedule:

January 15
Introduction: What do we need from history?
Overview: This session will introduce you to terms and the broad outlines of the fields of history and historiography—and why we study them. We will begin to think about the different formats that history is told through, and how these require different things of their creators, as well as their audiences.

Read the items listed below (under Jan. 22) for next time. In other words, make sure to do the readings before you come to class next time. You will be responsible for completing the readings listed for each day *before* coming to class that day, so you will be prepared to discuss them and in some cases do written exercises about them.

January 22
What Goes into Writing a History? Against the "Great Man" Narrative of History
Overview: Telling history through the eyes of political leaders ("great man" history) has long been a popular way of writing about, reading about, and understanding the past. But it poses problems and tends to limit our understanding. However, memoirs and biography can be a lens on less well known stories rather than "great man" narratives, and when used in this way the form of historical biography can illuminate broad social, cultural, and economic changes without resorting to the fiction that "great men make history."

Reading:
Required: Clyde W. Ford, *Think Black,* pp. 43-184 (141 pages total)
If you are using an e-book, these pages correspond to chapters 4-11 (inclusive)
Optional: Rest of book, reviews of book

January 29
The Personal is Political, and So It Becomes History
Overview: Weaving together personal and family narratives with broader societal changes is one way to write histories that are meaningful and approachable—especially when the topics being discussed may be unpleasant or difficult. After reading Carby we will take some time in class to do some historical detective work about the events she describes, using the *Times* of London database.

Reading:
Required: Hazel Carby, *Imperial Intimacies: A Tale of Two Islands,* pp. 1-98 and pp. 232-254 (120 pages total). If you are using an e-book, these pages correspond to, in Part 1 and 2, the "Preface" chapter through the "Brown Babies" chapter (inclusive), and in Part 4, the "Correspondence" through "Bookkeeping" chapter (inclusive).
Optional: Rest of book, review of book on Blackboard

February 5
Oral Histories and Their Uses
Overview: Going straight to the source sometimes involves talking to people who are still alive rather than reading documents about people who are now dead. Oral histories present a range of possibilities and difficulties for researching history, but one thing is clear: they connect us to the past in a variety of ways that are useful and fraught. As you do the assignment below, think about what these oral histories "tell" us that we wouldn't get elsewhere—and how exactly they do that.

Required: Listen to the items linked in the "oral histories" folder on Blackboard (Steve Shirley and Kristine Keese interviews). Set aside four to five hours to listen. There is no reading this week: listening to, and if necessary taking notes on these oral histories constitutes the work for class.

February 12

Finding People Who Weren't Meant to be Visible, Part 1: Political, Economic, and Technical Aspects of Hidden Historical Narratives

Overview: What do historians do when the sources available to them (archives) haven't been collected with their subjects in mind? How do historians use imperfect informational stores and "read against the archival grain" in order to find stories that might otherwise not be told, but that are important and explanatory?

Reading:

Required: Mar Hicks, *Programmed Inequality*, pp. 1-58, 93-148, and 219-239 (133 pages total)
If you are using an e-book, these pages correspond to the following chapters: Introduction, chapter 1, chapter 2 from the section "The Excluded Grades and the Formation of a Machine Work Underclass" through the end of chapter2, chapter 3, chapter 5 from the section "After White Heat" through the end of chapter 5, and the whole Conclusion chapter.
Optional: Book talk (overview of *Programmed Inequality*) at Oxford Internet Institute or Data and Society (linked on Blackboard)

February 19

Finding People Who Weren't Meant to be Visible, Part 2: Cultural, Social, and Sexual Histories

Overview: When sources aren't available because they haven't been collected by an institution, one thing historians can do (rather than working with imperfect archives) is to try to construct their own archive as part of their research project. That is what Gutterman does in this week's reading, in order to write a socio-sexual history of lesbians who were married (to men) in the Cold War and mid-to late 20th century.

Reading:

Required: Lauren Jae Gutterman, *Her Neighbor's Wife*, pp. 1-105 and 172-218 (151 pages total)
If you are using an e-book, these pages correspond to the following chapters: Introduction, chapters 1-4 (inclusive), chapter 6 starting at "No More Secrets, No More Lies" section through end of chapter, and chapter 7.

February 26

Midterm Review, Catching Up, Reflections

No reading, but do the short writing assignment below, which is geared to helping you prepare for the midterm. Please follow the instructions at www.digitalhistorylab.com to turn it in. Try to also come to class having caught up on any readings you may have missed or not completed, and with any questions you may have about the material so far.

Assignment: Think about how the histories that you've read so far fit together and also how they don't fit together. How do the sources they draw on determine what they are able to convey to the reader? How do they create new knowledge about the past and new stories? And what role do the different writing styles—which fall along the spectrum from more personal to more academic—play? Having considered these questions, write a short essay (2 to 3 typed pages, or roughly 500-900 words) that gives specific evidence for a novel claim (that you make) about how we understand the past. In other words, come up with a new insight, something you've learned in class about the different ways history has been written, and how that has impacted your understanding of the world. Be sure to use at least 2-3 specific examples from the readings and other class materials.

March 4
Midterm Exam in Class

March 11
A Practitioner Talks About Their Research Methods (also, final project will be assigned today)
In today's class we will have a guest speaker, Dr. Whitney Pow, a researcher who studies the history of video games. (The readings provided will depend on the speaker. Check Blackboard for the reading.)

Today will also be the day we discuss the final project and you begin thinking about what topic and format you'd like your final project to take.

[SPRING BREAK: March 14-22]

March 25
Making History More Accessible Using Visual Formats, Part 1: Reading Comics, Making Comics
Overview: Graphic Novels have increasingly become a popular and important way of transmitting complex stories—including historical ones. In this class we will discuss and compare several historical graphic novels and the ways in which they tell their histories. You will create a short comic or graphic novel of your own based on something you have read earlier in the semester (see assignment on Blackboard, due on April 3rd.)
Readings:
Required:
Whit Taylor and Shannon Wright, "She Dared to Be Herself: Shirley Chisholm's Legacy" at Medium/The Nib: https://medium.com/the-nib/she-dared-to-be-herself-shirley-chisholms-legacy-d11ea2dc8878
Tomomi Shimizu, "What has happened to me?" Testimony of an Uyghur woman: https://note.com/tomomishimizu/n/n4cade047aed8
Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis*. Read the whole thing, 153 pages; on reserve in Galvin or get it through ILL or your local library—it is widely available. Same goes for *Maus*, below.)
Art Spiegelman, *Maus* 1 and 2. Read as much as you'd like, try to read at least 30 pages—from anywhere in the volumes—to get a feel for the storytelling style.

April 1
Getting started on the final project, finishing your graphic novel/comics assignment
Class will not meet in the traditional way this week in order to give you time to start doing work for your final project. Work on the comics exercise mentioned above (due April 3rd, assignment on Blackboard) and take some time to think about what you would like to do for your final project. I will be holding extra online office hours to help you through this process this week (e-mail and skype).

April 8
Making History More Accessible Using Visual Formats, Part 2: Movies and Documentaries
Overview: Movies are a great way to tell a story to many people at once in a highly controlled way, and to engage people with narratives they might not otherwise seek out or read. How do audiovisual mediums like documentaries, or popular fictionalized films, help us get a sense of the past that we couldn't otherwise? Which techniques do they employ stylistically, and in terms of writing and research, that are markedly different from other mediums that we've studied? How does this alternately expand and limit what they can say? Also, what does comparing the various incarnations of a story (text, audio, film) tell us about the

process of knowing and learning history from film media? In class we will do an exercise involving a film that tells a fictionalized story about a real historical event, and then also a documentary based on that event.

Readings/Viewings:
Outside of class you will read, watch and reflect on the below. Then do the short assignment on Blackboard that asks you to compare and contrast sections of the book *Hidden Figures* with its film adaptation.
Read Margot Shetterly, excerpts from *Hidden Figures* (Blackboard)
View *Hidden Figures* (motion picture—available through library and elsewhere)

April 15
Making History More Accessible Using Audio Formats: Audio Documentaries and Podcasts
Overview:
Talking about the past happens all the time. We've done it a lot in this class and we've listened to oral histories that show how interviews can be primary research sources. Listening to audiobook versions of history books is also growing in popularity. But what happens when you talk about the past in a structured, produced way that's intentionally designed for an audio format and meant for public consumption? How does this invite others in on conversations about historical events? And, what does that change about how we come to know and understand what happened in the past? Heads up: the audio pieces for this class (linked on Blackboard) may involve disturbing topics, including racist violence. If you feel unable to listen to them, that's fine. Let me know and I will send you something else or ask you to do a slightly different (equivalent) assignment.

Reading/Listening:
Check folder on Blackboard for links to audio (includes the "Reverse Freedom Riders" episode of Code Switch, the "1919 Race Riot" episode of Curious City, and several other audio pieces) and a listening guide. Set aside several hours to listen and reflect on these audio pieces.

April 22
"Finding Yourself" (Or the Issues You Care About) in the Past
Today we will focus on a series of exercises in small working groups to ensure that everyone knows what they are doing for the final project and that you have a plan of action with concrete steps for getting to that goal. Please note: this class is very important due to what we'll cover and there is no easy way to make it up if you miss it. Please be sure to attend (unless you are ill, etc.).

April 29
Final Class—Summation

NOTE: Your final exam (project) must be turned in by date determined by the registrar. The final exam schedule will be posted online by midway through the semester.

Have a good summer!