

History 299: Introduction to Historical Theories and Methods
Tuesday/Thursday 1:30-2:50, King 325
Spring 2022

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Office Hours, Rice 314
Wednesdays, 10:30am-12:00pm
Thursdays, 3:00pm-4:30pm

What is history and what makes it a distinctive discipline from other fields in social studies and the humanities? How have historians understood the nature of their discipline and how has historical practice changed over time? In this class, history majors will explore the nature and methods of the discipline of history. To that end, we will explore some fundamental questions throughout the semester: Is there such a thing as historical truth and what is the role of “truth” in doing and writing history? Is there an objective history outside of the historian’s subjectivity and biases? What is the relationship of the historian to his/her subject and to the society in which they live? In what ways is the study of history relevant to the present? And what is the difference between history and memory?

Besides grappling with big questions about the nature and ethics of the discipline of history, this class will introduce students to the different kinds of raw materials that historians draw on as they reconstruct the lives and events of the past. We will consider just what an archive is, as well as the range of materials available to study the past—from textual sources to material objects to numerical data, among many others. We will also discuss both the challenges of undertaking different kinds of historical research and the ways in which digital tools have transformed the work of historians.

This course does not focus on any specific time period or geographic location. Students should not expect to gain deep knowledge about the history of any particular place or time. We will, however, explore the ways in which different historical methodologies and research practices have been developed to study diverse parts of the world and historical epochs.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Recognize and understand the differences between approaches that historians have used to study the past including macro and microhistory, political economy, social history, national and transnational analyses, postcolonialism, and identity-based studies
- Become familiar with the many different kinds of primary sources for the study of history, including letters and diaries, visual representations, quantitative data, government records, and oral sources and of the problems and potentials of using different kinds of evidence
- Demonstrate understanding of historical methods and of debates in the discipline about objectivity, truth, and the construction of historical knowledge
- Understand the difference between history and memory and why history is frequently the subject of political debate
- Develop an understanding of how the digital age has affected historians and how historians are using digital tools to develop new research methods
- Demonstrate competency in the conventions of historical writing and be able to produce written work according to those conventions
- Communicate effectively and advance compelling arguments in both written and oral form

COURSE READINGS: The following books are available at the bookstore and are on print reserve at Mudd Library. All other readings are available on the course blackboard site.

Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart (any edition, originally published in 1958)

John Lewis Gaddis, The Landscape of the Past (2002, also available as e-book through OBIS)

Carlo Ginzburg, The Cheese and the Worms (1997 ed.)

Sarah Maza, Thinking about History (University of Chicago Press, 2017)

COURSE GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS:

Grades in History 299 will be based class participation, a series of short historical exercises, and a proposal for an original historical research project. All assignments must be completed in order for students to receive credit for the class

1) Attendance and active participation in class discussions (20%)

This course will operate as a seminar rather than a lecture course so your participation and engagement with the course readings are vital to its success. There are approximately 60-80 pages of reading for each class session. I've provided the number of pages of reading for each session so that you can plan accordingly. Students are expected to arrive at class prepared to engage in a thoughtful and respectful discussion of the assigned material with classmates. If you are having trouble keeping up with the readings or are uncomfortable speaking in class, please come to see me at the beginning of the semester to talk about strategies for becoming an active reader and participant. Attendance at History 299 is mandatory. Absences for illness, family emergencies, or other extenuating circumstances may be approved if you tell me about them in advance of class. Absences that are not excused will affect your final grade in the course.

2) Completion and quality of work on 6 historical exercises (30%)

There are sixteen historical exercises (short prompts or questions that relate to the readings in some way) outlined on the syllabus, eight of them for sessions before spring break and eight for sessions after spring break. Each student must complete six of these exercises, three from before break and three from after break over the course of the semester. Historical exercises typically ask you to grapple with a methodological issue raised in the readings or to consider some aspect of your research project in light of the issues raised in the readings. Exercises should be considered short, formal papers that include citations as necessary. All exercises should be between 450-600 words long and should include a word count. Exercises must be turned in by the time of the class meeting for which they are assigned in order to receive credit; late exercises will not be accepted. Please upload exercises to the blackboard site before the class session for the day that they are due. Be prepared to talk about your historical exercise during class.

3) Preparing a historical research prospectus in a series of scaffolded assignments (50%)

For the final project for this class, you will prepare a research proposal in a series of stages. All work is due by the date indicated and should be uploaded via blackboard as word documents. A first draft of the proposal is due at our last class session on May 26; the final draft is due at the time of our regularly scheduled final exam. There are also short assignments due on March 13, March 27, and May 1. These include:

- By Friday, March 4: Meet with me individually to discuss your preliminary topic ideas

Each student is required to meet with me individually within the first two weeks of class to talk about your ideas for your research topic. Sign up for an appointment with me via my google appointment calendar (linked on the course blackboard site)

- By Sunday, March 13: Statement of Research Question and Potential Significance (5%): In no more than three paragraphs, describe 1) Your research question; 2) What you believe the significance of this particular question is; and 3) your preliminary thoughts about how to approach answering your question. Upload to blackboard by 5:00pm on Sunday, March 13.
- By Sunday, March 27: Annotated Secondary Source Bibliography (10%): Create an annotated bibliography of the most important secondary literature about your research topic (minimum of six sources). In a brief introductory section, characterize the state of the existing historiography on your topic and explain in which historiographies you are locating and contextualizing your research topic. Annotations should be at least a few sentences per source and should offer an overview of the work's argument and approach. You should consider the state of the field as reflected in journal articles, monographs, edited collections, and review essays as appropriate. Further guidelines and examples of annotated secondary source bibliographies are available on the course blackboard site. Upload your bibliography to blackboard by 5:00pm on Sunday, March 27.
- By Sunday, May 1 Annotated Primary Source Bibliography (10%): Develop an annotated bibliography of primary sources that you could use in your research (minimum of six sources). Think creatively about the range of primary sources that might speak to your topic; annotations should offer both your assessment of how the particular source might be useful and discussion of a source's location and accessibility to student researchers. Further guidelines and examples of annotated primary source bibliographies are available on the course blackboard site. Upload your bibliography to blackboard by 5:00pm on Sunday, May 1.
- Complete Research Proposal (25%): Draft due in class on May 26 for peer review; Final due at time of our regularly scheduled final exam.
Draw on your methodological statement and your annotated bibliographies to develop a compelling and concisely written research prospectus of no more than 10-12 pages. Your prospectus should include an explanation of your topic and its significance, a review of the historiography, a discussion of your sources, a research plan, and a bibliography. A first draft of your proposal is due in class on December May 26 and must be at least six pages long [full drafts are preferable]. Please upload your draft to the blackboard site and bring a printed copy to our last day of class. Each student will be assigned a peer reviewer who will provide feedback by May 30; each student will also meet with me individually about your draft during reading period (sign up for an appointment via my google calendar). Revised proposals are due by the time of our regularly scheduled final exam.

COURSE POLICIES

Classroom Environment: History 299 is a demanding course. This syllabus asks you to do a lot of reading, to grapple with a host of abstract and often challenging concepts, and to discuss complex ideas with your peers. We will all need to work together to make this an enriching and engaging learning environment. I ask that you come to class ready to state your views, to make arguments, to raise questions, and to challenge views with which you disagree respectfully. Respecting our class space also means coming to class on time and being attentive while in class.

Oberlin Honor Code: All work for this course must be done in compliance with the Oberlin Honor Code, which means that it must be your own. Any cases of plagiarism will be dealt with according to the letter of college policy. You must acknowledge when you use the ideas of other people (whether that be other students or published materials from websites, books, the media, etc.). If you have questions about citations, academic honesty, or the acceptability of collaborations, please see me. You should include the honor code on all the written work you hand in for this class. The Honor Code reads: “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code on this assignment.”

Educational Access: I am committed to creating inclusive learning environments. If any aspects of the instruction or design of the course result in dis/ability-related barriers to your participation, please let me know. If you receive any specific accommodations, please provide documentation from the Disability Service Office.

Extra Help: My door is open if you need help or just want to discuss the reading or other topics of interest to you. Drop in to my office hours anytime or email to schedule a specific appointment. I am happy to provide feedback on drafts if get draft writings (partial or full) to me at least **four days** before the assignment is due so that I have time to give you feedback.

COURSE SCHEDULE

I. WHAT IS HISTORY?

February 22: Introduction [22 pages]

Before the first class meeting, please read:

Maza, *Thinking about History*, Introduction, pp. 1-9.

Sam Wineburg, “Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 80:7 (March 1999): 488-499.

February 24: History as a Discipline [70 pages]

Edward Hallet Carr, “The Historian and His Facts,” excerpt from Carr, *What is History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961 [12 pages])

John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), Chapters 1, 3-4, pp. 1-16; 35-70.

Elliott Gorn, “Professing History: Distinguishing Between Memory and the Past,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 28, 2000 [5 pages]

March 1: Writing a Research Proposal

Example 1: “*Mujeres Zapatistas: Sustaining Autonomy and Community*”

Example 2: “*Cyberutopia: The Origin and Development of a Dream*”

II. HISTORY IN THE WIDER WORLD

March 3: The Many Forms of History: Popular Culture [68 pages]

Maza, *Thinking about History*, pp. 118-137.

Robert Rosenstone, “The Historical Film: Looking at the Past in a Postliterate Age” in Marcia Landy, ed., *The Historical Film: History and Memory in the Media* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001): 50-66.

Molly Ossberg, “The Assassin’s Creed Curriculum: Can Video Games Teach us History?,” *The Verge.com*, September 18, 2014 [11 pages]

Joseph Adelman, “Who Tells Your Story? *Hamilton* as a People’s History,” in Renee Romano and Claire Potter, ed., *Historians on Hamilton* (Rutgers University Press, 2018), 277-296.

Historical Exercise Option #1: Play a videogame or watch a film/TV show/play that represents the past in some way. Explore your experience in the context of the readings. What did you learn about history from your popular representation of it?

March 8: History in the Political Arena [86 pages]

Margaret MacMillan, “Presenting History’s Bill” and “History Wars” in *Dangerous Games: The Uses and Abuses of History*, (New York: Modern Library, 2010), 93-138.

Sanford Levinson, *Written in Stone* (Duke University Press, 1998), 3-31

Gerda Lerner, “Why History Matters?” from *Why History Matters: Life and Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 199-211.

Historical Exercise Option #2: Find a contemporary example the political use of history in the media. Use the readings for today to explain and analyze how the historical example you found.

III. SUBJECTS, SCALE, AND INTERPRETIVE PRACTICES

March 10: Agency and Resistance, and the Shifting Subjects of Historical Inquiry [43 pages]

Maza, *Thinking about History*, Chapter 1, pp. 10-44.

James Scott, excerpt from *Weapons of the Weak*, in The Cultural Resistance Reader, 89-96.

Excerpt from Robin Kelley, “We Are Not What We Seem: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South,” *Journal of American History* 80 (1993): 75-79 [note that only the first five pages of this article are required, but it is worth skimming the rest of it]

Historical Exercise Option #3: In your own words, define agency as a subject of historical study. How are Scott and Kelley employing the idea of agency?

March 13: Initial Topic Proposal Due by 5:00pm

March 15: The Nation and Its Discontents [58 pages]

Maza, *Thinking about History*, Chapter 2, pp. 45-82.

Benedict Anderson, excerpt from *Imagined Communities* in Philip Spencer and Howard Wollman, ed., *Nations and Nationalism: A Reader* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 48-58.

Excerpt from Tara Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis," *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (Spring 2010), pp. 93-98 only.

Partha Chatterjee, "Nationalism as a Problem" in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, 126-127.

Homi K. Bhabha, "Dissemination: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, 132-133.

Historical Exercise Option #4: Drawing on these readings, consider the strengths and limitations of using "the nation" as a category of historical analysis.

March 17: The Scale of History I: Big History [39 pages]

Sebouh David Aslanian, Joyce Chaplin, Ann McGrath, and Kristin Mann, "How Size Matters: the question of scale in history," *American Historical Review* 118 (2013): 1431-1453 only

David Little, "'Scale' in History: micro, meso, macro," *Understanding Society*, July 26, 2009, <https://understandingsociety.blogspot.com/2009/07/scale-in-history-micro-meso-macro.html>

Tom Griffiths, "Ecology and Empire: Towards an Australian History of the World," in Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin, ed., *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies*, 1-13.

Start reading *The Cheese and the Worms*

Historical Exercise Option #5: What do you see as the potential or limitations of "big history?" Use the Griffiths reading as an example in whatever case you make.

March 22: The Scale of History II: Microhistory

Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*

Optional: Dominick LaCapra, "The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Twentieth-Century Historian," in *History and Criticism* (1985), pp. 45-69.

Historical Exercise Option #6: What exactly is Ginzburg's thesis and how does he set about proving it? Can microhistory do what Ginzburg wants it to do?

March 24: Periodization and Classification [54 pages]

Elizabeth Brown, "The Tyranny of a Construct: Feudalism and Historians of Medieval Europe," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 79, no. 4 (October 1974): 1063-1088.

Carol Gluck, "The End of Elsewhere: Writing Modernity Now," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 116, no. 3 (June 2011): 676-687.

Reinhart Koselleck, "Historical Criteria of the Modern Concept of Revolution," in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (2004), pp. 43-57.

March 27: Secondary Source Annotated Bibliography due by 5:00pm.

March 29: Cause versus Meaning in History [61 pages]

Maza, "Causes or Meanings" in *Thinking about History*, pp. 157-198.

Gaddis, "Causation, Contingency, and Counterfactuals" in *The Landscape of History*, 91-109.
category of historical analysis.

Historical Exercise Option #7: Maza argues that academic historians' interests have evolved over time, from causes to meaning. Think about your own project. Do you see it as concerning causation, meaning, or some combination of the two?

IV. THEORIES AND SCHOOLS OF HISTORICAL THOUGHT

March 31: Truth, Objectivity, and Narrative in History [76 pages]

Maza, *Thinking about History*, pp. 199-225

Hayden White, "Historical Text as Literary Artifact" in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), 81-100.

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "The Power in the Story" in *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press, 1995), 1-30.

Historical Exercise Option #8: Compare the positions of White and Trouillot. What ideas do they share? Where do they differ? What kinds of theories of the historical narrative do they advance? To what extent can any narrative be "true"?

SPRING BREAK

April 12: Political Economy [50 pages]

Karl Marx with Friedrich Engels, "Premises of the Materialist Conception of History" from *The German Ideology* (1845) in Adam Budd, ed. *The Modern Historiography Reader* (Routledge, 2009), 214-218.

Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Ottoman Empire and the Capitalist World Economy: Some Questions for Research," *Review*, vol. 2, no. 3 (Winter 1979): 389-398

E.P. Thompson, "Preface," *Making of the English Working Class*, 9-13.

Robert Darnton, "Workers Revolt: The Great Cat Massacre of the Rue Saint-Severin" in *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (Basic Books, 2009), 75-104.

Historical Exercise Option #9: Explore and explain the different approaches to class analysis in these readings and make a case for how the Darnton reading draws on, uses, illustrates or complicates the other readings for this session.

April 14: Foucault: Theory or Method? [47 pages]

Michel Foucault, excerpt from *Discipline and Punishment* in Easthope and McGowan, ed., *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader* (University of Toronto Press, 1993), pp. 81-90.

Foucault, excerpt from *The History of Sexuality* in *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader*, pp. 90-95.

Patricia O'Brien, "Michel Foucault's History of Culture" in Alietta Biersack, et al, ed., *The New Cultural History* (University of California Press, 1989), 25-46.

Tony Bennett, "The Formation of the Museum" in *The Birth of the Museum* (Routledge, 1995), 17-25.

April 19: Gender, Race and Intersectionality [76 pages]

Joan Wallach Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91:5 (December 1986): 1053-1075.

Evelyn Brook's Higginbotham, "The Metalanguage of Race," *Signs* 17:2 (Winter 1992): 251-274.

Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1 (1989): 139-167

Historical Exercise Option #10: Joan Scott suggests that history itself should be written differently because of the importance of gender as a category. Is Higginbotham making the same kind of argument about race? How do you understand the similarities or differences between their projects?

April 21: Postcolonial Critiques of the Practice of History [43 pages]

Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Pantheon, 1978), Chapter 1, pp. 31-49.

Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton University Press, 2007), 3-16.

Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1998), abridged version from *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, pp. 28-37.

PART IV: HISTORICAL RESEARCH AND VARIETIES OF EVIDENCE

April 26: The Challenge of the Archive [45 pages]

Maza, *Thinking about History*, pp. 146-156.

David Anderson, "Guilty Secrets: Deceit, Denial, and the Discovery of Kenya's Migrated Archive," *History Workshop Journal* 80 (October 2015): 142-160.

Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (June 2008): 1-14.

Historical Exercise Option #11: What does Hartman see as the challenges posed by the existing archive on slavery? What does she propose as a solution? What do you think of her argument? What issues raised in these readings relate to the archive available for your research project?

April 28: The Impact of the Digital Age on Historical Research and Knowledge [~65]

Tim Hitchcock, "Digital Searching and Re-formulation of Historical Knowledge," in Mark Greengrass and Lorna Hughes, ed., *The Virtual Representation of the Past* (Routledge 2017), 81-90.

Daniel Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, "The Promise and Perils of Digital History" in *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* (2005), <https://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/introduction/>

Roy Rosenzweig, "Can History Be Open Source? Wikipedia and the Future of the Past," *Journal of American History* (June 2006): 117-146, <https://academic.oup.com/jah/article/93/1/117/813367>

Tim Sherratt, "Seams and Edges Dreams of Aggregation, Access and Discovery in a Broken World," *Discontents*, February 3, 2015, <http://discontents.com.au/seams-and-edges-dreams-of-aggregation-access-discovery-in-a-broken-world/>

Historical Exercise Option #12: What do you think are the most important ways that the digital tools have transformed historical research? What issues do historians need to be aware of to use these tools in an informed and critical way?

May 1: Primary Sources Annotated Bibliography due by 5:00pm.

May 3: The Written Record [55 pages]

Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, "Source Criticism: The Great Tradition" from *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods*, 60-68.

Steven Stowe, "Making Sense of Letters and Diaries" from *The Making Sense of Evidence Series*, History Matters: The U.S. Survey on the Web, pp. 1-18.

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale*, Introduction, pp. 3-13, 20-35.

May 5: Visit to Special Collections

May 10: History and Literature: Can fiction be a historical source?

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (entire)

Emad Mirmotahari, "History as Project and Source in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*," *Postcolonial Studies* 14 (2011): 373-385

Historical Exercise Option #13: Mirmotahari argues that Achebe wrote as both a fiction writer and as someone who sought to document a civilization. If you were writing a history of colonial Nigeria today, what use, if any, would you make of this book? To what extent can fiction be a meaningful historical source?

May 12: Visual Sources [79 pages]

Julia Adeney Thomas, "The Evidence of Sight," *History and Theory* 48:4 (Dec. 2009): 151-168.

J.B. Harley, "Maps, Knowledge, and Power" in *The New Nature of Maps*, pp. 51-81.

Paul Barclay, "Peddling Postcards and Selling Empire: Image-Making in Taiwan Under Japanese Colonial Rule," *Japanese Studies* 30:1 (May 2010): 83-112.

Historical Exercise Option #14: Pick a visual source related to the topic of your research prospectus and explore how you might analyze and use it in your project based on the ideas raised by the readings for today's class.

May 17: Oral History [59 pages]

Allessandro Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different" in *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 32-41.

Barbara Cooper, "Oral Sources and the Challenge of African History," in John Edward Phillips, ed., *Writing African History* (Rochester, 2005), 191-215.

Joan Sangster, "Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History," *Women's History Review* 3, no. 1 (1994): 5-28.

Historical Exercise Option #15: Find an oral history that relates to your research project (if possible) and use the readings for class to explore how you could use the oral history as evidence in your project. Alternatively, identify someone whom you would like to interview as part of the research for your proposed project if it were possible to do so and, drawing on the readings, explain how you would approach the interview, what the goals would be, and what kinds of questions you would ask of your interviewee.

May 19: Quantitative Analysis [54 pages]

Pat Hudson and Mina Ishizu, "Origin and Nature of Quantitative Thinking" in *History by Numbers*, 2nd ed. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 23-44.

Gary Kornblith, "Making Sense of Quantitative Evidence" from the Making Sense of Evidence Series on *History Matters: The U.S. Survey on the Web*, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu>, 1-23.

Jamelle Bouie, "We Still Can't See Slavery for What it Was," *New York Times*, January 28, 2022, <https://nyti.ms/3G2bzPi>.

Historical Exercise Option #16: Drawing on the readings for today consider whether a quantitative data might be useful in your research project and how you might use quantitative data as a historical source in your own research.

May 24: Using Digital Tools in Historical Research (~43 pages)

Douglass Seefeldt and William G. Thomas III, "What Is Digital History? A Look at Some Exemplar Projects," *DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska-Lincoln*, 2009, <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/may-2009/what-is-digital-history>

Peter Leonard, "Mining Large Datasets for the Humanities" 2014, <http://library.ifla.org/id/eprint/930/1/119-leonard-en.pdf>

Dan Edelstein, Paula Findlen, Giovanna Ceserani, Caroline Winterer, and Nicole Coleman, "Historical Research in a Digital Age: Reflections from the Mapping of Letters Project," *American Historical Review* (April 2017): 200-224, <https://academic.oup.com/ahr/article/122/2/400/3096208>

Explore at least two of the following sites:

- Digital Harlem, <http://digitalharlem.org>
- Mapping the Enlightenment: Intellectual Networks and the Making of Knowledge in the Intellectual Periphery, <https://mapping-the-enlightenment.org>
- Map of Jazz, <http://rainforest.compbio.cs.cmu.edu>

- Orbis: The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World, <https://orbis.stanford.edu>
- Robots Reading *Vogue*, <https://dhlabs.yale.edu/projects/vogue/>

PART V: CONCLUSION

May 26: Presentations and Conclusion (*draft of research proposal due in class*)

In class today, we will break into small groups and each student will give a 5-minute presentation on their research proposal to a group.

Final Research Proposal due

Each student must choose six of these historical exercises to complete over the course of the semester. You must choose three of the exercises from before Spring break and three of the exercises from after spring break. All exercises are due by the start of class.

Historical Exercises	Topics
March 3: History in Popular Culture	Play a videogame or watch a film/TV show/play that represents the past in some way. Explore your experience in the context of the readings. What did you learn about history from your popular representation of it?
March 8: History in the Political Arena	Find a contemporary example the political use of history in the media. Use the readings for today to explain and analyze how the historical example you found.
March 10: Agency and Resistance	In your own words, define agency as a subject of historical study. How are Scott and Kelley employing the idea of agency?
March 15: The Nation	Drawing on these readings, consider the strengths and limitations of using “the nation” as a category of historical analysis.
March 17: Big History	What do you see as the potential or limitations of “big history?” Use the Griffiths reading as an example in whatever case you make.
March 22: Microhistory	What exactly is Ginzburg’s thesis and how does he set about proving it? Can microhistory do what Ginzburg wants it to do?
March 29: Cause versus meaning in history	Maza argues that academic historians’ interests have evolved over time, from causes to meaning. Think about your own project. Do you see it as concerning causation, meaning, or some combination of the two?
March 31: Truth, Objectivity, Narrative	Compare the positions of White and Trouillot. What ideas do they share? Where do they differ? What kinds of theories of the historical narrative do they advance? To what extent can any narrative be “true”?
SPRING BREAK	
April 12: Political Economy	Explore and explain the different approaches to class analysis in these readings and make a case for how the Darnton reading draws on, uses, illustrates or complicates the other readings for this session.
April 19: Gender, Race, and Intersectionality	Joan Scott suggests that history itself should be written differently because of the importance of gender as a category. Is Higginbotham making the same kind of argument about race? How do you understand the similarities or differences between their projects?
April 26: Challenge of the Archive	What does Hartman see as the challenges posed by the existing archive on slavery? What does she propose as a solution? What do you think of her argument? What issues raised in these readings relate to the archive available for your research project?
April 28: Impact of Digital Age	What do you think are the most important ways that the digital tools have transformed historical research? What issues do historians need to be aware of to use these tools in an informed and critical way?
May 10: History and Literature	Mirmotahari argues that Achebe wrote as both a fiction writer and as someone who sought to document a civilization. If you were writing a history of colonial Nigeria today, what use, if any, would you make of this book? To what extent can fiction be a meaningful historical source?
May 12: Visual Sources	Choose a visual source related to the topic of your research prospectus and explore how you might analyze and use it in your project based on the ideas raised by the readings for today’s class.
May 17: Oral History	Find an oral history that relates to your research project (if possible) and use the readings for class to explore how you could use the oral history as evidence in your project. Alternatively, identify someone whom you would like to interview as part of the research for your proposed project if it were possible to do so and, drawing on the readings, explain how you would approach the interview, what the goals would be, and what kinds of questions you would ask of your interviewee.
May 19: Quantitative Analysis	Drawing on the readings for today consider whether a quantitative data might be useful in your research project and how you might use quantitative data as a historical source in your own research.