Historiography is the study of the methods historians have developed to narrate what happened in the past and to assemble arguments about the influence of the past on the present. Historiography is itself a historical inquiry, as history is only ever written in relation to the context in which the historian writes, and that context changes over time. Historiography is thus subject to the very influences and blind spots of what it seeks to study, and therefore always struggling to keep up to the present.

This could be a course about the history of the discipline of history, that is to say, how historians all over the world have written about the past, but I have not chosen to give it that form. Rather, our goal will be to develop familiarity with some of the main approaches to history that have been popular over the past three decades, though we will dip back into nineteenth-century historical thought when that might help to ground recent approaches.

Historiographical questions tend to ask why historians have written about the past in the ways they have (and should, by extension, be an inquiry that each of us undertakes constantly to ask ourselves why we approach the past the way we do). Why do we choose the subjects we do? What questions do we seek to answer by reconstructing the past? How do we construct narratives about these subjects? What is at stake when historical knowledge is produced?

The seminar topics will unfold in a vaguely chronological sequence, at least in terms of how the field has developed. We will read at least one book a week, sometimes two, and use that reading to explore the approach that author has taken. *Asterisked readings are supplementary, but you might benefit by giving them a look. There may also be shorter readings around the book or the topic. Discussion will focus on the approach, but also on how the author’s presentation of research and arguments. As history is principally a written discipline (though that may change), we will pay some attention to the “writing” part of “writing history.”

Starting in week 8, we will invite in some members of the Department to help us understand the subfields of history that concern them, and in two cases to read books that will be press off the press this fall.
No books have been ordered into the Bookstore. Most of the readings are available through digital editions from UBC Library. Those that aren’t will be distributed electronically, though that is no argument against finding your own paper copies of favourite items.

Some readings are posted on the course website within the History Department: https://www.history.ubc.ca/course/history-548d-101-historiography-2

Each week, three students will collectively take the lead in organizing the discussion. The presenters are also welcome to introduce other readings that exemplify or broaden the approach under study that week.

In addition to these presentations, members of the seminar are asked to write a brief commentary (2-3 pages) on the issues for discussion, and to circulate these commentaries to the other members of the seminar by 7 pm the day before the seminar meets, for weeks 3 to 10.

The principal writing assignment for the course is a historiographical essay on a subject of your choice. Ideally the essay should find a point of connection with some of the issues and problems raised in the course. The essay could be an analytical survey of a methodological approach within a defined field or in relation to a particular question; an examination of the evolving thought of an individual historian or school of historians; or an analytical treatment of an issue that has received sustained reflection in historical writing.

The completion of this assignment involves four stages:

1. A prospectus outlining theme, problem, and relevant readings (3-4 pages) is due on October 23.
2. A first draft should be circulated for peer review to two other members of the seminar on November 20.
3. Written peer comments for the author (2-3 pages), with copies to the instructor, are due on November 25.
4. The final paper (15 pages) is due on December 12.

The grading for the course will be based 40% on the final paper, 15% on the weekly commentaries, 15% on presentations, 15% on discussion, and 15% on the two peer comments.
Seminar topics and readings

1. **September 7** – Why become a historian now?


2. **September 13** – Speculative versus analytical history

   M. C. Lemon, *Philosophy of History* (2003), chs. 1, 9, 10, 13
   Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*

3. **September 20** – 1970s: The history of capitalism

   *Timothy Brook and Gregory Blue, *China and Historical Capitalism* (1998), ch. 4

4. **September 27** – 1980s: Foucault and poststructuralism

   Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (1977), pts. 1-3
   Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1979) ch. 1
   *Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *The Foucault Reader*, 76-100
   *David Garland, “What is a ‘History of the Present’?”

5. **October 3** – 1980s: History and gender

   Joan Wallach Scott, “Introduction” and “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” reprinted in her *Feminism and History* (1996), ch. 6
   Judith Butler and Elizabeth Weed, *The Question of Gender* (2011): introduction, ch. 1 (Butler), and epilogue (Brown)

6. **October 11** – 1990s: History of commerce and consumption

   Fernand Braudel, *Wheels of Commerce*, ch. 2
   *Jack Goody, *Capitalism and Modernity* (2004), ch. 6
7. October 18 – 2000s: Comparative/global history

R. Bin Wong, China Transformed (1999), introduction, chs. 1-2
Kenneth Pomeranz, The Great Divergence (2000), introduction, ch. 1
* Chakrabarty, Dipesh. Provincializing Europe (2000), ch. 1

8. October 25 - Empire
   Guest interlocutor: Coll Thrush

*Jace Weaver, The Red Atlantic (2014)

9. November 1 – Economic history
   Guest interlocutor: Richard Unger


10. November 8 – Legal history
    Guest interlocutor: Brad Miller

Bradley Miller, Borderline Crime (2016)
Philip Girard, "Who’s Afraid of Canadian Legal History?" (2007)

11. November 15 – Ethnological history

Gary Tomlinson, Music and Renaissance Magic (1993)

12. November 22 – Environmental history
    Guest interlocutor: Tina Loo

Timothy Mitchell, Carbon Democracy (2011)
   or Geoffrey Parker, Global Crisis (2013), pp. xv-113, 587-708
Edmund Burke, “The Big Story” (2009)—from Week 2
*Alan Mikhail, "Unleashing the Beast: Animals, Energy, and the Economy of Labor in
   Ottoman Egypt" (2013)

13. December 1 – Writing history now

Natalie Davis, Trickster Travels (2006)
Lynn Hunt, Writing History in the Global Era (2014)
*Kristen Nawrotski and Jack Dougherty, Writing History in the Digital Age (2013)
Course bibliography


Butler, Judith and Elizabeth Weed, eds. *The Question of Gender: Joan W. Scott’s Critical Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011. online@UBC


Nawrottski, Kristen and Jack Dougherty, eds. *Writing History in the Digital Age*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013. online@UBC


Scott, Joan Wallach, ed. *Feminism and History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. online@UBC


White, Hayden. *Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. 1987. D13 W564 online@UBC
