

**ISS 335: National Diversity and Change**  
**Social Science Approaches to the American Past**  
**Mondays/Wednesdays, 10:20am-12:10pm**  
**Spring 2015**

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**Office Hours: Thursdays, 10-11:30am, 306A Old Horticulture**

Course Summary:

This section of ISS 335 focuses on social science approaches to the study of the American past. History is one of the social sciences at Michigan State, but only a few years ago was part of the College of Arts and Letters (that is, it was considered one of the humanities). At schools throughout the country, the discipline is defined as either a social science or a humanity. What accounts for this confusion? ISS courses are designed to help you understand how social scientists think. This course will do that by asking whether historians are social scientists. We will ask how the disciplines of the social sciences affect the study of the past. This is an issue of considerable importance to our contemporary society, as the past is often used politically to justify current events. By thinking about how we can evaluate what constitutes historical “truth” and what types of analysis shape historical argumentation, we can become better consumers of news and culture.

This course is broken up into several units that examine different social science approaches to American history. It is organized thematically, not chronologically, in order to keep our focus on methodological questions. Our readings will cover topics including race, gender, and religion in American history and politics.

Assignments and Grading:

Grade breakdown:

In-class participation:	25%
Methods Project:	15%
Memory Project:	15%
Reading responses:	25%
Final Paper:	20%

This class involves active discussions of readings and films; it will only be successful if you come to class ready to take part in these conversations. You are expected to come to class having completed the assigned reading for the week, to participate in class discussions, and to actively listen to lecture, in-class films, and your classmates. Please note that simply showing up is NOT sufficient to get full points for in-class participation. Your participation in discussion as well as your engagement in class throughout the semester will figure into your “participation” grade. You will be granted three “free” absences for illness, family emergency, etc. before your absences will begin counting against your grade. I keep a daily record of participation on a check/plus/minus scale. Attendance without participation will earn you a check-minus (half-points for the day); attendance with some participation will earn you a check (85% of points for the day); active participation will earn you a check-plus (full points for the day). By “active

participation,” I expect that you will be clearly listening to lecture or discussion and contributing to the discussion. If you want to know how you are doing or how you might improve this part of your grade, feel free to come and discuss it with me in office hours. Altogether, your participation counts for 25% of your final grade.

You will be expected to post responses to the readings on D2L ten times over the course of the term. These must be up by 11:59pm on the night preceding class discussion of the readings (listed on the syllabus). Your responses should be short (about a paragraph in length—no more than a page) and should demonstrate that you have done the readings and thought carefully about them. You may use the week’s thematic question(s) as a jumping off point, or can focus on something else that struck you. If you were confused about something in the reading, feel free to note it here and I will be sure to go over it in class. Altogether, these responses make up 25% of your grade. Please use your “off” weeks responsibly—I will be keeping track of how many posts you have made, but it is your responsibility to be sure that you have completed the assigned number. If you are not sure where you stand, please check in with me.

There will be two group projects in this class: one on quantitative and qualitative research methods, and the other on history and memory. Each project is worth 10% of your final grade. These will be graded BOTH on the basis of the work of your group as a whole and on your individual contribution to that group. Accordingly, you will submit a short (approximately 250 word) reflection on each project, explaining how you think about the issue under consideration.

#### 4-Point Scale:

On your final transcript grade, the scaling for the 4-point grades are as follows:

4.0	92-100%
3.5	86-91%
3.0	80-85%
2.5	75-79%
2.0	70-74%
1.5	65-69%
1.0	60-64%
0	0-59%

#### Readings:

All readings for this course are available online on JSTOR, except where noted. There is a link to the library website on our ANGEL page. You are responsible for downloading the articles and reading them in time for class discussions. You should either bring printed or electronic copies to class (with your notes) to aid you in discussion.

## UNIT ONE: THEORY, SOCIOLOGY, ECONOMICS

### **Week One: Theory, Evidence, and Asking the Right Questions**

Monday, Jan. 12: Introduction: Is History a Social Science?

Wednesday, Jan. 14: The Value of Facts; Reading Discussion

#### Reading:

Edward Hallett Carr, "The Historian and His Facts," in *What is History?*, 3-35

Sam Wineburg, "Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts," *The Phi Delta Kappan*, Vol. 80, No. 7 (March, 1999), 488-499

#### Thematic Question:

What is the goal of history? In what ways is history a social science? What is a fact?

### **Week Two: Quantitative Methods**

Monday, Jan. 19: MLK DAY, NO CLASS

Wednesday, Jan. 21: From Counting to Regressions: What Numbers Tell us About History

#### Reading:

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "The Living Mother of a Living Child": Midwifery and Mortality in Post-Revolutionary New England," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Jan., 1989,) 27-48

Steven Ruggles, "The Transformation of American Family Structure," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 99, No. 1 (Feb., 1994), 103-128

#### Thematic Question:

What is the value of quantitative methodologies? What are their limits?

### **Week Three: Racial Theory and Race in America**

Monday, Jan. 26: The Development of Race in Early America

Wednesday, Jan. 28: Reading Discussion

#### Reading:

Peggy Pascoe, "Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, and Ideologies of 'Race' in Twentieth-Century America," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (June, 1996), 44-69

Michelle Brattain, "Race, Racism, and Antiracism: UNESCO and the Politics of Presenting Science to the Postwar Public," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 112, No. 5 (Dec. 2007), 1386-1413

#### Thematic Question:

What is race? How has its definition changed over time, and what effect have those changes had?

#### **Week Four: “Microhistory” as Ethnography?**

Monday, Feb. 2: In-class film: “A Midwife’s Tale”

Wednesday, Feb. 4: Discussion of Film and Reading; Team assignments

##### Reading:

Richard D. Brown, “Microhistory and the Post-Modern Challenge,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Spring, 2003), 1-20

Jill Lepore, “Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 88, No. 1 (June 2001), 129-144

##### Thematic Questions:

Ulrich is creating a “microhistory”—what does this mean? How is it like ethnography? How does it tell us about a broader story? If the Ulrich article from two weeks ago is part of the same project that resulted in *A Midwife’s Tale*, can you get a sense of some of the different ways that she constructed her microhistory? How is she using her evidence to tell certain kinds of stories in these different venues?

#### **Week Five: Quantitative vs. Qualitative Methods**

Monday, Feb. 9: No class—meet in your teams to prepare for Thursday

Wednesday, Feb. 11: In-class activity, presentations

##### Assignment:

The goal of this project is to help you think about the different benefits and setbacks of quantitative and qualitative methods. This is a group project, and you are expected to work together as a team using the provided primary sources as well as some suggested secondary sources. As a group, you will be assigned a certain subset of runaway slave advertisements to look at in order to form an argument about what sorts of slaves ran away and why. Each group will have a different sample size, and will accordingly find different types of methods most useful to make a story out of their data. As a class, we will discuss on Wednesday what seemed the most useful way for you to make sense of these records, what was difficult, and what you think this means.

Reading: There is a list of recommended sources on the assignment sheet. You should plan on doing some reading of these sources or others that you find (please do inform me of these) as you work on your project.

### **Week Six: Economics, Slavery, Race**

Monday, Feb. 16: The Capitalism of Slavery

Wednesday, Feb. 18: #economistbookreviews

#### Reading:

Walter Johnson, "The Chattel Principle," and "Turning People into Products," in *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* [e-book for free on library website]

Edward E. Baptist, "'Cuffy,' 'Fancy Maids,' and 'One-Eyed Men': Rape, Commodification, and the Domestic Slave Trade in the United States," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 106, No. 5 (Dec., 2001), 1619-1650

#### Thematic Question:

Was slavery capitalist? How? How not?

### **Week Seven: Women and Work**

Monday, Feb. 23: In-class film: "The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter"

Wednesday, Feb. 25: Film and Reading Discussion

#### Reading:

Linda Gordon, "Social Insurance and Public Assistance: The Influence of Gender in Welfare Thought in the United States, 1890-1935," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (Feb., 1992), 19-54

Elizabeth S. More, "'The Necessary Factfinding Has Only Just Begun': Women, Social Science, and the Reinvention of the 'Working Mother' in the 1950s". *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 8 (2011), 974-1005.

#### Thematic Question:

What are the links between the economy and society? How does economic change relate to social change?

### **Week Eight: The Global Effects of the US Economy**

Monday, March 2: Early American Globalization

Wednesday, March 4: Reading Discussion

#### Reading:

Adam McKeown, "Periodizing Globalization," *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 63, (Spring 2007), 218-230 [on Project Muse]

Sven Beckert, "From Tuskegee to Togo: The Problem of Freedom in the Empire of Cotton," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 92, No. 2 (Sept. 2005), 498-526

#### Thematic Question:

When did globalization start? How has it changed over time?

## **UNIT TWO: ANTHROPOLOGY, MEMORY, AND THE USES OF HISTORY**

### **Week Nine: Historical Archeology**

Monday, Mar. 16: In-class film: "Jane: Starvation, Cannibalism, and Endurance at Jamestown"

Wednesday, Mar. 18: Discussion of film and reading

#### Reading:

James A. Delle and Jason Shellenhamer, "Archaeology at the Parvin Homestead: Searching for the Material Legacy of the Underground Railroad," *Historical Archeology*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (2008), 38-62

Cheryl J. La Roche and Michael L. Blakey, "Seizing Intellectual Power: The Dialogue at the New York African Burial Ground," *Historical Archeology*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (1997), 84-106.

#### Thematic Question:

How does archeological evidence alter our understanding of the past? What is the role of this kind of study in contemporary discussions? What does the story of "Jane" tell us about early America that we didn't know before?

### **Week Ten: Native Americans: Subjects of History or Anthropology?**

Monday, Mar. 23: Anthropology and Racial Studies at the Worlds' Fairs

Wednesday, Mar. 25: Reading Discussion

#### Reading:

Danielle LaVaque-Manty, "There are Indians in the Museum of Natural History," *Wicazo Sa Review*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Spring, 2000), 71-89

Elizabeth A. Fenn, "Whither the Rest of the Continent," *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Summer, 2004), 167-175

#### Thematic Question:

What, and who, counts as part of American history? Why have Native Americans' stories been made a part of a natural history narrative in ways that other groups' stories have not?

### **Week Eleven: The Politics of Memory, I**

Monday, Mar. 30: In-class film: "Nat Turner: A Troublesome Property"

Wednesday, April 1: Reading and Film Discussion; Group Assignment

#### Reading:

Margot Minardi, *Making Slavery History: Abolitionism and the Politics of Memory in Massachusetts*, ch. 1

Michael Kammen, "The American Past Politicized: Uses and Misuses of History," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 617 (May 2008), 42-57

#### Thematic Question:

How is memory different than history? How does memory affect the way history is told? What are the implications of this?

### **Week Twelve: The Politics of Memory, II: Thomas Nast**

Monday, April 6: NO class—meet in your teams to prepare for Thursday

Wednesday, Apr. 8: In-class activity, debate

#### Assignment:

In 2011, Thomas Nast was nominated for the fourth time to take a place in the New Jersey Hall of Fame. Each time, his nomination was rejected due to considerable controversy about how he ought to be remembered. Nast was an important political cartoonist of the nineteenth century, when he created the illustration of the Republican elephant and Democratic donkey and many cartoons about Reconstruction politics. His work was also marked by a deep anti-Catholicism. How ought the legacy of this artist, and other people of the past like him, be remembered by people today? For this assignment, you will be divided into two groups and have an in-class debate on Wednesday considering the question of whether Nast deserves to take a place in the Hall of Fame for his contributions as an artist.

### **Week Thirteen: Public and Private Lives**

Monday, Apr. 13: Jefferson and Character

Wednesday, Apr. 15: Reading Discussion

#### Reading:

Jacob Katz Cogan, "The Reynolds Affair and the Politics of Character," *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Autumn, 1996), 389-417

John H. Summers, "What Happened to Sex Scandals? Politics and Peadilloes, Jefferson to Kennedy," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 87, No. 3 (Dec., 2000), 825-854

#### Thematic Question:

How have ideas changed over time about the ways that politicians' private lives affect their public lives and political personas?

### **Week Fourteen: Psychology, Gender, and History**

Monday, Apr. 20: In-class film: "The Lobotomist"

Wednesday, Apr. 22: Film and Reading Discussion

#### Reading:

Laura Briggs, "The Race of Hysteria: 'Overcivilization' and the 'Savage' Woman in Late Nineteenth-Century Obstetrics and Gynecology," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (June, 2000), 246-273

K.A. Cuordileone, "'Politics in an Age of Anxiety': Cold War Political Culture and the Crisis in American Masculinity, 1949-1960," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 87, No. 2 (Sept. 2000), 515-545

#### Thematic Question:

How do ideas about psychology and psychological problems change over time? What social factors (gender, race, etc.) shape these developments? From the other angle, how do ideas about these psychological issues affect history?

### **Week Fifteen: History, Experts, and Facts**

Monday, Apr. 27: "History on Trial": The Sears Case and Expert Testimony

Wednesday, Apr. 29: Reading Discussion

#### Reading:

Alice Kessler-Harris, "Equal Employment Opportunity Commission v. Sears, Roebuck and Company: A Personal Account," *Feminist Review*, No. 25 (Spring, 1987,) 46-69  
Brief of *Amici Curiae* Historians in Windsor v. United States of America (posted on website)

#### Thematic Questions:

What is the use of history to current affairs and policy? How should historians act to serve the public, and how much should history bear on today?

#### In-Class Viewing:

Nancy Cott testimony in Prop. 8 Trial Re-enactment, begins at 38:38

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1RKTu8XpVQ>

**Final Paper Due: Wednesday, May 6**