

Historical Methods

Fall 2009

Mondays and Wednesdays: 3:15- 4:30 pm

Dr. Edward Wang

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COURSE TEXTS:

John Tosh, *Historians on History* (London: Pearson/Longman, second edition, 2009)

Conal Furay et al, *The Methods and Skills of History*, (Harlan Davidson, Inc. 2000)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course introduces student to the tradition of historical writing and its modern transformation and the knowledge of historical methodology. Students will study not only how historians in the past wrote history and developed interpretations of events, figures, texts, and activities, they will also learn about the skills and methods in conducting historical study on their own and the distinction between history and historiography. As an intensive writing course, this course is required of all history majors after completing six credit hours of history courses.

COURSE GOALS:

This course aims to provide a general introduction to the nature and method of history and help students acquire necessary skills in historical study and approach a good understanding of the nature of history. More specifically, it will introduce students to the use of both library and internet references and the variety and types of primary sources. It will also teach students how to review, examine, and interpret both primary and secondary sources for historical research. In addition to several kinds of exercises (book reviews, research proposals, bibliographies, etc.), students are required to write a historiographical essay to complete the course.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Designed as a writing intensive course, this course provides a variety of writing exercises for students to help them learn about the work of a historian and acquire writing skills in history for their academic pursuits at both college and post-college levels. In addition to a historiographical essay (15 pages minimum), students are required to write short papers of different kinds in and outside classes and complete selectively class exercises offered in Furay's book. The grading policy is as follows:

1. Historiographical essay (15 pages, double spaced, with bibliography, due at the end of this semester): 1/3

2. Types/printed short papers combined: 1/3

3. Class/Blackboard participation and exercises: 1/3

IMPORTANT NOTE: Class assignment reading and exercises should be completed before coming to class. Exercise answers shall be written in the space provided in the text manual unless otherwise instructed. Please keep abreast of any changes that may be made in the typed or in class writing requirement. All work must be handed in on time and answers to weekly Blackboard discussions are due each Sunday noon.

Late papers will NOT be accepted and an F will be recorded for that particular assignment. There will be NO make-ups for in class writing assignments. INCOMPLETES will have a C as the highest grade for the course. The incomplete must be requested in writing with a verifiable excuse. Failure to submit a historiographical essay on time will result in a grade of F.

Attendance is essential for the successful completion of this course. Participation in class activities and Blackboard discussions are mandatory. Non-attendance is non-participation. Papers will not be accepted from non-attending students.

The historiographical essay is the term paper for this course, which constitutes the final examination. It should indicate students' awareness of both the intellectual as well as the scholarly nature of historical research and writing. The essay ought to involve the reading of many historians who have written interpretations of a historical incident selected by the student. By doing all of the exercises and following the instructions carefully in the syllabus, students should have no difficulty preparing a satisfactory essay. No one passes this course without completing a satisfactory historiographical essay.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Week	Assignments	Topics	Discussion Topic (in class and on Blackboard)
(1) Sept. 2	Tosh, Introduction;	Introduction: History vs.	Can you explain why historians create the word

	<p>Furay, chapter 13;</p> <p>1) Exercise: Set A, exercise 1 (Furay, pp. 7-8);</p> <p>2) crossword puzzle (Furay, p. 240)</p>	Historiography	“historiography”?
(2) Sept. 9	<p>Tosh, Parts one and two;</p> <p>Furay, chapter 1;</p> <p>1) Exercise: Set A, exercise 2 and Set B (Furay, pp. 8-9);</p> <p>2) Exercise: Set A and B (Furay, pp. 17-26); complete some in class and do the rest after class.</p>	The Nature and Goal of History	What has made you a history major and how history is attractive to you?
(3) Sept. 14-16	<p>Tosh, Parts three and four;</p> <p>Furay, chapter 2;</p> <p>Write a short essay (250 words) in class on the topic: what is the most important reason for studying history? Pay attention to the topic sentence and the danger of plagiarism.</p>	The Uses of History	What is your career goal in relation with your study of history?
(4) Sept. 21-23	<p>Tosh, Part five and six;</p> <p>Furay, chapter 3;</p> <p>1) Exercise: Set A and B (Furay, pp. 32-40);</p>	Continuity and Change	What is “historical mindedness”?

	2) Exercise: Find a historical monograph in the library and discuss its “historical thinking.”		
(5) Sept. 28-30 Review of Tosh’ book due Sept. 30.	Tosh, Part seven; Furay, chapter 4; 1) Exercise: Set A and B (Furay, pp. 49-61) 2) Write a 5-page review of Tosh’s book, summarizing its main points, describing its categorizations of different genres in historiography and explaining whether or not the book helps you understand historical study.	Causality in History	What interests you more: describing historical events or explain their causes?
(6) Oct. 5-7	Furay, chapter 5; 1) Exercise: Set A and B (Furay, pp. 68-76); 2) Find a historical source book or document and explain its use.	Historical Context	What does it mean by “contextualizing history”?
(7) Oct. 12-14 Virtual Visit to the Rowan Library	Furay, chapter 6; Exercises: Set A and B (Furay, pp. 88-103)	Using the Library	How useful is Internet for historical research and why (give an example)?
(8) Oct. 19-21 Paper topic due Oct. 21.	Furay, chapter 7; 1) Exercise: Set A and B (Furay, pp.	Reading History	Is reading history a fun experience to you (explain why)?

	<p>112-129).</p> <p>2) Find a topic for your historiographical essay and write a one-page introduction. Get the topic approved by the instructor.</p>		
<p>(9) Oct. 26-28</p> <p>Movie Critique due Oct. 28.</p>	<p>Furay, chapter 8;</p> <p>1) Exercise (Furay, pp. 138);</p> <p>2) Expand to a 4-page critique of a history-based movie.</p>	History on Film	Why some movie makers make the claim that their movies are based on real events?
<p>(10) Nov. 2-4</p> <p>Bibliography Due Nov. 4</p>	<p>Furay, chapter 9;</p> <p>1) Exercise: Set A and B (Furay, pp. 150-168)</p> <p>2) Hand in a bibliography for your historiographical essay. Present reasons why you have chosen them in the class (different arguments, different source materials, different style, different contents, etc.).</p>	Historical Evidence	What constitutes credible evidence?
<p>(11) Nov. 9-11</p>	<p>Furay, chapter 10;</p> <p>1) Exercises: Set A and B (Furay, pp. 176-181).</p>	Oral History	Human memory is unreliable, why oral history?
<p>(12) Nov. 16-18</p> <p>Class Presentations</p>	<p>Furay, chapter 11;</p> <p>1) Exercise: Set A and B (Furay, pp.</p>	Interpretation	What is the most important reason for reinterpreting history (give an example)?

	191-205) 2) Class presentation on your research for the historiographical paper.		
(13) Nov. 23-25 Paper draft due Nov. 25 Class presentations	Furay, chapter 12; 1) Exercise: (Furay, pp. 218-225) 2) Class presentation continued as needed.	Writing History	What makes history writing different from literary writing?
(14) Nov. 30-Dec. 2	Reread Furay, chapter 13; Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" (find it on the Blackboard) Revising your historiographical paper after its being peer-critiqued.	Historiography Reconsidered Women/Gender history as an example	What is the key difference between women's history and gender history?
(15) Dec. 7-9 Class presentations continue as needed	Furay, chapter 14 1) Exercise: (Furay, pp. 248-255); 2) Class presentations.	History and Other Disciplines	What makes history distinct from other disciplines?
(16) Dec. 14	Reread Tosh, Part six; Locate and check out a book from the library that in your opinion reflects new trends in historical study	Recent Trends in History: Postmodernism and Postcolonialism	What is the most serious postmodern challenge to historical study?
(17) Dec. 15-19 Finals Week; Final			

paper due this
week on
Blackboard

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