

# AMH 6199

## Readings in Nineteenth Century U.S. History

**Matt Gallman**  
**Fall 2015**

**Wednesdays, periods 8-10, K-F 013**

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**office hours: TBD**

### *Overview*

This seminar serves as one of the department's three "foundation courses" in American history. The selected readings are intended as an introduction to the wide array of topics and methodologies that are of interest to historians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. You will note that the list of required texts and book review titles includes a few fairly old classics, several monographs that have helped frame scholarly discourse over the last several years, and quite a few very new books that reflect the current state of the field. The books also divide between those written by very senior historians and first monographs by junior scholars. Much of our time will be devoted to placing these books into various historiographic conversations.

### *Assignments*

Each student will be responsible for all of the following:

- ***Attend each class prepared to discuss the assigned readings.*** That should include preparing written notes (as opposed to relying on underlinings). Your notes should include issues that you would like to raise in discussion: points that you found interesting, problematic, surprising, and so on. You should walk into seminar prepared to help shape the discussion, rather than simply expecting to respond to the comments of others. On any given day I might call on any member of the class to set up the discussion with an overview of the main reading.
- ***Submit 3 to 5 discussion questions in response to each reading.*** These should be questions that you believe will help generate an interesting discussion in class. (Not simple factual questions or "fill in the blank" queries.) You should preface your questions with some explanation of why you feel the topics are worth pursuing. These questions should be emailed to me and to the two student leaders by 10 pm on Tuesday before class. These questions should demonstrate that you have completed a close reading of the assignment, and have a sense of the crucial issues for discussion.
- ***Write two "review essays" discussing three titles (1,000 words).*** In most cases you will be responding to two books that we have read as a class, in conjunction with a third title on a related topic. The goal here will be to work on writing skills and also to focus on how books are often in conversation with each other, even when their topics are not identical. You will be able to choose from various topics noted below. These short review essays will be due in class on the day noted in the syllabus (so plan accordingly).
- ***Prepare one longer (2,500 to 3,000 word) historiographic essay on a specific topic in 19<sup>th</sup> Century American history.*** Unlike some such essays, which call for a quick gloss on a long list of titles, these essays should reflect a close reading of 5-6 books. You may (and usually should) use one of the assigned readings to anchor your essay, but the other books should be

titles that are new to you for this essay. This essay should consider at least three new books, in addition to the assigned titles and the books you used in your shorter review essays. Your titles should include at least one book that is a “classic” in the field (usually more than 20 years old). I have prepared a list of suggested themes. You may select topics that are not on this list, but you must make the case that the themes are sufficiently broad and interesting, and the titles are significant. A brief proposal will be due on November 18th. The final essay will be due on the last day of class.

- **Help lead one class discussion.** You will work in pairs to help frame class discussions. Partners should meet together and then with me in advance of class to discuss the themes. Of course it would be wise to integrate the historiographic essays with the classes you are leading.

### **Grading**

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|---|-----|
| • Preparation and participation<br>[Includes leading class] | 40% |
| • Weekly questions  | 10% |
| • Two Short Review Essays                                   | 20% |
| • Final Historiographic Essay                               | 30% |

### **Attendance and Deadlines**

Needless to say, you are expected to attend each seminar meeting (on time!). Absence from more than one meeting will result in a major grade reduction. I have never had a student miss more than two class meetings, but I imagine that the consequences would be dire.

All deadlines are final. I do not give extensions or incompletes except in extraordinary cases of unanticipated personal or medical issues.

### **Required Readings [dates are generally for latest version]**

Nancy Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835*, 2nd Edition (Yale 1997). This is one of the true foundational texts in the study of antebellum America. Be sure to read the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, including the new author's preface.

Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (JHU Press, 2009). This is a model for rethinking the meaning of labor history.

Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge University Press, 2008). A superb reconsideration of the southern plantation household.

Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Belknap Press, 2013). This is probably the most important book about slavery published in the last decade. At this writing this book is only available in hardback, but it is a reasonably priced HB. Also note that Johnson's book is much longer than Glymph's. You might want to plan accordingly and start *River of Dark Dreams* early.

Eliot West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, & the Rush to Colorado* (University of Kansas, 1998). West's book won a stack of prizes. It combines a rethinking of western history with a superb analysis of environmental history.

Stephen Mihm, *A Nation of Counterfeiters: Capitalists, Con Men, and the Making of the United States* (Harvard, 2009). This is a very clever window into the history of capitalism. A fun read.

Gary Gallagher, *The Union War* (Harvard, 2012). A prize winning book that seeks to understand why northerners went to war.

Drew Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (Vintage, 2009). A quite brilliant study about the meaning of death in wartime, by the current president of Harvard.

Greg Downs, *After Appomattox: Military Occupation and the Ends of War* (Harvard, 2015). The other recent book that is at this writing only available in hardback. This is one of the hottest books about the postwar years. (We will read in conjunction with a lecture by Gary Gallagher.)

Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (Oxford, 2009). The study of the populists had seemed to be a dead topic until Postel wrote this great book.

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### ***Class Topics and Readings (all Wednesdays)***

#### **August 26            INTRODUCTIONS**

Thoughts on reading, writing, and note taking

#### **September 2        GENDER ROLES IN ANTEBELLUM NEW ENGLAND**

Nancy Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*

#### **September 9        ANTEBELLUM LABOR AND CLASS**

Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore*

**Review Essay Option #1: Antebellum Gender and Class.**

Student Leaders #1

#### **September 16      RETHINKING THE PLANTATION HOUSEHOLD: RACE, GENDER AND SERVITUDE**

Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*

Student Leaders #2

#### **September 23      SLAVERY AND EMPIRE**

Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*

Scott Reynolds Nelson, "Who Put Their Capitalism in My Slavery?" *The Journal of the Civil War Era* vol 5 2 (June 2015): 289-310.

**Review Essay Option #2: Slavery.**

Student Leaders #3

#### **September 30      THE WEST AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

Elliot West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, & the Rush to Colorado*

Student Leaders #4

#### **October 7            CAPITALISTS AND CON MEN**

Stephen Mihm, *A Nation of Counterfeiters*

**Review Essay Option #3: Capitalism.**

Student Leaders #5

**October 14 THE CIVIL WAR: WHY THEY FOUGHT**Gary Gallagher, *The Union War***October 21 THE CIVIL WAR: COMING TO TERMS WITH DEATH**Drew Faust, *This Republic of Suffering***Review Essay Option #4: The Civil War.**

Student Leaders #6

**October 28 RECONSTRUCTION?**Greg Downs, *After Appomattox*

Watch: Gary Gallagher, "Surrender of the Confederacy." Lecture given at Gettysburg College, June 20, 2015.

<http://www.c-span.org/video/?326466-6/discussion-confederate-surrender>**November 4 INTERPRETING RECONSTRUCTION**

Individual presentations. See list below.

**Review Essay Option #5: Reconstruction.**

You should have met me by the end of this week to discuss your final paper topic.

**November 11 VETERAN'S DAY – NO CLASS MEETING**

Work on final papers.

**November 18 THE POPULISTS**Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision***Final Essay Proposals Due in Class**

- Title and short paragraph summarizing the main issues you intend to explore.
- Tentative list of 5-6 titles. You should have already looked at these books at this point and met with me to discuss your topic.

**November 25 THANKSGIVING - NO CLASS MEETING****December 2 DISCUSSION: TEACHING THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY****December 9 FINAL CLASS MEETING**

Final Essays due in class

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## Books for short review essays:

### **Option #1: ANTEBELLUM GENDER AND CLASS**

- Core books:
  - Cott
  - Rockman
- Additional Book (select one)
  - Bruce Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (2006)
  - Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic* (1984)
  - Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (1987)
  - Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds* (1997)

### **Option #2: SLAVERY AND RACE**

- Core books:
  - Johnson
  - Glymph
- Additional Book (select one)
  - Walter Johnson, *Soul By Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (2001)
  - Dylan Penningroth, *The Claims of Kinfolk* (2002)
  - Anthony Kaye, *Joining Places* (2007)
  - John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionism and the Transformation of Race* (2002)
  - Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (rev. ed., 1999)
  - Edward Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (2014)

### **Option #3: THE CIVIL WAR**

- Core books:
  - Gallagher
  - Faust
- Additional Book (select one)
  - Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (2012)
  - Judy Giesberg, *Army at Home: Women and the Civil War on the Northern Home Front* (2012)
  - Adam I. P. Smith, *No Party Now: Politics in the Civil War North* (2006)
  - Stephen Berry, *All That Makes A Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South* (2003)
  - Don Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the American Civil War* (2015)

### **Option #4: THE RISE OF CAPITALISM**

- Core book: Mihm
- Two Additional Books
  - Sven, Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (2014)
  - Edward Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (2014) [No, you can't use this book twice!]

- Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (1992)
- John Larson, *The Market Revolution in America: Liberty, Ambition, and the Eclipse of the Common Good* (2009)
- Scott Reynolds Nelson, “Who Put Their Capitalism in My Slavery?” *The Journal of the Civil War Era* vol 5 2 (June 2015): 289-310.

#### **Option #5: RECONSTRUCTION**

- Core Book: Downs and Gary Gallagher, “Surrender of the Confederacy.” Lecture given at Gettysburg College, June 20, 2015.
- Two additional books (One of these can be your book for November 4<sup>th</sup>.)
  - Heather Cox Richardson, *West from Appomattox: The Reconstruction of America After the Civil War* (2008)
  - Mark Summers, *The Ordeal of the Reunion: A New History of Reconstruction* (2014)
  - Caroline Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation*
  - Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (2008)
  - Jim Downs, *Sick from Freedom: African-American Illness and Suffering during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (2012)
  - David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (2002)
  - Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (2005)
  - Eric Foner, *Reconstruction* (1989)

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#### **A further note on the Historiographic Review Essays**

As in most historical writing, a good historiographic review essay depends on the selection of a good question and good sources (the books). Ideally, your texts will engage with each other either explicitly or in ways that can be clearly articulated and examined. You want to select a topic that is interesting and has attracted some scholarly attention. That allows for you to engage in some interesting analysis. What are the main arguments? What theoretical perspectives frame the analysis? What sorts of evidence does each author use? Neglect?

The key then is to select a topic that is sufficiently broad so that you can identify valuable books to read and consider. In many cases I hope that your essay will in some way inform your own scholarship. But as you make your selections, think about theoretical and interpretive insights, rather than simply books that might be empirically useful to your work. For instance, if you wish to write a dissertation about Florida during the Civil War, you probably should not choose that as the topic for a review essay. I suspect that you would find the available scholarship would offer some valuable factual information but not particularly interesting fodder for historiographic analysis.

Guidelines:

Write about at least five books.

Select at least three books that were not part of our core readings, part of your short review essays, or books you have previously read. (That means you might choose to write about more than 5 books.)

Length should be about 2,500 to 3,000 words.

Please include a title page, page numbers, and a Works Cited page.

Here are some broad topics that illustrate what I have in mind:

**Women in public.** How have scholars reconsidered the public arena and the role of women in that sort of political discourse?

**The Market Revolution.** What did this mean? How and where did it first emerge? How did these changes affect society?

**Slavery and Agency.** How have scholars understood the power exercised by enslaved people?

**Slavery and Capitalism.** How have scholars understood the institution of slavery, and its role in American economic development?

**Antebellum Southern Politics and Society.** How have scholars explained the South's path to secession?

**Politics and Secession.** How has the scholarship on the coming of the Civil War changed over time?

**Nationalism and the Civil War.** What did nationalism mean in a Civil War context? How have scholars understood the term? How did nationalism shape the war years.

**The Civil War and Memory.** How has the scholarship on Civil War memory evolved since the publication of David Blight's *Race and Reunion*? What are the core concerns?

**Politics in the Streets.** How have urban historians reconsidered the meaning of politics, civic ritual, and collective violence?

**Race, Gender, and Imperialism.** How have gender scholars examined the relationship between gender and America's role abroad?