

University of Florida
Department of History
Spring 2021

AMH4930: Research Seminar on Railroads in American Life

Professor Sean Adams
Tuesdays, Period 7-9 (1:55-4:55 p.m.)
Matherly Hall 0015

Course Introduction and Objectives

This research seminar explores the role that railroads played in the economic, social, and cultural development of the United States. From their origins in the early 19th century through their decline during the era of the automobile, the railroad served as an engine of development, a symbol of mobility, an agent of colonialism, and much more. Railroads could knit the nation together and conquer time and space; they also could provoke violent strikes, inspire anger among farmers, and serve as a magnet for criminals, hucksters, and unsavory elements looking for a fast getaway. The railroad therefore was much more than a transport device, it was an American icon.

As this is both a reading and research seminar with a thematic focus, the course will split time between a broad survey of themes in the memory of the Civil War Era and a hands-on research workshop allowing students to explore their own particular interests within this topic. The end result of this seminar will be a 15 to 20 page paper based upon primary sources. Along the way, students will develop skills in historical research that will involve the use of manuscript, published, microfilmed, and online source materials. They will also hone their writing skills with various short papers and the aforementioned research paper.

Required and Recommended Readings

There are several required texts and some film for this course. Three (3) of these books are available for purchase both online and at the UF Book Store; you will have a choice of readings and can secure them by whatever method you choose. Since this is a seminar, the success of the course depends upon the students completing, contemplating, and discussing the weekly readings. The reading schedule will provide a structure for completing these readings, and it is of the utmost importance that you adhere to this schedule. Not doing the readings will likely result in a failing grade for this course, as a hefty portion of the grade depends upon participation.

The core books required for purchase are:

Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2014 [1977]).

Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2012.

R. Scott Huffard, *Engines of Redemption: Railroads and the Reconstruction of Capitalism in the New South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2019.

We will discuss the other reading/viewing assignments over the course of the semester. Some of these will entail a choice of your own, so please plan accordingly.

Grading Policy

Students will be evaluated on a number of assignments in this class. Most important will be the final paper, which will be due on Thursday, 29 April 2021 at 5:00 pm. Students will also write various response papers at various points of the semester. More details on these response papers, along with formal guidelines for the research prospectus and presentation, will be made available in class.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

The final grade breakdown is as follows:

Grade Calculation	Grading Scale	Grade Value
Participation 25%	100-93=A	A=4.0
Short Response Papers 30%	92-90=A-	A-=3.67
Paper Prospectus 10%	89-87=B+	B+=3.33
Research Presentation 10%	86-82=B	B=3.00
Final Paper 25%	82-80=B-	B-=2.67
	79-76=C+	C+=2.33
	75-72=C	C=2.00
	71-69=C-	C-=1.67
	68-66=D+	D+=1.33
	65-62=D	D=1.00
	61-60=D-	D-=0.67
	59-0=E	E=0.00

The COVID-19 pandemic has made this seminar challenging. We will hold sessions simultaneously on Zoom and in person. With this in mind, I'd like to ask for patience as we collectively try to make the best of this situation. I will keep you informed of any changes in our seminar; please do the same for me and let me know if there are any pandemic-related concerns on your part.

Here is the official policy of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences on Zoom participation, as of 6 January 2021:

Participation in our class is fundamental since improving oral conversation skills is a key objective of the course. Thus, students are required to have their cameras on from start to finish during our classes on Zoom. A default setting for our sessions in Zoom is that participants will be muted when they enter, so you will unmute yourself when you comment orally during our whole-group conversations and when you are in small groups. Your instructor may also ask students to reply in the chat box for specific activities. Oral comments on camera and written comments in the chat box are considered activities for participation. If you have technical issues, please immediately consult UF IT Help to resolve them and then contact your instructor. Zoom sessions will not be recorded by the instructor and may not be recorded by students. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded material is prohibited

Please do not hesitate to contact the instructor during the semester if you have any individual concerns or issues that need to be discussed in terms of accessibility. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Disability Resource Center (<https://disability.ufl.edu/>). The DSO will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code." On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor and Student Conduct Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class, as it constitutes intellectual theft and academic dishonesty. If you turn in the work of others and try to pass it off as your own,

you will fail that assignment and risk expulsion from the University of Florida. I will give you the guidelines, expectations, and other information regarding the written work in this course, so you really have no reason to cheat. I take these matters very seriously and will prosecute vigorously if provoked. Any possible rewards derived from plagiarism simply don't justify the risk! All students must conform to UF's honesty policy regarding cheating, plagiarism, and the use of copyrighted materials. Your major assignments will be monitored with the Turnitin AntiPlagiarism Service, so please keep in mind that cheating on the assignments in this course will be much more difficult than actually doing the work.

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Seminar Schedule (Subject to Revision by Instructor)

12 January	Course Introductions and Expectations
19 January	The Human Impact of Railroads Reading: Schivelbusch, <i>The Railway Journey</i>
26 January	Three Episodes of American Railroad History Reading: David Schley, "A Natural History of the Early American Railroad," <i>Early American Studies</i> 13 (2015): 443-466; Troy Rondinone, "Guarding the Switch: Cultivating Nationalism During the Pullman Strike," <i>The Journal of the Gilded Age & Progressive Era</i> 8 (2009): 83-109; Rosemary Pearce, "Murder on the Kansas City Special? Pullman Porters, Emotions, and the Strange Case of J.H. Wilkins," <i>Journal of American Studies</i> 53 (2019): 683-702. These readings are available on the Canvas site.

- 2 February Railroaded, Part 1
 Reading: White, *Railroaded*, pp. 1-224.
- 9 February Railroaded, Part 2
 Reading, White, *Railroaded*, pp. 225-518
Brief Essay Due
- 16 February Railroading in the South
 Readings: Huffard, *Engines of Redemption*
- 23 February Literary Accounts of Riding the Rails
 Choose one (1) of the following books:

 Jack Black, *You Can't Win* (1926)
 Harry Bedwell, *The Boomer: A Story of the Rails* (1942)
 Woody Guthrie, *Bound for Glory* (1943)
 D. Sanders, *The Brasspounder* (1978)
- 2 March Railroads as Speculative Fiction:
 Choose one or more of the following:
 Watch the science fiction film *Snowpiercer* (2013)
 Read Colson Whitehead's alternative history novel *The Underground Railroad* (2016)
 Read China Mieville's "weird fiction" novel *The Iron Council* (2004)
 Watch at least 3 episodes of *Hell on Wheels* (AMC, 2011-16)
Brief Essay Due
- 9 March Primary Sources, I

16 March	Primary Sources, II Brief Essay Due
23 March	Research/Individual Conferences
30 March	Research/Individual Conferences
6 April	Research/Individual Conferences
13 April	Conference Session
20 April	Final Session

Final Paper Due: 29 April 2021, 5:00 p.m.

Contact Information

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10 am-12 pm; Wednesdays, 3-4 pm; & by appointment