

**HIS 3942 History Practicum:
The United States in the Seventies**

Instructor: Dr. Joseph Spillane

Classroom: Keene-Flint 236

Class Meeting Times: Tuesday 2-3 Periods (8:30 to 10:25 AM) and Thursday (9:35 to 10:25 AM)

Office Hours: Tuesdays, Noon to 3:00, and by appointment

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About this Course

As the “History Practicum” this course is intended to offer you the opportunity to learn in more detail just what it is that historians do, and how they do it. It is useful preparation for a number of things: for being a History major at the University of Florida, for doing your own original research papers and projects, and for being a more educated and thoughtful consumer of the history that others have written. Like every Practicum, the course is focused on a particular topic, in this case the United States in the decade of the nineteen seventies. The importance of the decade—or if it was important at all—has been much debated by historians of modern US history. In this course we will address a variety of topics, all of which serve as different windows into the dynamic of the decade. And if we don’t cover a topic of interest, no worries, because you will have the opportunity to prepare your own research prospectus, which can address anything of interest to you (as long as it implicates the United States in the Seventies).

This is a very hands-on sort of course. Learning how to be a historian means doing history, from the ground up. We will learn about the decade, but we will also practice all the elements of sound historical practice and methods. So be prepared to regularly attend class and actively engage in the work.

Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Distinguish between different types of historical sources, take effective notes on any given source, and evaluate their utility for historical research.
- Use the resources of the UF Libraries to locate relevant historical sources for any given research topic
- Ask effective historical research questions.
- Investigate the historiographical debates surrounding specific research topics.
- Prepare a research prospectus which displays proper understanding of formulating a research question, locating and documenting sources, and adherence to the conventions of writing in history.

- NOTE! Students who complete this course will also finish having learned a great deal about the United States in the Seventies, and should be able to write with confidence on many core issues in modern United States history.

Readings

There is only one textbook that needs to be purchased: Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, 10th edition (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2020). NOTE: The current edition of this textbook is the 10th edition. That's the one available through the UF bookstore, for example. However, I find that any edition from the 5th edition forward is quite suitable for this course. So feel free to purchase an older edition, used copy, if you would like to save yourself some money. BUT—you really must purchase a copy. It is essential for this course.

The remainder of the readings for the course are available electronically through the University of Florida Library, or online generally, and links to those readings will be available in the syllabus for each week of the course. Please make sure you're engaging with the readings, they will be key to what we are doing in the classroom and to your smaller assignments.

There are a great many broad histories and accounts of the decade. I will list some of them here, in case you are interested in learning more or thinking about potential research proposal ideas:

Edward D. Berkowitz, *Something Happened: A Political and Cultural Overview of the Seventies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

Thomas Borstelmann, *The 1970s: A New Global History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

Peter N. Carroll, *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened: America in the 1970s* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990).

Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010).

Alice Echols, *Shaky Ground: The Sixties and its Aftershocks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

Andrew J. Edelstein and Kevin McDonough, *The Seventies: From Hot Pants to Hot Tubs* (New York: Dutton, 1990).

Niall Ferguson, *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2011).

David Frum, *How We Got Here: The 70s: The Decade That Brought You Modern Life—For Better or Worse* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

Sherrie A. Inness, *Disco Divas: Women and Popular Culture in the 1970s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Roots, Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008).

Phillip Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Laura Kalman, *Right Star Rising: A New Politics, 1974-1980* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010).

Barbara Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014).

Judy Kutulas, *After Aquarius Dawned: How the Revolutions of the Sixties Became the Popular Culture of the Seventies* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 2017).

Daniel Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011)

Dominic Sandbrook, *Mad As Hell: The Crisis of the 1970s and the Rise of the Populist Right* (New York: Anchor Books, 2012).

Daniel Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2002).

Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven, 2010).

Shelton Waldrep, *The Seventies: The Age of Glitter in Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

Assignments

The course assignments are organized in the following way:

Individual classroom assignments: 60 points (6 assignments @ 10 points each)

Individual Canvas assignments: 40 points (4 assignments @ 10 points each)

Scavenger Hunt assignment: 50 points

Class Participation: 50 points

Preliminary Research Concept: 10 points

Final Research Proposal: 100 points

TOTAL POINTS: 310

Grading Scale

94-100%—A

90-93—A-minus

87-89—B-plus

84-86—B

80-83—B-minus

77-79—C-plus

74-76—C

70-73—C-minus

67-69—D-plus

64-66—D

60-63—D-minus

59 or below—E

Late Work and Make Up Work

No make-up assignments will be given except in cases of an excused absence as defined by UF's attendance policy – (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>) or a documented emergency. Notification of an excused absence should be made **BEFORE** to the assignment's deadline and not days later. For an emergency, instructor notification should be made within 72 hours post-emergency event and not weeks later. Students should be

prepared to document the reasons for the absence. Students whose absences are not excused will not normally be allowed to make up assignments.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is strictly prohibited. *Dishonesty includes cheating and plagiarism.*

Cheating encompasses acts such as, but not limited to, collaborating with other students on the class assignments when not directed or collaborating with others or unauthorized materials during an exam.

Plagiarism involves acts such as, but not limited to, failing to cite sources properly in written work, using phrases taken from original sources without proper quotations and citations, submitting all or part of papers that have been submitted to another class either in the past or during this current semester, and attempting to pass off someone else's ideas as your own. Plagiarism can occur in the absence of intent; it is your responsibility to make sure that you do not copy words or ideas from anyone, or generated by anybody (or anything) besides yourself, either purposefully or inadvertently. Cheating or plagiarism will result in penalties. It might be a zero on the assignment, an E in the class, or other disciplinary action. I may also elect to report academic dishonesty to the Dean of Students Office.

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 Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-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 me.

Extra Credit

This is a commonly-asked question, so please know that I will under no circumstances provide a student with an individualized extra-credit assignment. I also do not use "incompletes" except in the event of genuine problems (usually occurring after the withdrawal deadline) that are valid excuses for being unable to finish coursework on time. Your grade in the class is based on your performance on the assignments and final paper. Please do not come to me at the end of the semester asking for "extra" points. It is your responsibility to check Canvas regularly and to always know your current grade.

Disability Access

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students are required to meet with the instructor to discuss the appropriate accommodations required for the class. Just

simply emailing the instructor your accommodation letter with no further discussion will not suffice. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester. Additionally, if you were to experience an event during the semester that may require class accommodations, please reach out to the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible and provide me the documentation immediately following your visit, so that you are not delayed in receiving class accommodations.

Course Evaluation

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/> .

COURSE SCHEDULE

Note that more information for each week, including details on assignments and due dates, can be found on the course's Canvas page.

Week One (Tuesday January 9/Thursday January 11)—What is History? Why Study It?

What is history? What does it mean to “do” history? And what does one get from the study of history. This week, we will discuss some introductory readings on these questions, and we will also review the basic structure and goals of the course.

Required Readings:

Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History* (hereafter cited as Rampolla, *Pocket Guide*), Introduction: Why Study History?

Peter Stearns, “Why Study History? Revisited” *Perspectives on History* (September 2020); <https://www.historians.org/research-and-publications/perspectives-on-history/september-2020/why-study-history-revisited>

Lillian Guerra, “Why I Am A Historian: A Response to Mary Beth Norton,” *Perspectives on History* (September 2018); <https://www.historians.org/research-and-publications/perspectives-on-history/september-2018/why-i-am-a-historian-a-response-to-mary-beth-norton>

Week Two (Tuesday January 16/Thursday January 18)—What Makes A Decade?

A course organized around a single decade (“The Seventies”) necessarily begins with the question: why? What exactly is there about a “decade” that makes it worthy as an organizing framework for historical inquiry? What are the strengths and limitations of thinking about a moment in time called The Seventies? **Classroom Assignment 1 of 6.**

Required Readings:

American Yawp, Chapter Twenty-Eight, “The Unraveling”
<https://www.americanyawp.com/text/28-the-unraveling/>

Louis Menand, “The Seventies Show,” *The New Yorker* (May 20, 2001);
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2001/05/28/the-seventies-show>

Week Three (Tuesday January 23/Thursday January 25)—Nixon, Watergate, and Presidential Scandal

The “Watergate” scandal proved to be a seismic political and cultural event for the United States, and this week we will examine the events themselves, as well as the means with which historians have made sense of them. Our particular focus for this week—identifying primary sources and reading documents. **Classroom Assignment 2 of 6.**

Required Readings:

James W. McCord to Judge Sirica, March 19, 1973.

<https://www.nixonlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/McCord%27s%20letter%20to%20Judge%20Sirica%20p1%262.pdf>

Patrick Rael, How to Read a Primary Source, <https://courses.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/Rampolla>, *Pocket Guide*, “Working With Sources”

Week Four (Tuesday January 30/Thursday February 1)—The Fall of Saigon and the End of the Vietnam Era

The start the United States’ involvement in the Vietnam conflict is not easy to date with precision, though one could perhaps use 1955 as one starting point, when the United States took over responsibility for providing military training and support from the French. The “end” is similarly complicated, but it was certainly punctuated by the fall of Saigon twenty years later, in April of 1975. The fall of Saigon (as it was universally called in the United States) was the final capture of the South Vietnamese capital by forces of North Vietnam, which marked the victory of latter and the end of the war. This week, we will consider a range of sources beyond documentary evidence, particularly oral history as well as photographs, and how they have been or could be used to provide historical perspective on that event. **Individual Canvas Assignment 1 of 4.**

Stephen T. Hosmer, Konrad Kellen, and Brian M. Jenkins, *The Fall of South Vietnam: Statements by Vietnamese Military and Civilian Leaders* (Rand Corporation, 1978); <file:///C:/Users/spillane/Downloads/R2208.pdf> (PLEASE READ ONLY the Introduction and final pages, 127 and 128).

Ang Cheng Guan and Joseph Chinyong Liow, “The Fall of Saigon: Southeast Asian Perspectives,” Brookings, 2015; <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-fall-of-saigon-southeast-asian-perspectives/>

The Fall of Saigon (1975): The Bravery of American Diplomats and Refugees;

<https://diplomacy.state.gov/stories/fall-of-saigon-1975-american-diplomats-refugees/>

The Fall of Saigon—April 30, 1975, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training;

<https://adst.org/2013/04/the-fall-of-saigon-april-30-1975/>

Vietnam Archive, Oral History Project, Interview with Teodoro Gutierrez, Conducted by Stephen Maxner, October 8, 1999; <https://vva.vietnam.ttu.edu/images.php?img=/OH/OH0104/OH0104.pdf>

Week Five (February 6/no class meeting on February 8)—The Forgotten Americans? De-Industrialization and the Challenges of the Working Class

For some historians, the most salient aspect of the Seventies was the collapse of industrial America and the rise of a globalized economy in which manufacturing jobs moved overseas and a service-sector economy came to predominate. We will consider these changes this week. **Individual Canvas**

Assignment 2 of 4.

Rampolla, *Pocket Guide*, “Reading and Writing in History”

Jerome M. Rosow, *The Problem of the Blue-Collar Worker* (Department of Labor, 1970);

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED045810.pdf>

NOTE: To go along with your careful reading of Jerome M. Rosow’s memorandum, you may wish to review Zachary M. Schrag, *The Princeton Guide to Historical Research*, Chapter Ten “Interpreting Sources” (available as an e-book from the UF Library).

Week Six—The Rights Revolution (February 13/February 15) (Scavenger Hunt Week)

This week we will consider the Seventies as the moment of a “rights revolution”—a period of time which various groups asserted their claims on full participation in American life and society. Building upon the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, the Seventies became the setting for sustained rights campaigns for women, for LGBTQ Americans, for the poor, for Native Americans, for people with disabilities, and more. In some areas, rights claims made rapid advances. In others, rights claims progressed very slowly in the decade, if at all. And, in almost every case, rights campaigns generated some level of backlash and counter-political movements. We will briefly discuss this history on Tuesday, followed by the start of the scavenger hunt.

THE SCAVENGER HUNT

The scavenger hunt is a group project, worth 50 points toward the course total of 300 points. Please make sure you are here on Tuesday, February 13, for the start of the scavenger hunt.

The hunt will start on Tuesday, following lecture. Your group will be given an initial mystery question. Once you have correctly answered the mystery question, your group will be given in class the specific scavenger hunt rules.

You will have the class period on Thursday to complete the scavenger hunt. You must turn in your final report by the end of the day on Friday, February 16.

Week Seven—Framing Narratives, Part One: Disco (February 20/February 22)

In 1976, social commentator Christopher Lasch published an enormously influential essay, “The Narcissist Society” in the *New York Review of Books*, followed in 1979 by a best-selling book, *The Culture of Narcissism*. In both, Lasch argued that Americans had become too involved in the world of consumption. The pursuit of individual gratification, he argued, was ultimately an empty alternative to the “real” worlds of work and family. For many commentators, the disco craze was emblematic of what Lasch was describing. This week, we will read Lasch’s 1976 essay, and then several different kinds of commentaries on disco itself. **Classroom Assignment 3 of 6.**

Readings:

Christopher Lasch, “The Narcissist Society,” *The New York Review of Books* (1976) [NOTE: A copy will be distributed in class]

Richard Dyer, “In Defense of Disco” *Gay Left* 8 (Summer 1979), 19-23. See http://gayleft1970s.org/issues/gay.left_issue.08.pdf

Garcia, Luis-Manuel. "Richard Dyer, 'In Defense of Disco'", in *History of Emotions - Insights into Research*, November 2014, DOI: [10.14280/08241.32](https://doi.org/10.14280/08241.32) PDF version available here: <https://hdl.handle.net/11858/00-001M-0000-0024-E698-9>

Frank Rose, "Discophobia! Rock 'n Roll Fights Back," *The Village Voice* (November 12, 1979); <https://www.frankrose.com/essays/discophobia/>

Week Eight—Framing Narratives, Part Two: Jimmy Carter (February 27/February 29)

This week, in our continuing discussion of how historians frame major questions, we will consider one of the major political figures of the Seventies, Jimmy Carter. Sworn in as Governor of Georgia in January 1971, Carter launched his campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination in December 1974, won the Presidential election in 1976, and spent the remainder of the decade in a tumultuous one-term presidency. In a very real sense, Carter's political career neatly spanned the decade, and arguably helped define it as well. Carter was, and remains, something of an enigma, and historians have joined the popular debate over exactly who he was and how he should be understood. **Individual Canvas Assignment 3 of 4.**

Readings:

Rampolla, *Pocket Guide*, "Following Conventions of Writing in History"

Jonathan Alter, "Prologue: June, 1979" in *His Very Best: Jimmy Carter, A Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2020), pp. 12-21.

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ufl/detail.action?docID=6340840&pq-origsite=primo>

Angus Rielly, "Review Essay," *New Global Studies* 17 (2023): 243-255. <https://www-degruyter-com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/journal/key/ngs/html#latestIssue>

Jimmy Carter's "Energy and the Crisis of Confidence" Speech (July 15, 1979)

<https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/28-the-unraveling/jimmy-carter-crisis-of-confidence-1979/>

Week Nine—The Seventies Through Film: The Conspiracy Decade (March 5/March 7)

This week, we will turn to thinking about a particular dimension of 1970s popular culture—the prevalence of conspiracy as a theme. Conspiracy thinking has a long history in the United States. Indeed, one can find rampant conspiracy thought even in the colonial period, from the Salem witch trials to explanations for the British government's behavior in the 1760s. Nevertheless, scholars have long seen a particular thread of paranoia, distrust of institutions, and conspiracy thinking in the United States during the 1970s. This week we will examine some dimensions of conspiracy thinking, consider how historians think about conspiracy, and look at the examples from popular films.

Classroom Assignment 4 of 6.

Readings:

"Anthony Sampson Comments on His Book, *The Sovereign State of ITT*," Studs Terkel Radio Archive (original radio broadcast, July 2, 1973);

<https://studsterkel.wfmt.com/programs/anthony-sampson-comments-his-book-sovereign-state-itt>

"The Question of Confidence" Everett Carll Ladd, Jr. *The Public Opinion Quarterly* (1976-1977): <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2748287?seq=2>

SPRING BREAK (March 12/March 15)

Week Ten: Foreign Policy and the Age of Crisis (March 19/March 21)

This week's returns us to foreign policy, which we have not addressed since week four and the end of the Vietnam era. This time, we will address more directly U.S./Soviet relations during the decade. In our reading for the week, historian Robert J. McMahon (former UF history professor) traces the rise and fall of détente and asks, "what killed détente?"

Reading: Robert J. McMahon, *Cold War: A Very Short Introduction*, Chapter 7 "The Rise and Fall of Superpower Détente, 1968-1979 (available from the UF Library as an e-book).

NOTE: This week, you will be bringing in your preliminary research concepts for some peer evaluation on Thursday. For some good advice on research design, you can start with Rampolla, *Pocket Guide, "Writing a Research Paper"* and then you may ALSO wish to read Zachary M. Schrag, *The Princeton Guide to Historical Research*, Chapter Four "Research Design" (available from the UF libraries as an e-book). Schrag offers helpful guidance on: defining the basic scope of your project, structure, periodization, geographic focus and historiographical considerations...all of which will come into play as you think about a research proposal.

Week Eleven: Born in the Seventies: The Origins of Hip Hop and Alternative Rock (March 26/March 28)

This week, we will be thinking about the ways in which scholars approach history, and the ways in which we can approach that work as readers, by looking at two "origin story" accounts (we'll also think about what it means to write origin stories). The first is Grace Elizabeth Hale's *Cool Town*, which looks at the alternative rock scene in Athens, Georgia as a way of thinking about how the elements that came together to produce a particular cultural moment. The second is Joseph C. Ewoodzie Jr.'s *Break Beats in the Bronx* which explores the origins of hip-hop.

Readings:

Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Cool Town*, "Introduction" and Chapter One "The Factory"

Joseph C. Ewoodzie, Jr., *Break Beats in the Bronx*, "Introduction"

NOTE: Both books are available through the UF Library as e-books.

Week Twelve: Died in the Seventies: Picturephone and the History of Technology (April 2/no class meeting on April 4)

This week, we will undertake a brief introduction to the history of technology. As a field of historical inquiry, it has a noticeably hard time (as we shall see) fitting into a periodization-by-decade approach.

Individual Canvas Assignment 4 of 4.

Readings:

Kenneth Lipartito, "Picturephone and the Information Age: The Social Meaning of Failure," *Technology and Culture* 44 (January 2003);

Week Thirteen: Reagan Triumphant and the End of the Seventies (April 9/April 11)

This week, we will look at the presidential election of 1980 and the triumph of Ronald Reagan. For some historians of the 1970s, the ascendance of Ronald Reagan and the dominance of political conservatism were the stories of the decade—essentially making the 1970s merely the precursor to the “age of Reagan” in the following decade. We will examine the rise of Reagan, the growing dominance of political conservatism, and what it means for historians to study and define conservatism. **Classroom Assignment 5 of 6.**

Readings:

Rampolla, *Pocket Guide*, “Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Avoid It,”

Week Fourteen: Collaborative Work on Final Projects/Thinking About Revision (April 16/April 18)
Classroom Assignment 6 of 6.

This week, we will start by talking about revision, and then practice some of what we discuss in class on your research proposals in progress.

Week Fifteen: Wrap Up (April 23)

Our final class meeting today will be a good day to catch up on any remaining material we need to cover for the course, or it will be “extra” office hours during which you can come and discuss your research prospectus.

Final Research Prospectus Due: May 2, 2:30 PM