

Historiography

Introduction to Historiography



Time and Location

Monday 3:00-6:00 PM

Flint 111

Description

“The past is a foreign country” (David Lowenthal). While there is a great desire to explore it, it is equally important to look at the maps which have been used for its exploration. This course presents a survey of the historiography in the Western tradition. Its organization shows that history writing has been an integral part of all phases through which that tradition went. In fact, it has been a fundamental part of what came to be known as the “West.” An exploration of historiography therefore implies taking into account the contexts in which views were formulated and changed on what history is and how it should be remembered and (re)presented. The basic chronological approach adopted in this course is meant to emphasize that contextual quality of historiography and to give an opportunity to demonstrate influences from one period to another.

However, a purely chronological approach presents a great temptation of a mere narrative that simply relates one view after the other. We will avoid that temptation by analyzing each period's historiography in a systematic manner. The elements of that analysis reflect the continuity of concerns with certain questions prescribed by the structure of human life itself. Who were the prominent historians of any given period? What were the life circumstances that shaped their outlook (social, economic, political status)? What were the important works of the historical period? What were the dominant epistemological views (methodology, assumptions, views on objectivity). What were the foci of historical work (e.g., political, military, social history), and why were those preferred over others? What were the predominant views about the usefulness of history? What were the styles and forms of writing history, and what were the relations between history and other disciplines or fields of human activity? How did historians approach the concept of "person" and what elements of continuity with other periods may be identified? Treated in this manner, the history of history writing can avoid becoming a mere story-type account or an ahistorical collection of samples for the application of methods.

Required texts

- Ernst Breisach. *Historiography*. Ancient, Medieval, and Modern. 3d edition. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007 [hereafter *Breisach*]
- Donald Kelley (ed.). *Versions of History From the Antiquity to the Enlightenment*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991 [hereafter *Kelley*].
- Fritz Stern (ed.), *The Varieties of History From Voltaire to the Present*. New York: Vintage Books, 1973 [hereafter *Stern*]

In addition, there will be articles in pdf format accessible from Canvas (elearning.ufl.edu), as well as ad hoc and individual reading assignments as needed.

Assignments and evaluation:

There are three basic assignments and elements of evaluation for this course. First, before every class meeting, you will post an e-mail message on my address (see my [main pageLinks to an external site.](#)), in which you will discuss briefly the readings for the coming meeting, ask questions and/or make comments, raise issues that need clarification, etc. All e-mails should arrive at least 12 hours before class meetings. Be sure to keep your postings to a reasonable length (175 to 250 words long). Because the journal is designed to demonstrate your efforts towards an initial understanding of the readings, I must have ***in time*** one report for each class meeting, every week. Each journal needs to cover all the readings for the week—*Breisach*, *Kelley*, *Stern*, and/or the articles on Canvas. The reading journal represents 50 percent of your final grade, 4.5 percent for each entry. Reading reports *cannot* be made up; you simply *need* to have a journal entry for every class meeting. Be aware that missed reports may result in a substantially lower grade.

Second, you will be required to analyze critically the work of a well-known historian. Using the works of that historian and critical commentaries on it, you will show that you can assess historical works, their methodology and interpretive foundations. This assignment will take the form a 3-5 page essay and will count for 15 percent of your overall grade. Third, you will work on a longer, 20-30 page research paper on a topic approved by me. It is highly recommended that you choose a topic related to your own research interests leading to the M.A. thesis or the Ph.D. dissertation: the historiography of a particular problem, debates surrounding a specific historical issue, the history of a specific method employed in historiographic research, the historiographic tradition of a particular country in Europe or outside Europe, etc. The format of the paper must conform to the rules of the Chicago Manual of Style. The timely completion of the paper will be part of its evaluation. The research paper counts for 35 percent of your final grade. In writing papers, be certain to give proper credit whenever you use words, phrases, ideas, arguments, and conclusions drawn from someone else's work. Failure to give credit by quoting and/or footnoting is plagiarism and is unacceptable.

Weekly topics

Week 1: Introduction (terminology, purpose, and methods). What prompts the concern with history. The central importance of the temporality of humans.

Week 2: Labor Day (no classes)

Week 3: The historiography of the Greek world: discontinuity of time in epic history; the problems of continuous time (chronology); the importance of prose for historiography; the experience of war (Herodotus, Thucydides); the issue of oral vs. written history; Hellenism and historiography in a multicultural setting; elite and native histories, and the link to Rome

Read:

- *Breisach*, chapters 1-3
- *Kelley* 23-46, 48-49, 62, and 65
- Robert Louis Fowler, "Gods in early Greek historiography," in *The Gods of Ancient Greece. Identities and Transformations*, edited by Jan N. Bremmer and Andrew Erskine (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 318-334
- Katherine Clarke, "Polybius and the nature of late Hellenistic historiography," in *Polibio y la Península Ibérica*, edited by Juan Santos Yanguas and Elena Torregaray Pagola (Vitoria: Universidad del País Vasco, 2003), pp. 69-87

Week 4: Historiography of the Roman Republic and the Empire: the issue of the founding myths (Trojan and Greek), the link between Roman life and historiography, the building of a systematic Roman historiography, fate and "progress", the "old" and "new" Rome dichotomy; the Roman sense of history in a multicultural empire; scholarships vs. public history, the sense of decay vs. the idea of eternal Rome.

Read:

- *Breisach*, chapters 4-6
- *Kelley* 70-72, 77, 80, 93-95, 101-102
- Tim J. Cornell, "Universal history and the early Roman historians," in *Historiae mundi. Studies in Universal History*, edited by Peter P. Liddel (London: Gerald Duckworth, 2010), pp. 102-115
- John H. G. W. Liebeschuetz, "Pagan historiography and the decline of the Empire," in *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity (Fourth to Sixth Century AD)*, edited by Gabriele Marasco (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003), pp. 177-218

Week 5: A paradigm change—Christian historiography: the Jewish legacy and the role of the covenant, messianism, and history as a coherent, divinely guided story; the linearity of time in Christian historiography, periodization, the centrality of the text and text interpretation, history vs. chiliasm; the relation to the Roman Empire, universal history, and the issue of periodization (ages and empires).

Read:

- *Breisach*, chapter 7
- *Kelley* 118-121, 123, 126-131, 141, 151, 155-156
- Peter van Nuffelen, "Theology versus genre? The universalism of Christian historiography in Late Antiquity," in *Historiae mundi. Studies in Universal History*, edited by Peter P. Liddel (London: Gerald Duckworth, 2010), pp. 162-175
- Teresa J. Morgan, "Eusebius of Caesarea and Christian historiography," *Athenaeum* 93 (2005), no. 1, 193-208

Week 6: Medieval historiography: historiography as a tool of dynastic legitimization, the historiography of the medieval Empire, crusades, the role of the individual in history (biography and hagiography), forms of medieval historiography (*gesta*, annals, the special position of the chronicle); the monastic chronicle (authors, reasons for writing, style, historiography and *contemptus mundi*, chronological problems)

Research paper topic selection deadline

Read:

- *Breisach*, chapters 8-9
- *Kelley* 164-165, sections 43-46, 48, 50-52
- Gabrielle Spiegel, "Structures of time in medieval historiography," *Medieval History Journal* 19 (2016), no. 1, 21-33
- Ian Wood, "Universal chronicles in the early medieval West," *Medieval Worlds* 1 (2015), 47-60

- Elizabeth Lapina, “Crusader chronicles,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the Crusades*, edited by Anthony Bale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 11-24

Week 7: The West from 1300 to 1750—searching for structure in history: historiography and the problem of change, Renaissance historiography, chorography and the collective identity, the concept of decay, history as the struggle between *necessità* and *virtu*, the paradox of Protestant historiography (historical search for a “pure” church), historiography and the new national identities, ordering schemes (golden age theories), the struggle over the right historiographic example (Tacitists and Livyists), the formulation of *ars historica* (historiography as narration, teach or entertain, the question of truth [*verax* or *verum*], the Trattatisti); advocates of proximity to sources (erudites)

Read:

- *Breisach*, chapters 10-12
- *Kelley* sections 59, 61, 62; pp. 221, 227-231, 239-246, 254-258, 264-265, 270-272, 315-316, 354-358, 361, 373-376, 382-387; section 91 (92 is optional)
- Brett Edward Whalen, “Joachim the theorist of history and society,” in *A Companion to Joachim of Fiore*, edited by Matthias Riedl, Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition, 75 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2017), pp. 72-88
- Silvia Manzo, “Francis Bacon: freedom, authority, and science,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 14 (2006), no. 2, 245-273

Week 8: Second paradigm change: the French historiography of progress (the new principle of universal history, the propellant of progress, the aim of history), Rousseau and Vico, the historians of the German Enlightenment, historicism (Herder), English/Scottish Enlightenment historiography

Read:

- *Breisach*, chapter 13
- *Kelley* 425, 433-434, 443-449, 451-452, 474-477
- *Stern* 35-45
- Isaiah Berlin, *Three Critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder*, 2nd edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 21-121

Research paper outline due (together with a minimal bibliography)

Week 9: The historiography of two modern revolutions: historians of the American Revolution, historians of the French revolutions, the issue of national identity, the American sense of history. Historiography of the 19th-century national states: Prussian renaissance and historiography (the formulation of *Geschichtswissenschaft*, philosophical and religious foundations, the issue of German unification), the English Empire (politics

and historical scholarship, reflective products), the American response (the historiography of the Manifest Destiny, the confirming of the American sense of history)

Read:

- *Breisach* 224-227, 228-238, 238-247, chapter 16
- *Stern* 46-62, 71-89, 90-107, 108-119
- Ann Rigney, *Imperfect Histories: the Elusive Past and the Legacy of Romantic Historicism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 59-98
- Billie Melman, *The Culture of History: English Uses of the Past, 1800-1953* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 66-91

Week 10: Third paradigm change—modernization and the issue of historical knowledge: historians of the “real” order (Comte and the positivists, the scientific historians, the neo-positivists and the Covering Law theory, cliometrics, econometrics), historians of the conceptual order (German historicism, relativism, psychohistory, narrativists)

Historian analysis due

Read:

- *Breisach*, chapters 17, 18, 22, and 26
- *Stern* 120-144, 170-177, 209-226
- Joseph F. Campbell, “Psychohistory: creating a new discipline,” *Journal of Psychohistory* 37 (2009), no. 1, 2-26
- Jürgen Pieters, “New historicism: postmodern historiography between narrativism and heterology,” *History and Theory* 39 (2000), no. 1, 21-38

Week 11: Third paradigm change—modernization and the issue of structure: economic interpretations (Marx and non-Marx), institutional history, the *Annales* school, social history, the American social history (Progressive history). The issue of world history: progress and Christian interpretations, sequence of cultural models, world system theories

Draft of research paper due (at least four pages)

Read:

- *Breisach*, chapters 19, 20, 21, and 30
- *Stern* 145-169, 197-208, 246-266, 403-429
- John Farrenkopf, “Hegel, Spengler, and the enigma of world history: progress or decline?” *Clio* 19 (1990), no. 4, 331-344
- Michael Lang, “Globalization and global history in Toynbee,” *Journal of World History* 22 (2011), no. 4, 747-783
- Ellen F. Fitzpatrick, *History’s Memory. Writing America’s past, 1880-1980* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 51-97

- Matt Perry, *Marxism and History* (Houndmills/New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 9-46

Week 12: Veteran's Day (no classes)

Week 13: Historiography and totalitarianism: historiography and the Soviet regime; historians and fascism in Italy, Hungary, and Romania; history writing under the Third Reich

Read:

- Breisach, chapters 24 and 28
- Stern 329-346
- Alter L. Litvin, *Writing History in Twentieth-Century Russia. A View from Within* (Houndmills/New York, 2001), pp. 3-37 (available on Canvas)
- George G. Iggers, "Refugee historians from Nazi Germany: political attitudes towards democracy," Monna and Otto Weinmann Lecture Series (September 14, 2005; available on Canvas)

Week 14: Two case studies: German history since 1945 (*Sonderweg* theory, *Historikerstreit*, *Alltagsgeschichte*), American history since 1945 (consensus history, New Left history, emancipation histories, the implications of cultural pluralism). Historiography, post-modernity and prospects: turbulent political context and historiography, visions of a postmodern future, the New Cultural history

Read:

- Breisach, chapters 25, 29, and 31
- Stern 256-266
- Stefan Berger, *The Search for Normality. National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Germany Since 1800* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), pp. 124-148
- Mark Peacock, "The desire to understand the politics of *Wissenschaft*: an analysis of the *Historikerstreit*," *History of the Human Sciences* 14 (2001), no. 4, 87-110
- Ernst Breisach, *On the Future of History. The Postmodernist Challenge and Its Aftermath* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 193-208

Research paper due