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21H.931 Seminar in Historical Methods  
Spring 2004

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## SEMINAR IN HISTORICAL METHODS

**Subject Description.** This subject is designed to give 21H majors and minors an introduction to the methods that historians use to interpret the past. We will focus on two areas: archives and interpretation. In our work on archives, we will ask what constitutes an archive. We will visit one or two local archives, speak with archivists, and assemble our own archive related to life at MIT in 2003. Once we have a better understanding of the possibilities and limitations of historical archives, we will turn to the task of interpreting archival findings. We will discuss a series of readings organized around the theme of history and national identity in various parts of the world since the end of the eighteenth century. Students will also be asked to write a 15-page research paper, and present their work orally to the class.

**Subject Requirements.** Active class participation is central to our work together. Attendance is mandatory, and students are expected to arrive in class on time and prepared to discuss common readings. A student who misses two or more class sessions will automatically fail the subject. Students will write a five-page paper, due in its final version on 4/8, and a fifteen-page research paper due on 5/15, the final day of classes. Students will make two oral presentations in class, on 2/25 and 5/13. Before some class sessions, students will submit electronic responses to questions regarding the week's readings; these questions will be distributed in advance. There will be no exams and no final. Each assignment will be weighted as follows in the calculation of the final grade, although these calculations will also take into account improved performance during the course of the semester:

Class Participation	10 points
Homeworks (6, 5 pts each)	30 points
Fifteen-Page Research Paper	80 points
Five-Page Paper	40 points
<u>Oral Presentations</u>	<u>20 points each, total of 40 points</u>
TOTAL	200 points

**Required Reading.** The following books are available for purchase at the MIT Bookstore; they should also be on reserve in the Hayden Library. All other readings, indicated by an asterisk (\*), can be accessed from the online syllabus for the subject listed above.

G.W.F. Hegel, *Reason in History*

Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*

Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*

**Statement on Cheating and Plagiarism:** The web now hosts many sites which offer college-level papers of varying quality on a variety of topics. I am well acquainted with these sites, and with others that offer detection services to professors. **Buying a paper and submitting it as your own work is cheating. Copying sections from someone else's print or online work into**

**your own without an acknowledgement is plagiarism.** MIT has strict policies against both activities that I will fully enforce. For the appropriate MIT definitions and policies, visit the following websites. If you are uncertain about what constitutes cheating or plagiarism, please contact me **before** submitting the work in question.

- MIT Online Writing Communication Center: <<http://web.mit.edu/writing>>
- Citing and Using Sources: <http://web.mit.edu/writing/Special/plagiarism.html/>
- Plagiarism and How to Avoid It:  
<[http://web.mit.edu/writing/Special/citing.html/plagiarism\\_html.htm](http://web.mit.edu/writing/Special/citing.html/plagiarism_html.htm) >

## **Class Meetings and Reading Assignments**

### **Week One**

#### **2/4. Introduction**

1. Discussion: Timothy Garton Ash, “On the Frontier”, *New York Review of Books*, 7 November 2002, 60-1.

### **Week Two**

#### **2/11. What is an Archive? A Visit to the MIT Archives and Special Collections**

1. Natalie Zemon Davis, “Introduction”, in *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France*, (Stanford, 1987), 1-6. (To be distributed in class.)
2. \*Randolph Starn, “Truths in the Archives”, *Common Knowledge* 8 (Spring 2002): 387-401
3. \*MIT Archives and Special Collections website
4. \*Visit the websites for the Boston Athenaeum, the Massachusetts Historical Society, and the Massachusetts State Archives.

### **Week Three**

#### **2/18. NO CLASS – MONDAY SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**

1. Prepare “MIT in 2003” archive.
2. Prepare initial research paper prospectus.

### **Week Four**

#### **2/25. Presentation of Assembled Archive on MIT Student Life**

1. Student Presentations

2. Hand in research paper prospectus

**Week Five**

**3/4. A Philosophy of History**

1. \*Brief online biography of Hegel
2. G.W.F. Hegel, *Reason in History*, 3-95
3. **Homework #1 due**

**Week Six**

**3/11. The Storming of the Bastille and the History of Republican France**

1. \*”Ch. 4: Paris and the Politics of Rebellion”, on the website *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*. Read the text on the first page, and click on all texts and images in the left margin. On page 2, review all 10 images linked to the left-hand image icon entitled “destroying a hated symbol of oppression”.
2. \*Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution*, pp.195-209. [First published in 1837]
3. \*Jules Michelet, *History of the French Revolution*, trans. Charles Cocks, 161-80. [First published in French in 1847]
4. \*Georges Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution*, 45-60. [First published in 1959]
5. \* Christian Amalvi, “Bastille Day: From *Dies Irae* to Holiday”, in Pierre Nora, ed., *Realms of Memor: Rethinking the French Past / under the direction of Pierre Nora ; English language edition edited and with a foreword by Lawrence D. Kritzman ; translated by Arthur Goldhammer*. Vol 3. p. 117-59. [First published in Frenchca. 1990]
6. **Homework #2 Due**

**Week Seven**

**3/18. The Turner Thesis and United States History**

1. \*Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1891)
2. \*Henry Nash Smith, “The Myth of the Garden and Turner’s Frontier Hypotheses” in *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*, p. 291-305. (1950)
3. \*Richard Hofstadter, “The Frontier as an Explanation” in *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington*, 118-64. (1968)
4. \*Patricia Nelson Limerick, “Introduction”, in *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*, p. 17-32. (1987)
5. **Homework #3 due**

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**SPRING VACATION, MARCH 24-28**

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## Week Eight

### 4/1. Writing Workshop

1. **Rough draft of five-page paper due**

## Week Nine

### 4/8. *The Longue Durée*

1. Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean, Vol. I*, 13-53, 168-230, 295-312, 394-418 (and skim the rest!)
2. **Homework #4 due**
3. **Final draft of five-page paper due**

## Week Ten

### 4/15. Micro-Technologies of Power

1. Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, 3-228, 293-308
2. **Homework #5 due**

## Week Eleven

### 4/22. NO CLASS – PATRIOTS DAY

1. **Submit Second Research Paper Proposal**

## Week Twelve

### 4/29. A Return to the Anecdote?

1. \*Robert Darnton, “The Great Cat Massacre”, in *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*
2. \*Harold Mah, “Suppressing the Text: The Metaphysics of Ethnographic History in Darnton’s Great Cat Massacre” *History Workshop* 31 (Spring 1991): 1-20
3. Two French documents in translation, to be handed out in class.
4. **Homework #6 due.**

## Week Thirteen

### 5/6. Individual Consultations w/Instructor

**Week Fourteen**

5/13. Oral Presentations  
**Research Paper Due on 5/15.**

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**NO FINAL EXAMINATION**