



EAST TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY

Historiography and Theory
Hist 590.01E and Hist 590.1SE (80537 and 80979)
Course Syllabus: Fall 2025

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Professor: Dr. Cynthia Ross (I go by Dr. Ross or Professor Ross)

Class Time: M 7:20pm – 10:00pm

Class Location: EDS 135

Office Location: SS 104

Office Hours: MWF 11:00am-noon; TR 11:00-1:00pm

Instructor Email: cynthia.ross@etamu.edu

Response Time: Within 24 hours, excluding weekends

Email is the best way to reach me outside of class. I typically respond to email during regular business hours, within one day during the week; emails sent after 5:00pm on Friday may not get a response until Monday morning.

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Note: Students are welcome to get the books in any format that makes it easy to read the entire book (or as much as possible), including audiobook; a print or ebook will be necessary for citations if you use any of the books in your historiography paper. Some of these books may be available online through the Waters Library.

Sarah Maza, *Thinking About History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-0226109336

Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice*, 3rd Edition. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. ISBN: 9781474244430

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised Edition. New York: Verso, 2016. ISBN: 978-1784786755

Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller*. Reprint. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-1421409887

Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999. ISBN: 978-0521357456

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage, 1995. ISBN: 978-0679752554.

George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. ISBN: 9780195126600

Bathsheba Demuth, *Floating Coast: An Environmental History of the Bering Strait*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2019. ISBN: 978-0393635164

Priya Satia, *Time's Monster: How History Makes History*. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2020. ISBN: 9780674248373

Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015. ISBN: 978-0691162751.

Kate L. Turabian, *Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. Ninth Edition (University of Chicago Press, 2018). ISBN: 978-0226430577 (Optional; Strongly recommended)

Course Description

Historiography is the study of how history is written, interpreted, and understood. Over the course of this semester, we will explore how historians from the late nineteenth century to the twenty-first century have approached the past, and how their work has shaped the discipline. We will engage with some of the most innovative, influential, and challenging historical thinkers of the modern era. While we may not agree with all of them, it is essential to understand the historical, intellectual, and cultural contexts in which they worked, and how and why their ideas have had lasting impact.

Our work will involve developing the analytical tools necessary to examine how historians frame questions, select and interpret evidence, and construct narratives. We will critically assess their methodological choices, theoretical assumptions, and philosophical commitments, as well as the ethical responsibilities they bear as scholars and as citizens. In doing so, we will trace how the discipline has responded to new bodies of evidence, shifting political landscapes, and evolving debates about the purpose of history itself.

This course is not simply about studying other historians—it is about becoming one. You will learn to position your own research within ongoing historiographical and theoretical debates, to situate your work in broader scholarly conversations, and to articulate the methodological choices that underpin your arguments. The skills you develop here—critical reading,

historiographical mapping, methodological reflection, and scholarly self-positioning—are foundational to your success as a professional historian. For these reasons, this course is one of the most important in your graduate training, preparing you to navigate the intellectual, ethical, and pedagogical dimensions of our field.

We will meet once a week at the designated class time for an engaging and active discussion. Each week, prior to class, students will complete a common core of assigned readings and a related short writing assignment. Once this semester, each student will be responsible for leading discussion, in collaboration with a classmate. Sign up for leading discussion will occur on the first class day. Students will also complete a significant historiography paper.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to research and write an essay about one major approach to the discipline of history.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

You must be able to use MyLeo Online (D2L), Zoom (hybrid students), and Microsoft Word. All materials submitted through D2L must be uploaded as a .doc or .docx file.

Instructional Methods

The course will require reading, writing, listening, presenting, and group work.

Class Meeting Agenda

The class meeting begins promptly at 7:20pm. Please try not to come in late: entering into a graduate seminar already in progress is disruptive. On selected weeks, student pairs will lead discussion for the first hour of class. We will take one 15 minute break midway through the class. Please return promptly from the break.

Learning Activities and Assessments

1. Participation

You should come to class prepared to discuss the reading. Have your book with you. Have reading notes in whatever form you take them. You are encouraged to ask questions and it is helpful to prepare them ahead of time. Unprepared attendance may be treated as an absence. Students are expected to create and sustain an open intellectual classroom environment, which fosters discussion - you should listen to each other's comments and questions with an open mind and respect viewpoints other than your own.

Students must also be open to understanding why people of the past did what they did, and should not dismiss these actors' views because they might be perceived as "wrong."

Your participation grade will be based on the following criteria:

A = Student is always prepared; makes frequent voluntary contributions to classroom discussion

B = Student is generally prepared; makes occasional voluntary contributions to discussion or participates only when called on

C = Student is usually prepared but rarely voluntarily speaks

D = Student is generally unprepared and does not contribute to discussion

F = Student is unprepared and appears disinterested in contributing to discussion

Note: Remote students must have their camera on throughout the class, except during break.

Graduate students should not skip classes. Students are expected to attend every class session; attendance will be taken. Each unexcused absence beyond two (2) instances will result in a 10% reduction in the participation grade; excessive unexcused absences (more than 4) may be cause for a failing grade in this course, at the professor's discretion.

2. Book Summaries

Each week you will complete a book summary prior to class on Monday. This should be a two-page, double spaced Word document uploaded to D2L by Sunday at 11:59pm that includes: the scope of the book, main research question(s) / purpose, thesis / argument, evaluation of the use of available sources, organizational structure of the book, presentation of material, the extent to which the author achieved their overall purpose, and the broader significance of the work. This is intended to be a very short, to the point, assignment; be brief and focused.

3. Leading a Discussion

During selected weeks, there will be two assigned discussion leaders who will be responsible for summarizing the assigned book and for guiding the overall discussion for the first hour of class. Prepare to spend about twenty to twenty-five minutes summarizing the book and thirty to thirty-five minutes leading discussion. The two leaders must work together.

Focus on (1) the interpretive or theoretical school (if any) to which the book belongs; (2) its thesis; (3) its use of sources; and (4) an evaluation of the success or failure of the book considered as an example of its type. Discussion leaders must have a note sheet with scripted questions.

It is acceptable to use book reviews to prepare, but if used in any way in class, you must present them as the work of the reviewer, not as your own. Follow up assessments from book reviews with your own reasoned assessment of the reviewer's remarks.

All students must complete the weekly reading assignments and to participate actively in class discussion even when student-led.

4. Historiography Papers

Historiography is the study of how historical interpretations change over time and in dialogue with one another. It examines how historians' questions, methods, and theoretical approaches evolve in response to new evidence, shifting scholarly trends, and the world around them. For example, interpretations of the American Civil War differ significantly depending on whether

they were written in the decades after Reconstruction, during the era of segregation, in the wake of World War II, after the Civil Rights movement, or in the context of the Black Lives Matter movement. Similarly, Cold War histories written just after the fall of the Berlin Wall differ from those written after the reemergence of an authoritarian Russia in the 21st century.

Historiography is not just a record of interpretations—it is a conversation among historians. Each work engages with earlier scholarship, whether to build upon, revise, or challenge it. Your task is to map this conversation for a particular historical topic, analyzing how interpretations have changed and why.

Assignment Requirements

- **Length:** 20 pages (+/- 10%), double-spaced, 12-point font, one-inch margins.
- **Sources: Minimum of 10 scholarly sources** (academic books strongly preferred; no more than two academic journal articles). One of these must be a selected course text. No primary sources. Note: This is not a paper of original research.
- **Style:** Turabian full note/bibliography citation style (no parenthetical citations). If using Zotero or other reference manager, select Chicago 17th edition full note.
- **File format:** Submit as a single .doc or .docx file in D2L. No PDFs or Google Docs.

Structure and Content

1. **Introduction**
 - Introduce your chosen topic and explain its significance.
 - Identify the key historiographical debate you are engaging.
2. **Historiographical Analysis**
 - What questions have historians asked about this topic?
 - What approaches or theories shaped their analysis (e.g., environmental history, gender theory, historical materialism, post-structuralism)?
 - What methods and sources do they use?
 - What causative explanations do they offer?
 - How do they periodize the topic?
 - How do the works respond to one another?
3. **Contextualization**
 - How does each work reflect the time in which it was written?
 - How have broader social, political, or intellectual contexts influenced interpretations?
4. **Critical Comparison**
 - Compare strengths, weaknesses, and contributions of each work.
 - Identify points of agreement and disagreement in the scholarship.
5. **Conclusion**
 - Summarize the evolution of historical interpretations on your topic.
 - Reflect on what this historiography reveals about both the topic and the discipline of history.

Process

- Select your course text and additional sources early.
- Conduct thorough, active reading—take notes on argument, evidence, and methodology.
- Create annotated bibliographies for each book or article before drafting your paper.
- Draft your paper in stages to allow for feedback and revision.

Evaluation Criteria

- **Depth of Analysis:** Engagement with historiographical debates and critical comparison of works.
- **Use of Evidence:** Accurate and effective use of sources.
- **Organization and Clarity:** Logical structure and clear, persuasive writing.
- **Citation Accuracy:** Consistent use of Turabian full note/bibliography style.
- **Professionalism:** Adherence to formatting and submission requirements.

Overall Rubric for the Course:

A = Follows all instructions; follows the format; accurate; insightful; well-organized paragraphs; generally correct mechanics.

B = Follows all instructions; follows the format; few errors regarding accuracy; well-expressed; some organizational weaknesses; generally correct mechanics.

C = Follows all instructions; some mistakes in following format; few errors regarding accuracy; some organizational weaknesses; some errors in mechanics.

D = Does not follow all instructions; several errors in regard to format; or is weak regarding accuracy, organization, or mechanics.

F = Does not follow all instructions; several errors in regard to format; not required length; errors in accuracy; poor organization; several errors in mechanics; quotes or paraphrases

Student Responsibilities or Tips for Success in the Course

Please read the syllabus and adhere to the schedule. Attend class. It is imperative that you complete the assigned readings; the texts will drive classroom discussion, a crucial course requirement. You are responsible for all the material contained in the readings; if you do not read them, you will have a difficult semester. Professional and polite interactions with everyone in the class is expected.

GRADING

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

900-1000 = A

800-899 = B

700-799 = C

600-699 = D

599 or less = F

THIS COURSE USES A POINT-BASED SYSTEM

Participation (preparedness, discussion, attendance)	300
Leading a Discussion	100
Book Summaries (10 @ 10 points each)	100
Historiographical Paper	300

Elevator Speech Presentation
Total:

100
900 points

D2L TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

All course sections offered by East Texas A&M University have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

<https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@etamu.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a ETAMU campus open computer lab, etc.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your professor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

Interaction with Instructor Statement:

Students are encouraged to email the professor with questions, concerns, or comments. Students must provide a valid return email address for replies. I typically respond to email during regular business hours, within one day during the week; emails sent after 5:00pm on Friday may not get a response until Monday morning.

When sending an email always do the following:

- 1) Use a subject line. This tells me what the topic is and prevents your message from ending up in my junk mail.
- 2) Include your class and section (or class time). I need to know exactly which of my courses you are in.
- 3) End the email with your name, that is “sign” your message. I also need to know who you are.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Citation Style:

Turabian or Chicago (17th edition) required; footnotes with bibliography. For a Turabian style guide visit <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/turabian/turabian-notes-and-bibliography-citation-quick-guide.html>

Reference Manager (Highly Recommended, Not Required):

Zotero is free and will save your life, at least when it comes to storing and citing references for papers. It also blends seamlessly with Word and digital sources. For instructions and downloads visit <https://www.zotero.org/>. I will also be offering a class on Zotero during the Fall semester if you prefer hands on instruction.

Late Work:

Papers may be granted extensions. Please email me to let me know what is going on and request an extension **before the due date**. Without an extension, late papers will not be accepted except in the event of a major catastrophe, such as unexpected emergency hospitalization or regional catastrophe.

Students who miss their assigned slot to be discussion leader will be reassigned, if possible. Please be advised that rescheduling may not be possible.

Plagiarism Policy:

In all courses, I expect that all work that you turn in is your own. It is the policy of the University, the History Department, and me that no form of plagiarism, cheating, collusion or any other form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. Academic dishonesty may result in a grade of zero for the assignment or in a failing grade for the entire course. Plagiarism is defined as taking the words or ideas of someone else and passing them off as your own. Cheating is obtaining unauthorized assistance on any assignment. Collusion is the selling or sharing of academic products with the intention that they be submitted to satisfy an academic requirement.

AI Use in Course:

East Texas A&M University acknowledges there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course.

Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

No AI use is allowed in this course. Students should not use any text generated by AI in any graded assignments. Use of AI to write any part of an assignment and present it as the student's work is prohibited. This applies to this course only (Hist 590).

Students should be aware of the requirements in all their classes and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed. In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

13.99.99.R0.10 Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty

Extra Credit:

There is no extra credit.

Expectations for Out-of-Class Study:

Beyond the time required to attend each class meeting, students enrolled in this course should expect to spend at least an additional 9-12 hours per week of their own time in course-related activities, including reading required materials, completing assignments, etc.

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the resources of the Online Writing Center for assistance with drafting their papers. The Writing Center is a resource for you. The tutors will not write your paper; they will help you improve your writing skills. If you use the Writing Center, please plan ahead. They can only help you if you see them in advance and have time to incorporate their suggestions into the final paper.

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events may make it necessary for the professor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced as soon as possible.

University Specific Procedures

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the Student Guidebook.

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

ETAMU Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the Attendance webpage and Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01.

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

Academic Integrity

Students at East Texas A&M University are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10GraduateStudentAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

East Texas A&M University

Waters Library- Room 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@etamu.edu

Website: Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

East Texas A&M University will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in East Texas A&M University buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and ETAMU Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all ETAMU campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1. 12

Statement on Student Grievances

Students who have questions or concerns about the Instructor's course policies or the conduct either of the Instructor or a classmate should first consult with the Instructor. In the event of a lack of resolution or satisfaction on the matter, the student may bring their concerns to the head of the History Department, Sharon Kowalsky (Sharon.Kowalsky@etamu.edu). If this does not result in a satisfactory conclusion to the matter, students may bring the issue to the attention of the Associate Dean of Students per procedures outlined on pp. 15-19 of the Student Guide Book.

ETAMU Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at ETAMU, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel.

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

WEEK ONE August 25

Review syllabus, introduce course, assign books to discussion leaders, expectations

WEEK TWO September 1

No Class, Labor Day

“Intellectual darkness is essential to industrial slavery.” ~ Eugene V. Debs

WEEK THREE September 8

Maza, *Thinking About History*.

Book summary due Sunday by midnight

Select book(s) for historiography papers

WEEK FOUR September 15

Jordanova, *History in Practice*, 3rd Edition.

No books summary this week; only next week

WEEK FIVE September 22

Jordanova, *History in Practice*, 3rd Edition. Continued.

Discussion Leaders:

Book summary due Sunday by midnight

WEEK SIX September 29

Anderson, *Imagined Communities*

Discussion Leaders:

Book summary due Sunday by midnight

WEEK SEVEN October 6

Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*

Discussion Leaders:

Book summary due Sunday by midnight

WEEK EIGHT October 14

Novick, *That Noble Dream*. Chapter 1-8

Discussion Leaders:

No books summary this week; only next week

WEEK NINE October 20

Novick, *That Noble Dream*. Chapter 9 - 16

Discussion Leaders:

Book summary due Sunday by midnight

WEEK TEN October 27

Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

Discussion Leaders:

Book summary due Sunday by midnight

WEEK ELEVEN November 3

Mosse, *The Image of Man*

Discussion Leaders:

Book summary due Sunday by midnight

WEEK TWELVE November 10

Demuth, *Floating Coast*

Discussion Leaders:

Book summary due Sunday by midnight

WEEK THIRTEEN November 17

Satia, *Time's Monster*

Discussion Leaders:

Book summary due Sunday by midnight

WEEK FOURTEEN November 24

Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*

Discussion Leaders:

Book summary due Sunday by midnight

WEEK FIFTEEN December 1

Historical Navel Gazing; Wrap Up

FINAL EXAM WEEK December 8

Presentations