



**HISTORY 398:
INTRODUCTION TO HISTORICAL THOUGHT & METHODS**

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY ♦ AUTUMN SEMESTER 2011

Tuesday & Thursday 10:30- 12:18
Baker Systems 136

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A. Course Description & Objectives

This course is an introduction to the craft of history. The primary goal of the course is to provide students with insight into the nature of historical inquiry and the historical profession. To achieve this goal, we will focus on two specific historical problems: (1) whether or not Hildegard of Bingen's (1098-1178) visions can be attributed to migraine headaches, and (2), whether or not a sixteenth-century French villager who returned home after years away at war was the man he claimed to be. Throughout the course, we will consider several broader questions and issues confronting the historian: the nature of historical evidence, the boundaries of the discipline of history, and the possibility of historical objectivity.

Books for Purchase:

Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1984)
John Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (2004)
Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, 5th ed. (2006)
Mark Salzman, *Lying Awake* (2001)

All other reading assignments will be posted on Carmen

Assignments

Précis (6 October)
Primary Source Analysis (25 October)
Critical Book Review (8 November)
Oral Presentation (29 November or 1 December)
Historiographical Essay (by 8 December)

B. Class Participation and Written Assignments

TOTAL OF 400 POINTS

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION: [25% or 100 points]

Attendance is required, and each student is expected to play an active role in class meetings. Since this class is a seminar, **active class participation** is essential. The grade in this category will be based on attendance, written and oral exercises, quizzes, in-class assignments, and informed contributions to class discussions.

ASSIGNMENT 1: PRÉCIS: [15% or 60 points]

Write a précis of any chapter of Gaddis *except for Chapters 1 or 8*. A précis is a summary of the author's main points, arguments, and conclusions. (See also Rampolla, 24.)

Quotations of more than a word or two or a very short phrase are not acceptable. A précis should also communicate the logic of the author's argument. Your précis should be 1 page (typed, double-spaced, 12-point type, with one-inch margins) or about 300 words. It is extremely difficult to write a good précis. You might find it helpful to follow these guidelines:

1. Read the chapter to discover the general idea.
2. Read the chapter more carefully, looking for the main ideas in each paragraph.
3. Jot down the main ideas in each paragraph.
4. Write a summary sentence for each paragraph.
5. Write the précis, putting all of the summary sentences into one well-written paragraph.
6. Rewrite and edit your précis.

Note: Footnotes and page references are not necessary in a précis.

ASSIGNMENT 2: PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS: [15% or 60 points]

Write a 3-4 page source analysis of a) Guibert of Gembloux's (1124/5-1213) Letter to Bovo or b) the Life of Hildegard of Bingen. Your analysis should first provide an overview of the work, including a brief outline of its contents. Second, consider the circumstances of composition, including the author's identity, reasons for writing, sources, and reliability. The bulk of the paper (at least half) comes third, where you evaluate the source. Here, you should suggest what challenges the work poses (or not) to our historical understanding of the person of Hildegard of Bingen.

ASSIGNMENT 3: CRITICAL BOOK REVIEW: [20% or 80 points]

The book review should be 5-6 pages (full pages) or between 1500 and 1800 words. Please include full bibliographical information at the top of the first page and use parenthetical citations for references to the book being reviewed. Use footnotes for references to other reviews of the book.

ASSIGNMENT 4: HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY: [25% or 100 points]

Write a ten- to twelve-page essay in which you discuss and compare sources that are available to you on a given topic. That is, you are not to write a research paper, but an essay that studies the approaches by historians to a given topic. You might also choose to consider a primary source collection along with secondary sources, but this is not required.

You are to identify, describe, analyze, and compare five sources that you would use to compose a paper on a particular historical topic. *See further guidelines at the end of the syllabus and in Rampolla, A Pocket Guide, 32-34.*

For all assignments

There are multiple written assignments, due in class on the dates specified in the course outline below. While learning how to express ideas clearly is an important goal of any liberal arts education, it is especially important for historians. For this reason, grades on written assignments will be based not only on content, but also on expression, including grammar, mechanics, and your correct use of formal writing style. Each paper should be typed, double-spaced, in a 12-point type, with one-inch margins. Number the pages in the upper right hand corner. The paper should be **stapled** in the upper-left corner and should have a simple cover sheet with the title of the assignment, your name, the date, and "History 398" written all in the same 12-point font. (For the précis, be sure to indicate which chapter you've chosen.) No folders or plastic covers, please. I will reduce a paper grade by a full grade for each class period that it is late.

C. COURSE SCHEDULE

PART 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE DISCIPLINE OF HISTORY

■ Thursday, 22 September

Introductions and information sheets; introductory exercise: What is History?

■ Tuesday, 27 September

Taking Notes, Citing Sources

Reading: Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide* (read pp. 39-65, and familiarize yourself with the rest); Begin Gaddis, *The Landscape of History*

Assignment: Accept your invitation to Zotero and have a look at what it will do! Please bring a laptop to class if you have one!

■ Thursday, 29 September

Reading: Gaddis, *The Landscape of History* (finish). Students should be prepared to discuss their own particular view of history and what they think can be gained by historical research. (Shortened class: 10:30-11:30)

■ Tuesday, 4 October

Approaches to History: Leopold von Ranke and the Question of Objectivity

Reading: Wilhelm von Humboldt, "On the Historian's Task" and Leopold von Ranke, "On the Character of Historical Science."

■ Thursday, 6 October

Approaches to History: The Annales School

Reading: Michael Harsgar, "Total History: the Annales School," in *Journal of Contemporary History* 13 (1978): 1-13.

📖 **DUE:** Assignment 1. Write a précis of any chapter of Gaddis *except for Chapter 1 or Chapter 8* (see Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide*, 20-24, and refer to assignment handout for further guidelines).

PART 2. CASE STUDY #1

HILDEGARD OF BINGEN: DIVINE VISIONS OR MEDICAL PATHOLOGY?

■ Tuesday, 11 October

Reading: Mark Salzman, *Lying Awake*.

■ Thursday, 13 October

Reading: Barbara Newman, "Sibyl of the Rhine," in *Voice of the Living Light: Hildegard of Bingen and Her World*, pp. 1-29.

■ Tuesday, 18 October

Presentation by Maria Mazon on the History Major at OSU

Conversation with a graduate student about doctoral study in history

■ Thursday, 20 October

Reading: Hildegard of Bingen, Declaration and Excerpts from the *Scivias*.

📖 **DUE:** Approval of selection for Critical Book Review (due November 8)

■ Tuesday, 25 October

*Meet in the library **Room 150A** for a meeting with David Lincove on OSU Libraries*

📖 **DUE:** Assignment 2. Primary Source Analysis (review Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide*, 6-14)

■ Thursday, 27 October

How Satisfying is a Medical Explanation from the Historian's Point of View?

Reading: Charles Singer, "The Visions of Hildegard of Bingen," in *From Magic to Science* (1958), pp. 230-234; Podoll, K. and Robinson D. "The Migrainous Nature of the Visions of Hildegard of Bingen," in *Neurology, Psychiatry and Brain Research* 10 (2002): 95-100, and G. N. Fuller and M. V. Gale, "The Migraine Aura as Artistic Inspiration," in *British Medical Journal* 297 (1988): 1670-72.

PART 3. CASE STUDY #2

THE CONTROVERSY OVER MARTIN GUERRE

■ Tuesday, 1 November

Approaches to History: *Alltagsgeschichte* (History of Everyday Life) and Cultural History

Reading: Charles Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (begin)

■ Thursday, 3 November

Film: Class rescheduled for a group viewing of *Le Retour de Martin Guerre*, directed by Daniel Vigne (1982) - one evening this week! Refreshments provided!

■ Tuesday, 8 November

Competing Narratives: The Film and the Text (discussion of book and film)

Reading: Charles Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (complete)

📖 **DUE:** Assignment 3. Critical book review (review Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide*, 26-28)

■ Thursday, 10 November

Historical Criticism

Reading: "AHR Forum: The Return of Martin Guerre" in the *American Historical Review* 93 (1988): essays by Natalie Davis and Robert Findlay

■ Tuesday, 15 November

"New Cultural History": Pierre Bordieu and the Theory of Practice

Reading: Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (2004), pp. 49-73.

PART 4. THINKING ABOUT HISTORY, TRUTH, AND EVIDENCE

■ Thursday, 17 November

Reading: Steven Shepard, Phillip Honenberger and Allan Megill, “A Case Study in Historical Epistemology: What did the Neighbors Know about Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemmings?” in *Historical Knowledge, Historical Error*, pp. 125-150.

■ Tuesday, 22 November

Reading: Salem’s Secrets: a Case Study on Hypothesis Testing and Data Analysis (case study packet)

■ Tuesday, 29 November

Student Presentations of Historiographical Essay

■ Thursday, 1 December

Student Presentations of Historiographical Essay

ASSIGNMENT 4 (historiographical essay) is due by the time of the exam. You will need to submit an electronic copy and a hard copy of the paper.