

**HIST 2110/6110:  
HISTORY AND THEORY  
Semester 1, 2008  
Course Guide**



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**Lectures:**

Tuesday, 11:00am-Midday: Haydon-Allen Theatre (Building 23)  
Wednesday, 10:00am-11:00am: Haydon-Allen Theatre (Building 23)

**Tutorials:**

Wednesday	11:00	HNG060
Wednesday	12:00	HN G060
Wednesday	2:00	HN G060
Wednesday	3:00	HN G060
Wednesday	4:00	HN G060
Thursday	10:00	HA 2162

## **COURSE AIMS**

The aims of this unit are twofold: first to acquaint students with current debates about the discipline of history, and second to provide a foundation for thinking theoretically about history at the same time as we engage in its practice. That is, your success in this unit should be judged not only by the work you undertake for it specifically, but also by the degree to which you are able to translate ideas and concepts arising in *History and Theory* to your other history units. This is not really a unit exploring theory for theory's sake (though there is nothing wrong in that), but rather a unit engaging in theoretical questions in order to be able better to reflect on our historical practice.

This course considers what historians aim to do, and what they actually do. It asks questions such as: How can we know what happened in the past? What is the relationship between the present and the past, and how does this inform the way we research and write history? Is History necessarily a western discipline, or can it embrace a wider variety of epistemologies? Why do historians disagree about what happened? What do debates about the Holocaust tell us about the 'limits' of history?

We also consider key developments in historiography, from Herodotus to our own time. We will chart the move from empiricist history through to the rise of social, cultural, feminist, poststructuralist and postcolonial histories.

## **READINGS**

In addition to a standard reading brick the following text is *required* for this unit. This is available in the Co-Op Bookstore:

Ann Curthoys and John Docker, *Is History Fiction?* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2006).

## **UNDERGRADUATE ASSESSMENT**

40% An essay of 1500 words, due by 12 pm, *Tuesday April 1*

50% A second essay of 2500 words due by 4 pm, *Friday 30 May*

10% Tutorial participation.

*All written work must be submitted to the School of Social Sciences main office, located on the second floor of the Copland Building, room 2147. Written work received more than five business days late (without an approved extension) may not be accepted.*

## Essay Assignments

### Essay #1 (*due on Tuesday, 1 April*)

1500 words for undergrads, 2000 words for postgrads.

Answer the following question:

‘The facts speak only when the historian calls on them: it is he who decides which facts to give the floor, and in what order or context’ – EH Carr, *What is History?* (p.11)

Using Carr as a starting point, consider how one of the following historians deploys ‘facts’ and for what ends.

Herodotus, Thucydides, Ranke, Braudel, Marx, EP Thompson.

You may choose to reflect on some of the following: objectivity/ subjectivity, narrative, interpretation, what constitutes evidence (and therefore the ‘facts’), the relationship between the past and the present, the relationship between history and politics.

### Essay #2 (2500 words, due *Friday, 30 May*):

Assignment due Friday 30 May

2500 words for undergrad, 5000 words for post grad.

**Write a critical historiography of one of the following approaches/ areas.**

- **Marxist history**
- **The *Annales* School**
- **Poststructuralism and/ or Foucault**
- **Feminist/ Gender History.**
- **Postcolonialism**
- **Histories of Nation**
- **Social and/ or cultural history**
- **Ethnographic history**
- **Oral history**

Consider definitions, key figures, debates, use of evidence, challenges to historical theory and practice, wider applications/ influences. You may choose to briefly address several of these, while exploring one aspect in more depth. You may closely investigate a key thinker that falls under this rubric however broadly, eg. Marx or Foucault. **You have the option of devising a specific question with me if you prefer, you must do this by Week Eight at the latest.**

## **Submission, Extensions and Late Penalties**

All written work must be submitted to the School of Social Sciences main office located on the second floor of the Copland Building, room 2147. Each piece of work must be accompanied by a green Essay Submission Sheet, which is available from outside the School Office. *This sheet must be signed by the student.* All submissions to the School office are time-stamped, and items submitted after 4:30pm will be stamped as having been received the following morning.

## **Tutorials**

Tutorials are an essential part of this unit and will provide opportunities to engage with potentially difficult readings in a small group setting. Each tutorial will negotiate the precise terms of its assessment with the individual tutor.

You can sign up for tutorials on-line at <http://arts.anu.edu.au/tutorials/> (take note of the building name and room numbers listed here). More tutorials may be added as required.

Please note that tutorials are compulsory. Students missing more than three tutorials without adequate explanation may be excluded from assessment. *If you attend a tutorial other than the one in which you have enrolled, it is your responsibility to let your tutor know!*

## **Class Representative**

It will be useful to have a class representative appointed or elected early on during the semester.

The representative can then be a point of contact for students who may wish to raise matters with the convener without approaching him/her directly. The representative will also attend any School Meetings which may be called during the semester.

The ANU Students' Association (ANUSA) has two Student Representatives in the College of Arts and Social Sciences who can help you with problems or concerns that you may have with your course or degree. They can help you by talking to lecturers or tutors on your behalf, help you address your concerns with assessment, and give you advice about appeals procedures. They also sit on a number of College Committees, so let them know if you have complaints or suggestions for improvement about your courses or about facilities and services more generally.

You can contact them by emailing them at [arts.facrep@anu.edu.au](mailto:arts.facrep@anu.edu.au) or visit the NUSA website for more information <http://sa.anu.edu.au>.

## LECTURE SCHEDULE

**Week 1 Introduction**

26 February: Introduction: Main themes, issues, and concepts

(Tutorial: Introduction)

**Week 2 The Ancients**

March 4: Herodotus

March 5 : Thucydides

(Tutorial: The Ancients)

**Week 3 Ranke and his legacy**

March 11: Leopold Von Ranke

March 12: Responses to Ranke and Scientific History

(Tutorial: Ranke and his legacy)

**Week 4 Marx and Marxist History**

18 March: Marx

19 March: Marxist History

(Tutorial: Marx and Marxist History)

**Week 5 Structuralism**

25 March: Overview

26 March: Spotlight: The *Annales School*

(Tutorial: The Annales School)

**Week 6 Poststructuralism**

1 April: Overview

2 April: Introducing Foucault

**\*\*Assignment One due on 1 April\*\***

(Tutorial: Foucault)

**Week 7 History and the Nation**

8 April: Old School

9 April: New School

(Tutorial: History and the Nation)

**Teaching break: Monday April 14-Friday 25 April (Anzac Day)**

**Week 8 Social and Cultural History.**

29 April: Social and Cultural History

30 April: Spotlight: Oral History

(Tutorial: Social and Cultural History)

**Week 9 Feminist and Gender History**

6 May: Feminist History and Gender History

7 May: Spotlight: Australian Feminist History.

(Tutorial: Feminist and Gender History)

**Week 10 Postcolonialism**

13 May: Orientalism and Subaltern Studies

14 May: Postcolonialism

(Tutorial: Postcolonialism)

**Week 11 Week off to prepare for the final essay.****Week 12: History Wars**

27 May: The History Wars in Australia

28 May: Wrap Up and What's Next?

(Tutorial: The History Wars)

**\*\*\*Final Essay due: Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May\*\*\***

**Tutorials:****Week 1 (Feb 26-29) Introduction****Reading Brick:**

Reading: E.H Carr, *What is History?*(London: Penguin, 1961), 7-30

**Week 2 (March 3-March 7) The Ancients****Reading Brick:**

Herodotus: Selections from ‘The Histories’, Book 1” 1-13; Book 2, 113-20, Book 4”  
Book 4: 110-17 in Herodotus, *The Histories*. Translated by Aubrey de Selincourt, (Penguin, 1996)

Thucydides, Book One, Introduction, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, (Penguin, 1976), 35-48

**Also:**

**Curthoys and Docker**, *Is History Fiction?*, 12-49;

**Week 3 (10-14 March) Ranke and his legacy****Reading Brick:**

Ranke, Leopold von, “Introduction to *The History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations*” (1824)

\_\_\_\_\_ “History and Philosophy”

\_\_\_\_\_ “On the Relation of and Distinction between History and Politics”

\_\_\_\_\_ “The Holy Hieroglyph”, pp. 240-1.

Smith, Bonnie, “Gender and the Practices of Scientific History: The Seminar and Archival Research in the Nineteenth Century”, *American Historical Review*, October 1995, 1150-1175

**From Curthoys and Docker:** Chapter Three: ‘Leopold von Ranke and Sir Walter Scott’, 50-69

**Week 4 (17-21 March) Marx and Marxist History****Reading Brick:**

Karl Marx, “‘Bourgeois and Proletarians”, from *The Communist Manifesto* (1848)

Karl Marx, extract from “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Napoleon Bonaparte” (1871)

E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963), Preface.

Rigby, S.H., ‘Marxist Historiography’ in M. Bentley, (ed) *Companion to Historiography* (Routledge,1997)

**Week 5 (24-28 March) Structuralism****Reading Brick:**

Braudel, Fernand, “History and the Social Sciences: The *Longue Durée*” (1958)

Burke, Peter, “The Age of Braudel” (1990)

Lynn Hunt, “French History in the Last Twenty Years: The Rise and Fall of the *Annales* Paradigm,” *Journal of Contemporary History* April 1986 (21), 209-224

**Week 6 (March 31-April 4) Foucault and Poststructuralism**

\*\*Assignment One due on 1 April\*\*

**Reading Brick:**

Foucault, "Truth and Power," (1976)

Michel Foucault, "Panopticism", *Discipline and Punish* (1976)

Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' (1971)

**Also: Curthoys and Docker**, Chapter Nine, 'Postmodernism and Poststructuralism', 180-205

**Week 7: (April 7-11) History and the Nation**

**Reading Brick:**

Eric Hobsbawm, 'The Nation as invented tradition' (from *The Invention of Tradition* 1983) in *Nationalism* eds. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: OUP, 1994)

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1983/1991 edition)

Partha Chatterjee, 'Whose Imagined Community?', *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, (Princeton NJ: PUP, 1993)

Ann Curthoys, 'We've Just Started Making National Histories, and You Want Us to Stop Already?' in *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking With and Through the Nation*, Antoinette Burton (ed), Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2003

Mrinalini Sinha, 'Gender and Nation', *The Feminist History Reader*, ed. Sue Morgan, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 324-338

**Teaching break: Monday April 14-Friday 25 April (Anzac Day)**

**Week 8 (28 April- 2 May) Social and Cultural History.**

**Reading Brick:**

Robert Danton, 'Workers Revolt: the Great Cat Massacre of the Rue Saint-Severin' in *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 75-104

Alessandro Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different', *The Death of Luigi Tratsulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*. (Albany: University of New York Press, 1991) 45-58

Walter Johnson, 'On Agency', *Journal of Social History* 37.1 (2003) 113-124

**Week 9 (5 May-9 May) Feminist and Gender History****Reading Brick:**

Joan Scott, 'Gender as a Category of Historical Analysis', *American Historical Review*, 1986, 1053-1075

Gisela Bock, 'Women's History and Gender History: Aspects of an International Debate', in *The Feminist History Reader*, ed. Sue Morgan (London: Routledge, 2006), 104-115

Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Introduction/ Conclusion, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Aboriginal Women and Feminism*, (Brisbane: UQP, 2000), xv-xxv, 179-86

Also: Curthoys and Docker: Chapter Eight, 'The Feminist Challenge', 154-180

**Week 10 (12 May-16 May) Postcolonialism****Reading Brick:**

Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978, 2003)

Ranajit Guha, 'On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India', *Subaltern Studies I*, 1982, 1-8

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe : postcolonial thought and historical difference* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 2000.)

**(Tutorial: Postcolonialism)**

**Week 11      Week off to prepare for the final essay.**

**Week 12: (26 May-31 May) History Wars****Reading Brick:**

Statement from Peggy Patrick. In *Whitewash*, ed. Robert Manne (Melbourne: Black Inc, 2003), 215-217

**Curthoys and Docker:** Chapter 11, 'History Wars', 220-238

## A GLOSSARY OF TECHNICAL TERMS

(With acknowledgement to Dr Chris Forth, Dr John Powers and Professor Ann Curthoys, previous teachers of this course.)

Since some of the following terms may crop up in certain readings and lectures, it may be useful to refer to this glossary as an aid. The following brief and very general entries are simply a starting point and should not be viewed as the final word on any of these concepts. Simply reproducing any of the following entries in your written work will not be taken as evidence that you have understood these concepts.

**AHISTORICAL:** Timeless, not subject to the influence of historical development.

**DETACHMENT:** The attempt to distance oneself personally from one's subject matter so as to speak in an academic tone (something that academics have traditionally insisted on) while realizing that one cannot be totally separate from what one studies.

**DIACHRONIC:** Thinking about history as a series of events that follow upon one another "across time" (dia-chronic). In a diachronic perspective one seeks a chain of causes that allows one to explain particular events. Traditional narrative history is usually diachronic insofar as the events and actors are presented in linear and story-like manner. Diachronic history is often criticized for its emphasis on historical actors and relative neglect of the role of broader structures in history.

**DIALECTICAL, DIALECTICS:** Developed by Plato and revived in the early 19th century by G.W.F. Hegel, this is a mode of philosophical inquiry which proceeds through a productive "dialogue" between opposing viewpoints rather than through rigid binary oppositions. This way of thinking was further developed by Karl Marx, who saw history as the story of opposing forces. In dialectical thinking a 'thesis' is opposed by its opposite, an 'antithesis', and from their clash emerges a new 'synthesis', which in turn becomes a new 'thesis', able to be opposed by a new 'antithesis', and so on and so on.

**DISCOURSE:** Sometimes simply referring to speech, discourse often refers to the systematic interconnection of a wide range of statements within an organized body of knowledge, so that when one speaks of psychological discourse on criminality one means the whole interconnected system of psychological thinking about the criminal at a particular time.

**EMPLOTMENT:** A concept popularized by the literary critic Northrop Frye and translated into historical terms by Hayden White. White argued that what historians essentially do is put their accounts of the past into plot structures that have become central in the western tradition, thus availing themselves of such things as tragedy, comedy, and irony when striving to depict the past objectively.

**EPISTEMOLOGY:** The theory of knowledge. In historical terms this means an inquiry into how one knows anything about the past.

**EVENT:** Something that happens relatively suddenly in history, often as the result of direct human action. In Annales terms, events are very short-term and fairly insignificant phenomena that can be considered chaotic and hard to explain adequately. Fernand Braudel likened the history of events to the foam or scum that rides on the surface of deeper, slower moving, and more significant levels of history, including geological and climatic changes.

**FICTION:** If we assume that fiction means total fabrication or outright lying, then there is no doubt that history is not that. Yet if we recall that the root of the word, "fictio," refers to something that is put together, then it is hard to deny that historians do precisely that: they arrange the scattered debris of the past into an order that corresponds to how they think the past actually was.

**GENEALOGY:** A concept developed by the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in On the Genealogy of Morals (1888) and put into historical terms by Michel Foucault. The

genealogist distrusts the notion of origins, and believes that events are determined by innumerable influences, including but not reducible to a single actor. Much like searching for the genealogical roots of one's own family, the genealogist-as-historian does not stop with a single set of "parents," but constantly pushes his or her inquiry further into the past; e.g. while my parents may have produced me, who produced them?

**HISTORICISM:** Has a number of different meanings but in recent usage tends to mean the general sense that everything is subject to the flow of historical time, even those things we used to consider "natural" and thus unchanging.

**MENTALITÉS:** The total manner of thinking and feeling of a set of people at a certain time.

**MODERNITY:** One definition of modernity would be the ensemble of political, social, technological and economic changes experienced in the west since the 1750s, including the rise of representative democracy, class mobility, scientific advancement and industrial capitalism. Another definition, promoted by philosopher Jürgen Habermas, considers modernity as an on-going project initiated by the Enlightenment thinkers in which knowledge was used critically to unmask the vagaries of political despots and ruling classes.

**NATURE:** In the terms of this unit, "nature" refers to that which is not subject to historical change. Many contemporary historians inquire not into the naturalness of something but into how it has been constructed as (or made to seem) "natural" in particular historical contexts.

**OBJECTIVITY:** The notion that one can know the past as an object without any subjective "taint," i.e., without the intrusion of present-day perspectives in general or of any personal biases of the historian in particular. Tends to assume there is only one legitimate reading of a given historical document.

**POWER:** Traditionally conceived of as a repressive external force (a king, dictator, military, ruling class) which imposes itself on an individual or group. Foucault drew historians' attention to the ways power is not so much a repression as something that is *productive*. It is closely associated with knowledge.

**STRUCTURE:** The most durable features of a culture or society, providing the basic framework within which anything can be conceived or considered possible. They may be extremely slow moving phenomena like geological and climatic changes which are far beyond the control of humans, or they may be frameworks and ways of thinking that persist over time with very few changes. The relative stability of structures thus stand in opposition to the rather chaotic eruptions of events.

**SUBJECTIVITY:** Pertaining to the knowing person (or "subject") who seeks to understand the past. Subjectivity sometimes refers to the distortions produced by the personal feelings of the observer which frustrate attempts to being "objective," that is, letting the object speak for itself. But more often it is used to mean something like 'self-awareness'.

**SYNCHRONIC:** Thinking about history in terms of simultaneity rather than linearity. For historians, a synchronic approach would be a 'snapshot' in time, presenting a "slice of life" view of the past on a number of levels at once. Synchronic history is often criticized for being too static and unable to explain change over time.

**TELEOLOGY:** In historical terms, teleology assumes that the flow of time is moving inexorably toward an ultimate purpose and that all experiences along the way are validated in terms of this goal. Teleological thinking assumes it can know the ultimate end of history without any sort of proof and thus becomes akin to an act of faith. Many Marxist, Christian and Muslim views of history are teleological in character.

## Bibliography

**This is a preliminary list, a fuller version will be released in the first weeks of semester.**

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- . "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," pp. 81-100, in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985).

### *The Ancients*

- Dewald, Carolyn "Women and culture in Herototus' *Histories*," in Helene P. Foley (ed.), *Reflections on Women in Antiquity* (Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, New York, 1981), pp.91-125
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### **Thucydides**

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### **Marx (with social history)**

Articles from *History Workshop Journal*:

1976: 1: Editorials, pp.1-3; 4-6; 6-8

1978: 6: Editorial 'History and Theory', pp.1-6

Critique: Richard Johnson, 'Edward Thompson, Eugene Genovese, and Socialist-Humanist History', pp.79-100.

1976: 1: Editorials, pp.1-3; 4-6; 6-8

1979: 7: Tony Judt, 'A Clown in Regal Purple: Social History and the Historians', pp.66-94.

Critique: Towards a Socialist History: Keith McClelland, 'Some Comments on Richard Johnson, Edward Thompson, Eugene Genovese, and Socialist-Humanist History', pp.101-15.

Gavin Williams, 'In Defence of History', pp.116-24..

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Simon Clarke, 'Socialist Humanism and the Critique of Economism', pp.137-56

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