

# U.S. SOCIAL HISTORY

HI 217 Worcester State University  
Fall 2015 MWF 12:30 pm Room S-320

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Social history  
explores the  
worlds of “non-  
famous” people,  
who often left  
little record of  
their own.

## Ordinary People, Extraordinary Stories

### COURSE OVERVIEW AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

#### EXPECTATIONS AND COURSE STRUCTURE

This course involves extensive reading and writing. You will be expected to read 50-100 pages a week (sometimes more), and to write approximately 20-25 pages over the course of the term. You will need to put in consistent effort during the whole semester; your learning will be assessed in multiple ways. You'll need to employ strong research skills and participate in a community of learning in our classroom.

#### STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Extend and broaden your own historical knowledge of the American past and its ordinary people, through the lens of social history.
- Consistently contribute to a community of learning in seminar discussion with: active preparation, productive and respectful discussion, and depth of engagement with course materials to advance your own and others' understanding.
- Conduct small-scale primary research in local archives, while demonstrating high standards of scholarly integrity.
- Adhere to the disciplinary conventions of historical scholarship while crafting evidence-based research projects that exhibit originality.



*Immigrants arriving at Ellis Island, New York City*



*Sometimes this is all we have left*



*Is this social history? (Yes!)*

**LASC Categories:**  
WAC + DAC  
USW or TLC  
*cross-listed with*  
*Women's Studies*



## Course Requirements

### ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION 25%

I will take attendance in each class session. You should be prompt, present and ready for discussion each day. Class discussion should be lively, substantive, and involve everyone. Your A&P grade also includes your “Prof” day, when you assume part of the responsibility for the teaching and discussion.

### EXAMS 20%

We will have three closed-book written exams, one at the end of each unit. The last exam will take place during the final exam week but will be the equivalent of the other two exams, not a comprehensive final. Your lowest test score is dropped; for that reason **there are no makeup exams**. Exams will be held on Sept 28, Nov 2, and Dec 14.

### RESPONSE PAPERS 20%

You’ll write three brief (2-page) papers that represent your thoughtful response to the assigned readings. The first is due Friday, Sept 11. The second is due on your “Prof for a Day”, and the third is due on a different “Prof for a Day” of your choosing. A fourth paper is a course reflection, due on the final exam date, Monday Dec 14.

### DIGITAL PROJECT 20%

As a class, we will explore a collection in the holdings of the Worcester Historical Museum and each student will craft a digital project based on a social worker’s casefile from the early 20th century. The project involves a class visit for archival research, scanning and processing documentary material, and preparing that material to be added to a digital archive. Due on Oct 21.

### RESEARCH PROJECT 15%

You’ll develop and conduct a social history research project, resulting in a well-crafted 6-page paper that adheres to the research and citation conventions of history. Detailed guidelines and rubric will be given later. Topic is due Nov 11. There will be a peer review session on Nov 23; the draft is 5% of the grade, and the final paper due on Dec 8 is 10% of the grade.

### THE FINE PRINT

Regarding plagiarism: on papers and exams, doing your own work is essential. Cite your sources using Chicago-Style footnotes. Plagiarized work will result in an automatic zero on the assignment and may cause you to fail the class, at my discretion. I take such violations very seriously. Please familiarize yourself with and follow the university’s policy on Academic Honesty in the student handbook.

### IF YOU HAVE A DOCUMENTED DISABILITY

... learning or otherwise, and you need a reasonable accommodation made for you in this course, please consult with me immediately at the outset of the course so we can design a solution that will help you be successful in the class.



Which is the “real” Pocahontas?

### POLICY ON DEVICES IN CLASS

We will be busy in every class session, and we don’t need any technological distractions. Silence your cell phone before you enter the classroom. Laptops or tablets are welcome, but please stay on task and use them only for taking notes or accessing course materials during discussion. Do not use your device in class to surf the internet, check email, or use social media. These activities will definitely jeopardize your class participation grade and they pull others away from the work at hand.

## Grading Scale

Attendance & participation +  
oral presentation 25%

Response and reflection  
papers (4 @ 5%) 20%

Exams, lowest is dropped  
(2 of 3 @ 10%) 20%

Digital Project 20%

Research Paper 15%

**Total 100%**



*Japanese American families boarding buses for World War II internment camps in California, 1942*

### HERE'S A QUESTION:

What evidence will YOU have left behind for future historians? How would they know about your life? What conclusions would a social historian make from your evidence?

## MOST WEEKS WILL FOLLOW THE SAME PATTERN

### MONDAY

Historical context, introduction and overview of the week's readings; assigned readings provide essential background for studying the historical evidence .

### WEDNESDAY

Exploring the week's primary sources and documents in depth, in a workshop / discussion format. Your task is to read & discuss for what we can learn about ordinary people from these documents, and how the document's creator(s) got — and interpreted — their information.

### FRIDAY

“Prof for a Day” Presentations. Students take a turn teaching based on the week's material. Think of this as a chance to engage your colleagues and empower **their** learning, NOT as a formal or stiff “oral presentation.” There will be seven of these throughout the term.

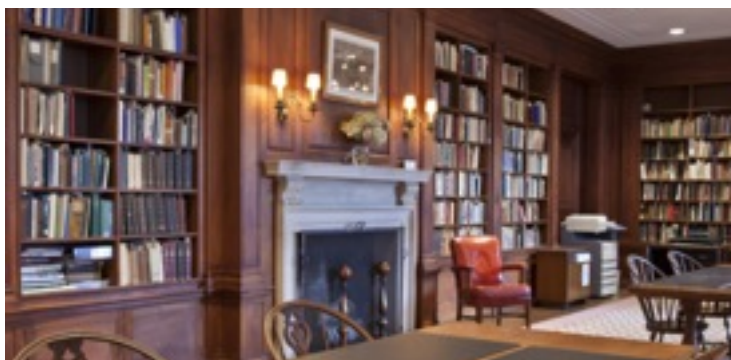


# Syllabus

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subject to change; check the website for updates!

#	DATE	TOPIC	READINGS	WHAT'S DUE / NOTES
1	Wed 9/2	Course Intro		
<b>Unit One   Who Built America? Social History as Labor / Folk History</b>				
2	Fri 9/4	Social History, Labor History	Gutman, "Work, Culture & Society" PDF	<i>No class Mon 9/7</i>
3	Wed 9/9	Labor and Gender	Zinn Ch 13	
4	Fri 9/11	The Brandeis Brief discussion	Brief in <i>Muller v. Oregon</i>	<b>Response Paper #1</b>
<b>Discussion Questions:</b> What "extra-legal" data did Brandeis use? What can we learn from this? Why has this brief become important in legal practice? How did Brandeis find and compile this information? What were his findings? What was the effect on the case? On a recent feminist lawyers' blog, one lawyer criticized this brief for being full of "paternalistic drivel." Do you agree?				
5	Mon 9/14	The New South	Zinn Ch 11 + see online links	
6	Wed 9/16	<i>Like a Family</i> discussion	<i>Like a Family</i> , "Cradle to Grave" PDF	
<b>Discussion Questions:</b> What do we learn about the southern cotton mill world? Why / how is it a "world"? Who peoples it? What is life like? How does it differ from the northern urban working class we've discussed so far, and in what ways is it similar? How did this team of researchers conduct their research?				
7	Fri 9/18	Prof for a Day #1		
8	Mon 9/21	Workers in Worcester	Rosenzweig, <i>Eight Hours</i> , Parts I and II	
9	Wed 9/23	Workers in Worcester discussion	Rosenzweig, <i>Eight Hours</i> , Parts III and IV	
<b>Discussion Questions:</b> Let's focus on Worcester and how Rosenzweig used sources to construct a portrait of workers in Worcester. What was it like to live in Worcester at this time period? How do we know? What is Rosenzweig's argument? How will we go about researching Worcester in the same time period; what questions shall we bring to our project?				
10	Fri 9/25	Prof for a Day #2		
11	Mon 9/28	<b>Exam #1</b>		
<b>The Digital Project</b>				
12	Wed 9/30	Worcester Historical Museum	Field trip for half the class (other half has day off) - details on web	
13	Fri 10/2	Worcester Historical Museum	Field trip for half the class (other half has day off) - details on web	
14	Mon 10/5	Digital Project Work Day #1	bring laptops to class	
15	Wed 10/7	Digital Project Work Day #2	bring laptops to class	



*Our digital project will take us to the research library of the Worcester Historical Museum*

#	DATE	TOPIC	READINGS	WHAT'S DUE / NOTES
<b>Unit Two   The Other Half: Social History as Women's History</b>				
16	Fri 10/9	The "Pocahontas Problem"	Zinn Ch. 1 and Rountree PDF	<i>No class Mon 10/12</i>
17	Wed 10/14	Native American Women, discussion		
<b>Discussion Questions:</b> Prepare to discuss legends and reality surrounding this singular historical woman. What do we actually know about her? Why has she become such a repository for multiple meanings? In what ways does she or does she not represent other native American women of her time and place?				
18	Fri 10/16	Prof for a Day #3		
19	Mon 10/19	Separate Spheres, Didactic Literature	Zinn Ch. 6 + Scott, "Gender" PDF	
20	Wed 10/21	Female Worlds, discussion	Smith-Rosenberg, "Female World" PDF + Abbott "The Mother At Home" online link	
<b>Discussion Questions:</b> Discuss the ideology of "separate spheres" and what Nancy Cott has called the "canon of domesticity." What ideas about gender were prevalent in early 19th century America? To whom did these definitions apply? What is meant by "proscriptive" literature? Can you think of contemporary examples of proscriptive literature? How does Smith-Rosenberg investigate whether women followed this literature's prescriptions in their own lives?				
21	Fri 10/23	Prof for a Day #4		
22	Mon 10/26	American Women 1940-1960	Zinn Ch. 19 + Walker's intro <i>Women's Magazines</i>	
23	Wed 10/28	Gender in mid20th century	bring Walker book to class with you	
<b>Discussion Questions:</b> explore the themes and ideas raised in women's magazines of this period. What did / did not surprise you? How do these compare and relate to the proscriptive literature of the 19th century? What ideas about gender can you find in these sources? Are women following them at the time, and how could we know? How can historians use these magazines as a source of information about women's lives in this time period? What women are left out, or perhaps even defined out of the category of "women" altogether?				
24	Fri 10/30	Prof for a Day #5		
25	Mon 11/2	<b>Exam #2</b>		
<b>Unit Three   Who is America? Social History as Multicultural History</b>				
26	Wed 11/4	Library Day 1	Intro to sources, strategies - bring laptops	
27	Fri 11/6	Biography & Microhistory	Lepore, "Historians Who Love Too Much" PDF	
28	Mon 11/9	Library Day 2	location TBA - bring laptops	
	<b>Wed 11/11</b>	<b>No Class - RP due via email</b>		<b>Paper topic due</b>
29	Fri 11/13	African American Life in the Nadir	Zinn Ch. 17	
30	Mon 11/16	Immigration, Nation, Migration	Zinn Ch. 12	
31	Wed 11/18	Asian Americans	Ngai, "Filipinos" PDF + Goldstein-Shirley "Strangers" PDF	



Strikers and Militia face off in Lawrence, MA during the 1912 "Bread & Roses" Strike



Mill children in Lawrence

#	DATE	TOPIC	READINGS	WHAT'S DUE / NOTES
32	Fri 11/20	Prof for a Day #6		
33	Mon 11/23	Peer Review Day	none - bring 2 printed drafts of your paper to class	<b>Paper Draft Due - 2 copies, printed out</b>
	11/25 - 11/29	<i>No School, Thanksgiving Holiday (... aka Native American National Day of Mourning)</i>		
34	Mon 11/30	Latinos - Bilingual America	Zinn Ch. 8, also pp. 614-616 + website links	
35	Wed 12/2	The (?) Mexican American experience	Pam Munoz Ryan, <i>Esperanza Rising</i> (entire)	
<b>Discussion Questions:</b> What do you learn from this text about Mexican-American migrant worker experiences? Does the fact that it is based on the author's own family story give this work of fiction special authority or power? What are some of the themes and symbols explored in this book? What's the novel's historical context (hint: it was published in 2000)? How might this book be incorporated into K-12 classrooms, or into other public history or education settings? How does this story connect to our other readings about marginalized, migrant, and/or minority peoples?				
36	Fri 12/4	Prof for a Day #7		
37	Mon 12/7	Course Wrap-Up & Sharing Research	Bring a food to share that represents your (or another) cultural heritage	<b>Final Papers Due + 50-word summary of your rsch project</b>
	Mon 12/14	<b>Exam #3 12:30 pm</b>		

### Required Books:

Nancy Walker,  
*Women's Magazines, 1940-1960*  
(Bedford)  
ISBN 978-0312102012

Roy Rosenzweig,  
*Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920*  
(Cambridge U Press)  
ISBN 978-0521313971

Pam Munoz Ryan,  
*Esperanza Rising*  
(Blue Sky Press)  
ISBN 978-0439120425

Howard Zinn,  
*A People's History of the United States*  
(Harper Perennial Modern Classics)  
ISBN 978-0061965586