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.

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

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION 21%
I will take attendance in each class session. You should be prompt, present and ready to work in 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 Feb 12, March 16, and May 16.

RESPONSE PAPERS 9%
You’ll write three brief (2-page) papers that represent your thoughtful response to the assigned readings. The first is due Friday, Jan 26. 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.

ZINN BLOG 10% (HONORS ONLY)
Keep a running Blackboard backchannel discussing Zinn’s People’s History of the United States.

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 Feb 23.

RESEARCH PROJECT 20%
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. Your topic is due March 30. There will be a peer review session on Apr 23.
20 points total: Apr 23 draft 5 points, May 7 final paper 12 points, May 7 oral presentation 3 points.

THE FINE PRINT
Regarding plagiarism: on papers and exams, doing your own work is essential. Cite your sources using Chicago-Style footnotes. If you need help with citation, see the Footnotes Module on Blackboard. 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.

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.

Which is the “real” Pocahontas?
Extra Credit

The topic and themes of this course can be explored beyond our classroom, and I highly recommend this! As an incentive, I will grant up to 5 points extra credit each time you do one of the following:

Visit a museum that contains images or objects relating to everyday peoples’ lives, and either write a review of the exhibit or provide a description & close reading of one or more items/objects you viewed. For example: Worcester Art Museum, Worcester Historical Museum, or beyond Worcester; zillions of options. (3-5 pages)

Conduct an interview or oral history with a person whose life experience touches on our course themes: working-class labor, women’s lives and work, or first-generation immigration (provide video or audio and full transcript of interview).

Write a book review of a monograph or biography that relates to our course themes. Book must be approved in advance. (3-5 pages).

Grading Scale

Attendance & participation
+ Prof for a Day
21 points

Response papers
(3 @ 3 points)
9 points

ZinnBlog (see p. 7)
10 points

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

Digital Project
20 points

Research Paper
20 points

Total 100

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 documents and readings in depth, in a workshop / discussion format. Your task is to understand what we can learn about ordinary people from these documents, and how the document’s creator(s) got — and interpreted — their information. Discussion questions are listed ahead of time in the syllabus, so come with the readings and your notes addressing the discussion questions, ready to respond in class.

FRIDAY
“Prof for a Day.” Students take a turn teaching based on the week’s material and topics. Think of this as a chance to engage your peers and empower their learning, NOT as a formal or stiff “oral presentation” that shows off your own knowledge. There will be seven of these throughout the term.
## Syllabus

### Unit One | Who Built America? Social History as Labor / Folk History

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<th>READINGS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wed 1/17</td>
<td>Course Intro</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fri 1/19</td>
<td>Social History, Labor History</td>
<td>Gutman, “Work, Culture &amp; Society” PDF</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mon 1/22</td>
<td>Labor and Gender</td>
<td>Zinn Ch 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Wed 1/24</td>
<td>The Brandeis Brief discussion</td>
<td>Brief in Muller v. Oregon</td>
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**Discussion Questions:** 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    | Fri 1/26 | American Working Class History |                                   | Response Paper #1 |
| 6    | Mon 1/29 | The New South                  | Zinn Ch 11 + see online links     |                    |
| 7    | Wed 1/31 | Like a Family discussion       | Like a Family, “Cradle to Grave” PDF |                    |

**Discussion Questions:** 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?

| 8    | Fri 2/2  | Prof for a Day #1            |                                   |                    |
| 9    | Mon 2/5  | Workers in Worcester         | Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours*, Parts I and II |                    |
| 10   | Wed 2/7  | Workers in Worcester discussion | Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours*, Parts III and IV |                    |

**Discussion Questions:** 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?

| 11   | Fri 2/9  | Prof for a Day #2            |                                   |                    |
| 12   | Mon 2/12 | Exam #1                     |                                   |                    |

### The Digital Project

| 13   | Wed 2/14 | Worcester Historical Museum | Field trip for half the class (other half has day off) - details on web |                    |
| 14   | Fri 2/16 | Worcester Historical Museum | Field trip for half the class (other half has day off) - details on web |                    |
| 15   | Mon 2/21 | Digital Project Work Day #1  | bring laptops to class            |                    |
| 16   | Wed 2/23 | Digital Project Work Day #2  | bring laptops to class            |                    |

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Our digital project will take us to the research library of the Worcester Historical Museum.
# Syllabus


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<tr>
<td>**Unit Two</td>
<td>The Other Half: Social History as Women’s History**</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Mon 2/26</td>
<td>The “Pocahontas Problem”</td>
<td>Zinn Ch. 1 and Rountree PDF</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Wed 2/28</td>
<td>Native American Women discussion</td>
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**Discussion Questions:** 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 3/2 | Prof for a Day #3 | | |

| 19 | Mon 3/5 | Separate Spheres, Didactic Literature | Zinn Ch. 6 + Scott, “Gender” PDF | |
| 20 | Wed 3/7 | Female Worlds discussion | Smith-Rosenberg, “Female World” PDF + Abbott “The Mother At Home” online link | |

**Discussion Questions:** 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 prescriptive literature? How does Smith-Rosenberg investigate whether women followed this literature’s prescriptions in their own lives?

| 21 | Fri 3/9 | Prof for a Day #4 | | |
| 22 | Mon 3/12 | American Women 1940-1960 | Zinn Ch. 19 + Walker’s intro Women’s Magazines | |
| 23 | Wed 3/14 | Gender in mid20-century discussion | bring Walker book to class with you | |

**Discussion Questions:** 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?

| 25 | Fri 3/16 | Exam #2 | Spring Break, March 19 - March 23 | |

| **Unit Three | Who is America? Social History as the History of Immigration and Multiculturalism** |
| 26 | Mon 3/26 | Library Day 1 | Intro to sources, strategies - bring laptops | |
| 27 | Wed 3/28 | Biography & Microhistory discussion | Lepore, “Historians Who Love Too Much” PDF | |

**Discussion Questions:** How does Lepore define “microhistory”? What is the difference between biography and microhistory? What is microhistory’s value, especially for studying people who left us little record? What are Lepore’s four propositions, and how will you apply them to your upcoming research project?

| 28 | Fri 3/30 | Library Day 2 | location TBA - bring laptops | **Topic due by midnight** |
| 29 | Mon 4/2 | Immigration, Nation, Migration | Zinn Ch. 12 | |
| 30 | Wed 4/4 | Life in the Nadir discussion | Zinn Ch. 17 | |

**Discussion Questions:** Around 1900, most historians agree, was the low point for African American citizenship in all of American history (i.e. the “nadir”). What was life like for African Americans between 1880 and 1945? What forms of protest and social justice advocacy did they use? How do early 20th-century black lives illuminate American history’s broader context: also an era of westward expansion, industrialization, American imperialism and involvement in global war, urbanization, and high rates of European immigration?
HI 217 US Social History, Fall 2018

**Required Books:**

  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

  ISBN 978-0062397348

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**Discussion Questions**:

For the discussion questions, use your assigned primary source to address these questions — how did prevailing ideas about race inform immigration policy in Congress and the courts between 1880 and 1945? What assumptions and values can you identify in your document? What were some of the long-term effects of immigration restriction?

1. **Fri 4/6**
   - Prof for a Day #5

2. **Mon 4/9**
   - Asian Migrants
     - Ngai, “Filipinos” PDF + Goldstein-Shirley “Strangers” PDF

3. **Wed 4/11**
   - Race and Immigration restriction discussion
     - Document by assignment, see website links

4. **Fri 4/13**
   - Prof for a Day #6
     - No Class Mon 4/16

5. **Wed 4/18**
   - Today’s Immigrant Cultures discussion
     - TAL episode = website links
     - Plan ahead - episodes are 1 hour long

6. **Fri 4/20**
   - Prof for a Day #7

7. **Mon 4/23**
   - Peer Review Day
     - none - bring 2 printed drafts of your paper to class
     - Paper Draft Due - 2 copies, printed out

8. **Wed 4/25**
   - Paper Workshop
     - Prof conferences & bring paper to work on in class

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**Syllabus**

*subject to change; check the website for updates!*

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

*Mill children in Lawrence*
Syllabus

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fri 4/27</td>
<td>No Class</td>
<td>WSU is in session, but our class is cancelled for the day. Use the time</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>to work on your research papers or read the upcoming novel for Wed 5/2</td>
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<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Mon 4/30</td>
<td>Bilingual America</td>
<td>Zinn Ch. 8, also pp. 614-616 + website links</td>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Wed 5/2</td>
<td>The (?) Mexican American</td>
<td>Pam Munoz Ryan, <em>Esperanza Rising</em> (entire)</td>
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<td>experience</td>
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**Discussion Questions:** 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?

| 41 | Fri 5/4  | Latino-American discussion | (No Prof for a Day today)                                                |                                           |
|    |         |                            |                                                                         |                                           |
| 42 | Mon 5/7 | Course Wrap-Up and Research | Bring a food to share that represents your (or another) cultural heritage | Final Papers Due + 50-word summary of     |
|    |         | Sharing                    |                                                                          | your research project                    |
|    |         |                            |                                                                          |                                           |
|    | Wed 5/16| Exam #3 12:30 pm           |                                                                          |                                           |

**More about the Honors ZinnBlog**

Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United States* is an important book to grapple with and it’s stuffed with powerful stories, but it’s not perfect. Zinn makes no attempt to be objective; instead he takes a strong ideological perspective that reflects his own radical politics and working-class-to-intellectual biography. He also seems uninterested in the usual trappings of scholarly writing, like footnotes citing his sources. Are these problems? Should they be?

For the benefit of the non-honors class we treat Zinn fairly uncritically, as if his account of the past is authoritative and true, if perhaps incomplete. We will read 6 of the chapters together as a class (1, 6, 8, 12, 17, and 19), though not necessarily in order. In a sense we (mis-)use *People’s History* like a textbook (which it’s not designed to be). The honors section, however, should approach Zinn more thoroughly as critical, engaged readers and will maintain a running Blackboard discussion board as a sort of backchannel conversation. Each honors student will have an assigned week to be in charge of the ZinnBlog. Threads open on a Monday morning and close the following Sunday at midnight. Everyone contributes to each open thread, either with a post (if it’s your week in charge) or with smart comment(s) to keep the discussion flowing. I’ll post a schedule to the honors Blackboard shell once the semester gets going.

“I am supposing, or perhaps only hoping, that our future may be found in the past’s fugitive moments of compassion rather than in its solid centuries of warfare.” — Howard Zinn

HI 217 US Social History, Fall 2018 | http://tonahangen.com/wsc/hi217