

## **Thinking History**

### **Debates and Developments in Historiography from the end of the First World War to the beginning of the Twenty- First Century**

#### **Aims and Objectives**

**This is a course that proposes to take an historical approach to the difficult but fascinating subject of Historiography. Its aim is to provide students with a survey of the principal movements and debates which have shaped historical research and writing over the past eighty years or so. Though the approach will be largely chronological, a principal aim of the course is to introduce students at once to the major theoretical and methodological problems which continue to confront historians in their everyday work, and to present them with the opportunity of examining some of the classic texts of modern historical writing.**



**Clio: the Muse of History**

## **Learning Outcomes:**

This course will expose students to the history of historical thought and writing in the twentieth and twenty-first century.

On successful completion of this module students should be able to demonstrate that they have acquired the ability

- to order the main developments in historical theory and practice in Europe and North America in the twentieth and early twenty-first century.
- to assess the significance of the major trends in modern historiography.
- to evaluate the critical turning points in historiographical theory and practice.
- to engage critically with the most influential books and articles pertaining to the subject.
- to present a coherent summary and assessment of the historical debates and controversies relating to the subject.
- to interpret with key primary documents in the light of the political, social, intellectual and cultural contexts of the period.
- to interact with and apply key analytical and theoretical models available for the subject
- to demonstrate a continuing engagement with the latest developments and outstanding problems in the interpretation of the subject.
- to present a critical discussion of specific topics selected for analysis within the subject
- to present a comparative assessment and evaluation of contributions to the wider debates on historical method and philosophy
- to demonstrate a written mastery of a range of general issues raised by recent theoretical challenges to the status and value of history writing

## **Some Definitions**

### **What is historiography?**

historiography *n.* 1. the writing of history. 2. the study of history-writing.

History is a complex and misleading word. It connotes both the past that the historian studies and the exercise of investigating analysing and writing about that past. This complexity is sometimes lost on us, and in practice we frequently neglect the artificial, creative nature of history writing. We mistake the art for the fact, and forget that the historical past, however straightforward it may seem, is not plain truth, but is always 'constructed' by the person who writes about it. For these reasons historians

often use the term *historiography* specifically to denote the conscious act of writing history and of thinking about how history is written.

### **Thinking about how history is written**

Historical construction, good and bad, takes place in several stages. Gradually, by selecting and reading sources, by assessing the value and the relevance of disparate and often conflicting evidence, by engaging with other historical writers and interpretations the historian pieces together an understanding, an explanation and (ultimately) an interpretation of past societies and events. But each of these easily summarised stages is replete with inherent problems. What sources should the historian use? What sort of evidence is convincing? Which documents should be read, and how many? How are previous interpretations and perspectives to be weighed? Which interpretative concepts work best? Which subjects are worth investigating in the first place, and on what ground is this selection and that approach based? Can history writing be objective, should the writer even try to be free of value judgement? Can historians erase their own assumptions, social attitudes and prejudices before beginning this series of intricate tasks? Or should they frankly declare them and use them overtly in their historical interpretations and arguments?

It is to explore such questions about how historians have tried to write history that this course has been designed. By introducing students to the wide variety of perspectives, methods and concepts by which historians actually approach the task of making sense of the past, it seeks to provide practical and usable answers to the theoretical problems inherent in History as a form of knowledge. And by focussing discussion on texts that have exercised a major influence in the development of these perspectives over the past century it hopes to provide students with a sense of the breadth and richness of contemporary historical writing

### **What is postmodernism?**

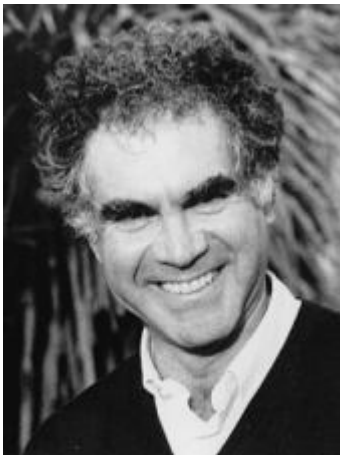
In recent years one of the most serious challenges to the integrity and to the very status of history writing as a respectable form of study and thought has come from a variety of critical and theoretical perspectives which have been grouped under the complex and exceedingly slippery theoretical construct of *Postmodernism*. Postmodernism is a term used to designate a multitude of trends—in the arts,

philosophy, literary theory, historical discourse and many other areas—that come after and deviate from the many 20th-century movements that constituted modernism. The term, now ubiquitous in contemporary discourse, has been employed as a catchall for various aspects of society, theory, and art. Central to it, however, is a rejection of the sovereign autonomous individual – in particular the authoritative composer of a text - and a corresponding emphasis upon the contingent, collective, anonymous and sometimes anarchic nature of cognitive experience, that is of the way in which we perceive and get to know the world. In practice, the Postmodernist perspective has tended to subvert the notion of a coherent text or line of argument, to deny the absolute superiority of one way of knowing the world over another (which it sees as ideologically repressive), to blur the distinctions between high and low culture, and as a whole to challenge a wide variety of traditional cultural values.

**Some Historians**



**Marc Bloch**



**Carlo Ginzburg**

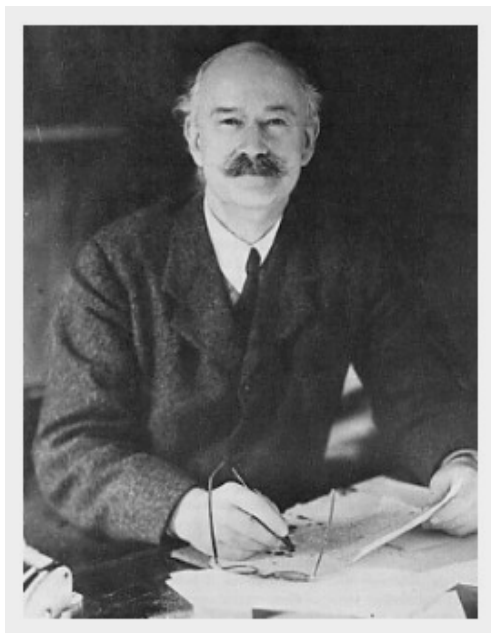


**Natalie  
Zemon Davis**

**Francois Furet**



**Joan Wallach Scott**



**R.H Tawney**



**E.P. Thompson**



**Eugene Genovese**

### **Modes of delivery**

**This course will be delivered through nine lectures at 10am on each Monday from the start of term through to Monday 19th March in R. 3071.**

**In addition three two hour discussion sessions will be held in Week 4, (3pm to 5pm on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> February), Week 8, (3pm to 5pm on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> March), and Week 11, (3pm to 5pm on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> March) .**

**These discussion sessions will all be held in R 3081**

### **Course Teacher and Co-Ordinator**

**The co-ordinator for this course is Prof. Ciaran Brady who is contactable in R 3116 during office hours and at [cbrady@tcd.ie](mailto:cbrady@tcd.ie).**

### **Introductory and General Reading**

Five books which offer introductory surveys of the range of history writing over the past half century and of the debates, problems and developments which have arisen over the same period are Arthur Marwick, *The Nature of History* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 1989), John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* ( 3<sup>rd</sup> ed 1999), Jeremy Black and D.M Mc Raild, *Studying History* (1997), Michael Bentley, *Modern Historiography: an introduction* (London, 1999) and J.H. Arnold, *History: a very short introduction* (Oxford, 2000).

Beverly Southgate, *History: What and why?* (1996) offers a discussion which, while being sympathetic to the postmodernist critique does not entirely surrender to it; Keith Jenkins, *Re-thinking History* (1991) does. Three robust rebuttals of the postmodernist siege are Joyce Appleby et al, *Telling the Truth about History*, (1994) Richard Evans,

*In Defence of History* (1997) and David Cannadine (ed) *What is History now ?*(2002). An important book written by a scholar who is both a trained historian and philosopher is C.B. Mc Cullagh, *The truth of history* (1998).

Longer perspectives are supplied in the encyclopaedic Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient , Medieval and Modern* ( 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1994), in Donald R. Kelley, *Frontiers of History: historical enquiry in the twentieth century* (2006), and in George Iggers, *New Directions in Modern European Historiography* ( 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1985). Peter Burke (ed) *New perspectives on Historical Writing* (1991) offers a series of short essays on recent methodological and theoretical developments.

Marnie Hughes-Warrington provides short essays with valuable bibliographic references on *Fifty key thinkers on History* (2000) and John Cannon (ed) *The Blackwell Dictionary of Historians* ( 1988) is a useful work of reference.

### **Primary Sources:**

Robert M Burns (ed), *Historiography: Critical Concepts* (2006) is a massive four volume collection of key documents in the history of historical writing which lays particular emphasis on modern trends, methods and controversies, practical and theoretical. Three other anthologies which collect a variety of statements from practicing historians concerning the purposes and problems of their work are Fritz Stern, *The Varieties of History*, ( 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 1980), John Cannon (ed.), *The Historian at Work*, (1980) and John Tosh (ed.), *Historians on History* (Longman, 2001).



# **Lecture List And Key to Further reading**

## **Week 1**

**Lecture: Dialogue of the deaf: Philosophers and Historians reflect on the nature of historical practice. c 1950 – 1970**

**Discussion focus: Elton, Hexter and the ghost of Collingwood**

**[Reading: Dray; Danto; Mink; Elton; Hexter (a); Carr; Walsh;  
\*\*  
Collingwood; Graham]**

## **Week 2**

**Lecture: The Marxist paradigm and its problems, 1920 – 50**

**Discussion focus: Historical materialism: its proponents and critics**

**[Reading: Marx; Taylor; Rigby; McClennan; Roth; Hilferding; Dobb; Cohen;  
Weber; Tawney; Fromm; Giddens]**

## **Week 3**

**Lecture: Class, Ideology and Power: developments in Marxist Historiography in the West, 1950 – 1980.**

**Discussion focus: Marxist history writing: its proponents and critics**

**[Reading: Kaye; Anderson, P (a), (b); Blackburn; Thompson (a);  
Thompson (b); Stedman-Jones; Abrams;]**

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**\*\* For full titles , see Recommended Reading below**

#### **Week 4**

**Lecture: Alternative Perspectives (1): The Annales School, 1929 – 1970**

**Discussion focus: Interpreting the French revolution**

**[Reading: Burke (a); Burke (b); Carrard; Bloch; Braudel (a); Braudel (b); Doyle; Soboul; Furet]**

#### **Week 5**

**Lecture: Alternative perspectives(2): The new economic history and the new political history, 1950 – 1970**

**Discussion focus: Slavery and Race in the Americas**

**[Reading: Novick; Sternsher; Fogel; Fogel & Engerman; Genovese; Levine]**

#### **Week 6**

**Lecture: New Directions (1) Anthropology and the emergence of Ethnohistory, 1960 - 2004**

**Discussion focus: The New Nationalism and the emergence of Postcolonialism**

**[Reading: Anderson B; Ashcroft; Geertz; Goody; Ranger; Wachtel; Said; Bhabha; Turner; Kennedy]**

#### **Week 7**

**Lecture: New Directions (2): Feminism and the emergence of Gender History, 1960 - 2004**

**Discussion focus: Recovering the lives of medieval and early modern women**

**[Reading: Carroll; Shoemaker & Vincent; Scott; Bridenthal & Kuntz; Hufton; Hanawalt; Rowbotham; Smith; Walkowitz]**

**Week 8**

**Lecture: New Directions (3): Cultural history and Microhistory, 1970 - 2004**

**Discussion focus: Recovering *mentalités* in early modern Europe**

**[Reading: Hunt; Burke(c); Davis; LeRoy Ladurie; Ginzburg; Darnton]**

**Week 9**

**Lecture: Dialogue of the deaf? Postmodernism confronts the empiricists, 1970 - 2004**

**Discussion focus: Historians confront the Holocaust**

**[ Reading: Clark; Jenkins (a ); Jenkins (b); Kershaw; White; Appelby; La Capra (a); La Capra (b); Lipstadt; Maier; McCullough Windshuttle]**

## **List of works keyed in the lecture list**

[Though the following texts have been keyed to the topics of lectures and suggested discussions above, they may be read with profit in regard to more general historiographical issues]

**Abrams, Philip , *Historical Sociology* (1982)**

**Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities* (1983)**

**Anderson, Perry, (a) *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* (1974)  
(b) *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (1974)**

**Ankersmit, Frank (ed). *A New Philosophy of History* ( 1995)**

**Appelby, Joyce et al ,*Telling the Truth about History* (1994)**

**Ashcroft, Bill, et al, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, (1989)**

**Ben-Israel, Hedva, *English Historians on the French Revolution* (1968)**

**Bhabha, Homi, K, *The Location of Culture* (1994)**

**Blackburn, Robin ( ed), *Ideology in Social Science* ( 1972)**

**Bloch, Marc, *The Historian's Craft* (Eng. trans., 1954)**

**Braudel, Fernand, (a) *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world in the Age of Philip II* (Eng. trans.,1972)**

**Braudel, Fernand, (b) *On History*, (1980)**

**Bridenthal, Renate& Koontz, Claudia (eds), *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (1987)**

**Burke, Peter, (a) *The French Historical Revolution: the Annales School, 1929 – 1989*, (1990)**

**Burke, Peter (b) *A New Kind of History: from the writings of Lucien Febvre* (1973)**

**Burke, Peter (c), *Varieties of Cultural History* (1997)**

- Carr, E.H., *What is History* ( 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1987)
- Carrard, Phillipe, *Poetics of the New History: French historians from Braudel to Chartier* ( 1992)
- Carroll, B.A (ed.), *Liberating Women's History: theoretical and critical essays*, (London,1976)
- Clark, J.C.D., *Our Shadowed Present: Modernism, Postmodernism, and History* (2004)
- Cohen, G. A., *The Marxist throphy of History*
- Collingwood, R.G., *The Idea of History* ( latest ed. 1993)
- Danto, Arthur, *Analytical Philosophy of History* ( 1965)
- Darnton, Robert, *The Great Cat Massacre and other episodes in French Cultural History* (1984)
- Davis, Natalie Zemon, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1983)
- Dobb, Maurice, *Studies in the development of Capitalism* ( 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1963)
- Doyle, Wiliam,(ed) *The Impact of the French Revolution on European Consciousness* ( 1989)
- Dray, William, *Laws and Explanation in History* ( 1970)
- Elton, G.R. *The Practice of History* ( 1967)
- Fogel, Robert, *The Reinterpretation of American Economic History* ( 1972)
- Fogel, Robert and Engerman, Stanley, *Time on the Cross : the Economics of American Negro Slavery* ( 1974)
- Fromm, Erich, *Marx's Concept of Man* (1961)
- Furet, Francois, *Interpreting the French Revolution* ( 1987)
- Geertz, Clifford, *The Interpretation of Cultures : selected essays* ( 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 1993)
- Genovese, Eugene, *Roll, Jordan Roll: the World the Slaves Made* (1972)
- Giddens, Anthony, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (1981)

- Gildea, Robert, *The Past in French History* (1994)
- Ginzburg, Carlo, *The Cheese and the Worms: the Cosmos of a Sixteenth century Miller* ( Eng. Trans. 1987)
- Goody, Jack, *The European Family : an Historico-Anthropological Essay* (2000)
- Graham, Gordon, *The Shape of the Past: a philosophical approach to History* (1997)
- Hanawalt, Barbara, *Women and work in Pre-Industrial Europe* ( 1986)
- Hexter, J.H. (a), *The History Primer* ( 1970)
- Hexter, J.H. (b) *On Historians* ( 1979)
- Hilferding, Rudolf, *Finance Capital : a Study of the Latest Phase of Capitalist Development* ( Eng.trans., 1981)
- Hufton, Olwen, *The Prospect before Her :A History of Women in Western Europe, 1500 –1800* ( 1996)
- Hunt, Lynn (ed), *The New Cultural History* (1989)
- Jenkins, Keith (a), *Re-thinking History* (1991)
- Jenkins, Keith (b), *On “What is History?”* ( 1995)
- Kaplan, Stephen, *Farewell Revolution:disputed legacies, France 1789.1989* (1994)
- Farewell, Revolution: the historians' feud: France 1789/1989* (1995)
- Kaye, Harvey J., *British Marxist Historians* (1984)
- Kennedy, V, *Edward Said*
- Kershaw, Ian, *The Hitler Myth: image and reality in the Third Reich* ( rev.ed, 2001)
- La Capra, Dominick (a) *History and Criticism* ( 1985)
- La Capra, Dominick (b) *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma,* (1994)
- Le Roy Ladurie, Emmanuel, *Montaillou: Cathars and Catholics in a French Village* ( Eng. Trans., 1980)
- Levine, Lawrence, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* ( 1977)

- Lipstadt, Deborah, *Denying the Holocaust: the growing assault on History and Memory*, (1993)
- McClennan, David, *Marxism after Marx* (1975)
- McCullough, C. B., *The truth of history* (London, 1998)
- Maier, Charles, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust and German National Identity*, ( 1988)
- Marx, Karl, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*
- Mink, Louis et al (eds), *Historical Understanding* ( 1987)
- Mommsen, Wolfgang, *The Age of Bureaucracy : Perspectives on the Political Sociology of Max Weber* ( 1974)
- Novick, Peter, *That Noble Dream: the 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* (1988)
- Ranger, Terence (ed), *The Invention of Tradition* (1983)
- Rigby, S.H., *Marxism and History: a Critical Introduction* (1987)
- Roth, G, *Max Weber's Vision of History*
- Rowbotham, Sheila, *Hidden from History* ( 1973)
- Said, Edward, *Orientalism* ( 1978)
- Samuel, Raphael, 'British Marxist Historians' in *New Left Review* 120, 1980, pp 21-96
- Scott, Joan Wallach, *Gender and the Politics of History*
- Shoemaker, Robert & Vincent, Mary, *Gender and History in Western Europe* (1988)
- Smith, Bonnie, *The Gender of History: Men, Women and Historical Practice* ( 1998)
- Soboul, Albert, *The French Revolution* ( Eng trans., 1984)
- Stedman Jones, Gareth, *Outcast London : a Study in the relationship between Classes in Victorian Society* (1971)
- Sternsher, Bernard, *Consensus, conflict, and American historians* (1975)
- Turner, B.S., *Orientalism, Postmodernism, Globalism* ( 1989)

- Tawney, R.H., *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* ( 1927)
- Taylor, Charles, *Hegel and Modern Society*
- Thompson, E.P., (a) *The Making of the English Working Class* ( 1965)
- Thompson, E.P., (b) *The Poverty of Theory* (London, 1978)
- Wachtel, Nathan, *The Vision of the Vanquished: the Spanish Conquest of Peru through Indian Eyes, 1530-1570* ( 1977)
- Walkowitz, Judith, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual danger in Late Victorian England* (1992)
- Wallerstein, Immanuel, *The Modern World System* (3vols, 1974, 1980, 1989)
- Walsh, W.H., *An Introduction to the Philosophy of History* ( 1950 and sub edns)
- Weber, Max, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* ( 1971 ed.)
- White, Hayden, *Metahistory: the Historical Imagination in the Nineteenth Century*, (1973)
- Windshuttle, Keith, *The Killing of History* ( 1996)

### **Assessment and Evaluation**

**Credit allocation for this course is 5 ECTS.**  
**Assessment of this course will take the form of two essays ( approx. 2, 000 words each) to be submitted on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> March and Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2018 respectively .**

**A list of essay titles from which two may be chosen follows.**

### **Essay Topics**

- 1. Why did the theoretical arguments of R.G Collingwood fail to influence the practice of historians in the later twentieth century?**



- 2. Assess the degree to which Marxist historians have addressed the critique of historical materialism advanced by Max Weber.**
- 3. To what extent can the methods of the Annales School of French historical writing be related to sociological concepts of structuralism and post-structuralism?**
- 4. Assess the influence of quantitative and statistical methods on the reinterpretation of American political history.**
- 5. ‘The conceptual challenges of gender history are far more formidable than the evidential ones’ Discuss.**
- 6. Assess the relevance of post-colonial theory for the re-interpretation of the history of empires in the modern world.**
- 7. ‘Anthropology is the enemy of History’. Discuss.**
- 8. Should historians refrain from making explicit moral judgements in their writings?**