

History 300: History Methods Colloquium Wealth and Poverty

University of Illinois at Chicago
Lincoln Hall 308

Spring 2019
Thurs. 3:30-5:55 p.m.

Prof. Jeffrey Sklansky
University Hall 921
Office Hours: Tues. 2:30-3:30 p.m., Wed. 11 a.m.-12 p.m.
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Course Description: History 300 is one of the core classes for History majors. Its main purpose is to train students in thinking, reading, and writing historically. We'll work on developing the basic skills of identifying and interpreting primary sources, critiquing secondary sources, developing historical arguments based on evidence and analysis, designing in-depth research projects, and writing term papers. A major emphasis of the course is historical writing; students will write two short papers and one long paper, with graded intermediate steps along the way, including handing in a first draft and then a revised final version of the term paper. In addition to its goals relating to historical methods, the course also has a specific theme: the history of wealth and poverty in the United States from the Revolution to the present, which we'll explore through a series of readings of primary sources such as speeches, essays, and government documents along with journalistic and scholarly accounts. We'll consider a wide range of changes in the production and distribution of wealth, poverty and poor relief, and political responses to economic inequality. This shared theme is intended to provide a common basis for the research papers, helping students to develop their individual projects in conversation with each other while learning about the role of wealth and poverty in American history.

Required Books:

Jim Cullen, *Essaying the Past: How to Read, Write, and Think About History*, 2nd ed. (2012)
Call No.: D16 .C83 2013

Seth Rockman, *Welfare Reform in the Early Republic: A Brief History with Documents*
Call No.: HV91 .R625 2003

Steve Fraser, *The Age of Acquiescence: The Life and Death of American Resistance to Organized Wealth and Power*
Call No.: E169.Z8 F73 2015

Pamela Nadasen, Jennifer Mittelstadt, and Marisa Chappel, *Welfare in the United States: A History with Documents*
Call No.: HV699 .N233 2009

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*
Call No.: HD4918 .E375 2008

Requirements:

1. *Class participation.* (10 percent of course grade.) All students are expected to complete the assigned reading for each week and to participate actively in class discussion. A grade of “C” is given for consistent attendance and preparation; a grade of “B” for consistently active and engaged participation; and a grade of “A” for superior participation throughout the term.

Attendance in the first week of class is mandatory.

2. *Analysis of a primary source.* (20 percent of course grade.) Each student will choose one primary source related to the history of wealth and poverty in America to read closely and analyze thoroughly in a 4- to 5-page (double-spaced, 12-point-font) essay. The source should NOT be on the syllabus or one that you will be using for your research project. The idea of this assignment is for you to practice how you might approach and make use of a primary-source document in writing a research paper. You should think about the author, date, and conditions of publication, the intended audience for the document, who actually saw or read or used it, what kinds of questions the source might help an historian to answer, what the limits or biases of the source are, what elements of the source are especially challenging, difficult to decipher, or unclear, what parts of the source are particularly revealing or interesting, and what conclusions you might reach from it. Find out whether other scholars have used the source you are analyzing; if so, how have they used it, and does your reading of the source corroborate, amplify, or challenge their findings?

3. *Critique of a secondary source.* (20 percent of course grade.) Choose one secondary source related to the course theme that is NOT on the syllabus; it could be a scholarly article or a book. As with the primary-source analysis, it should NOT be a source you will be using for your research project. Write a 4- to 5-page essay summarizing and critically evaluating the work you’ve chosen. Consider what questions the author raises, what answers he or she offers, what argument he or she makes, and on what evidentiary and interpretive basis. Is the author engaging with other scholars—and if so, does he or she write in support of, or in disagreement with, what others have written? What is the article or book’s major contribution? What are its most interesting, provocative, or salient points? What questions or issues related to the topic does it leave aside or take for granted? The objective here is for you to gain familiarity with the craft of reviewing other scholars’ work, of seeing what is at stake and engaging with it critically. You may want to consult the book reviews in the *Journal of American History* or the *American Historical Review* for models.

4. *Research paper.* (50 percent of course grade.) The ultimate goal of this course is to prepare students to write an in-depth historical research paper, based on primary sources as well as secondary sources, and contributing to a constructive conversation with other scholars who have worked on related topics. Early in the term, each student will identify and propose a particular topic in the history of wealth and poverty in America for the term paper. Your topic should be broad enough so that it is significant and interesting and so that there will be enough for you to say in the full paper, *which is to be 10 to 12 pages in length*. But it should be narrow and specific enough so that you will be able to get a handle on it during the semester and to write something reasonably comprehensive about it, without leaving out or slighting major issues or concerns. A

few weeks later, you will turn in a proposed bibliography, including both primary and secondary sources. You should choose a topic on which there is a sufficient, accessible source basis for you to do the necessary research. A few weeks after that, you will turn in an outline of the full paper. We'll then have a week of one-on-one meetings between students and the instructor. A *complete* first draft is due after that, and the final paper, incorporating revisions based on the instructor's comments, is due on the last day of class. During the last week of the term, students will share their work with the rest of the class in oral presentations (roughly 10-15 minutes each). Proper grammar and style will count considerably toward your grade on the written work. Note that the 50 percent of your grade stemming from the research paper will be divided as follows:

Proposal	5 percent
Bibliography	5 percent
Outline	5 percent
First draft	10 percent
Final paper	25 percent

Deadlines: All assignments are due *at the beginning of class* on their due dates. A major part of the class will consist of in-class discussions and peer reviews of student assignments on the days that they are due. Assignments turned in after the beginning of class will be graded one grade lower for every day late.

Academic Honesty: Please familiarize yourself with UIC's academic integrity policy, which can be found here: <http://www.uic.edu/ucatt/cat1315/GR.shtml#qa>. Any instances of plagiarism or other academic dishonesty will result in an "F" on the assignment, and a formal report will be filed with the Dean of Students.

Students with Disabilities: If you are a student with a documented disability and require special arrangements or accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible. I will be happy to make an appointment to meet with you.

Schedule of Topics, Assignments, and Readings

Week 1 (Jan. 17): Thinking Historically/Poor Relief in Early America

Reading: *Essaying the Past*, pp. 1-36; *Welfare Reform*, pp. 1-28.

Week 2 (Jan. 24): Reading History/Elite Perceptions of Poverty and Private Benevolence

Reading: *Essaying the Past*, pp. 37-60, 173-192; *Welfare Reform*, pp. 35-97.

Week 3 (Jan. 31): Writing History/ Public Institutions and Structural Solutions

Reading: *Essaying the Past*, pp. 61-111; *Welfare Reform*, pp. 98-164.

Research paper proposals due.

Week 4 (Feb. 7): Library Research/ Nineteenth-Century Class Struggles

Reading: *Essaying the Past*, pp. 112-139; *Age of Acquiescence*, pp. 3-106.

Research workshop in Daley Library 1-010, IDEA Commons Lab

Week 5 (Feb. 14): Primary Sources/ Nineteenth-Century Class Struggles, Continued**Reading:** *Age of Acquiescence*, pp. 107-221.

In-class film: “J. Pierpont Morgan: Emperor of Wall Street”

Primary-source analyses due.**Week 6 (Feb. 21): Bibliography/ “The Second Gilded Age”****Reading:** *Age of Acquiescence*, pp. 222-323**Research paper bibliographies due.****Week 7 (Feb. 28): Secondary Sources/ Twentieth-Century Welfare****Reading:** *Age of Acquiescence*, pp. 324-374; *Welfare in U.S.*, pp. 1-84.**Secondary-source critiques due.****Week 8 (March 7): Making and Organizing Notes/ The New Deal and the War on Poverty****Reading:** *Welfare in U.S.*, Docs. 1-20.**Week 9 (March 14): Outlining/ Welfare Rights and the War on Welfare****Reading:** *Welfare in U.S.*, Docs. 21-40.

In-class film: “America’s War on Poverty: In This Affluent Society”

Research paper outlines due.**Week 10 (March 21): No Class—Individual Meetings with Instructor****March 25-29: Spring Break****Reading:** *Nickel and Dimed*, pp. 1-120.**Week 11 (April 4): Pulling it All Together/ Work and Poverty Since the 1990s****Reading:** *Nickel and Dimed*, pp. 121-192.**Week 12 (April 11): First Drafts/ Work and Poverty Since the 1990s, Continued****Reading:** *Nickel and Dimed*, pp. 193-206.In-class film: “American Winter” OR “The 51st State: America’s Working Poor”**First drafts of research paper due.****Week 13 (April 18): No Class—Individual Meetings with Instructor****Week 14 (April 25): Revising****Peer review and revision workshop.****Week 15 (May 2): Presentation****Oral presentations of research papers.****Final research papers due.**