

**THE PROBLEMATICS OF THE PAST:
AMERICAN HISTORICAL AND LITERARY NARRATIVES**

(full year course)

This seminar course will look at the "literary" in American historiography (specifically in its narrative forms) and the "historical" in literature, particularly in some American historical fiction. In order to accomplish this we will need to gain some knowledge of narrative theory, theories of history, historiography, and the historical novel, so theoretical and critical texts will play a prominent role in our discussions.

I have no particular thesis to demonstrate, but the course is designed with the conviction that rigorous and theoretically informed analyses of narrative and representation in American historical novels and historiography may tell us something useful, interesting, and fresh about the ways in which the American past is conceived and ordered.

Wednesdays, 9:00-11:45, UC 377

REQUIRED FICTION:

J. F. Cooper, *The Pioneers* (Oxford)
N. Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (Bantam)
M. Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* (Warner)
W. Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (Random)
W. Styron, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*
(Vintage)

E. L. Doctorow, *Ragtime* (Plume)
Kenneth S. Greenberg, *The Confessions of Nat
Turner and Related Documents* (Bedford)
***And Theoretical texts and historical texts (listed in
the Bibliography)***

SEPTEMBER 11

Introduction, Organization

SEPTEMBER 18

Narrative / Narrative Theory / Tools {choosing texts and seminars}

"The Open Window," Saki [x]

"Some Passages for Discussion" [x]

Aristotle, *Poetics*, Sections: 6-11, (Richter, *Critical Tradition*, pp. 46-50) [x]

Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot*. 1985. pp. 3-36. [x]

Ryan, Marie-Laure. *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory*. 1991. pp. 1-3. [x]

Kroeber, Karl. *Retelling / Rereading: The Fate of Storytelling in Modern Times*. 1990, pp. 1-14, 41-58. [x]

O'Neill, Patrick, *Fictions of Discourse: Reading Narrative Theory*. 1994. 11-57 [x] or

Toolan, Michael. *Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction*. 1988, pp. 1-11, 47-84. [x]

SEPTEMBER 25

History / Historiography / Narrative

Stanford, Michael. *A Companion to the Study of History*. 1994, pp. 87-106. [x]

Mink, Louis. "Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument," *Historical Understanding*. 1987, pp. 182-203. [x]

White, Hayden. "Historiography as Narration," *Telling Facts: History and Narration in Psychoanalysis*, Ed. J. Smith et al., 1992, pp. 284-99. [x]

Ritter, Harry. "Historicism, Historism," "Historiography," "History," "Narrative," *Dictionary of Concepts in History*, 1986, pp. 183-200, 279-85. [x]

Cooper, *The Pioneers*

suggested

Berkhofer, Robert F. "Emplotment: Historicizing Time," *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse*, 1995, pp. 106-37. [x]

OCTOBER 2

Historical Fiction: Scott / Cooper

Cooper, *The Pioneers*

Lukács, Georg. "The Classical Form of the Historical Novel." *The Historical Novel*, pp. 19-65. [x]

Fleishman, Avrom. "Towards a Theory of Historical Fiction." *The English Historical Novel*, pp. 3-15. [x]

Turner, Joseph W. "The Kinds of Historical Fiction: An Essay in Definition and Methodology," *Genre* 12 (1979): 333-355. [x]

suggested

Humphrey, Richard. "Beginnings," "The Historical Novel Described," *The Historical Novel as Philosophy of History*, pp 1-34. [x]

OCTOBER 9

Historical Fiction / Cooper

Cooper, *The Pioneers*

Twain, Mark. "James Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offences" (x)

Lawrence, D. H., "Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking Novels"(x)

Jameson, F. "Lukacs" (excerpt from *Marxism and Form*) (x)

OCTOBER 16

Historiography

Tocqueville, Alexis. "Present and Probable Future Condition of the Indian." *Democracy in America*, I: 336-55 (x)

Beard, Charles. *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*, 1-51 (x)

Turner, Frederick Jackson. *The Frontier in American History*, 1-38 (x)

Zinn, Howard. "As Long as Grass Grows or Water Runs," *A People's History of the United States*, 124-46. (x)

Brogan, Hugh. "The Planting of the West," *The Penguin History of the United States of America*, 224-38 (x)

suggested

Megill, Allan. "Recounting the Past: 'Description,' Explanation, and Narrative in Historiography." *American Historical Review* 94, (1989). 627-53. [x]

Stanford, Michael. *A Companion to the Study of History*. 1994, pp. 88 - 92 , 102-106 [x]

OCTOBER 23

D. Millar, "The Custom House" and History as Relic

Historiography (cont)

Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*

OCTOBER 30, 5:00-7:00, UC 384

The Scarlet Letter

J-P. Seguin, Autobiography and *The Scarlet Letter*

Some Historical Sources for *The Scarlet Letter* [x]

Brogan, Hugh. "The Planting of New England" *Penguin History of the United States of America*, 28-50 [x]

Ryskamp, Charles, "New England Sources for *The Scarlet Letter*" [x]

suggested

Some Contemporary Reviews of *The Scarlet Letter* [x]

NOVEMBER 6

M. Johnstone, Readers and *The Scarlet Letter*

The Scarlet Letter

Historiography

Miller, Perry, *New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*, 463-91, [x]

Parington, V. L. *Main Currents in American Thought: The Colonial Mind, 1620-1800*, 27-50, [x]

Bancroft, George. *History of the Colonization of the United States*, pp. 167-78.[x]

NOVEMBER 13

[SHORT PAPER TOPIC MUST BE APPROVED]

The Scarlet Letter

Historiography / Historical Fiction

NOVEMBER 20

T. Tokaryk, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, History, and Focalization

Styron, *Confessions of Nat Turner*

Greenberg, ed. *Confessions of Nat Turner and Related Documents*, pp. 1-35.

NOVEMBER 29 [SHORT PAPER DUE IN THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT BY 4:00 PM]

L NO CLASS THIS WEEK7

DECEMBER 4

P. Darbyshire

Confessions of Nat Turner

DECEMBER 11, 10:00 am -12:30, UC 377

Confessions of Nat Turner

History, Historiography and Nat Turner

JANUARY 8

Gone with the Wind

JANUARY 15

Gone with the Wind

Lukács, Georg. "The Classical Form of the Historical Novel." *The Historical Novel*, pp. 19-65. [x]

Fleishman, Avrom. "Towards a Theory of Historical Fiction." *The English Historical Novel*, pp. 3-15. [x]

Turner, Joseph W. "The Kinds of Historical Fiction: An Essay in Definition and Methodology," *Genre* 12 (1979): 333-355. [x]

Humphrey, Richard. "Beginnings," "The Historical Novel Described," *The Historical Novel as Philosophy of History*, pp 1-34. [x]

JANUARY 22

Gone with the Wind

Cash, W. J., *The Mind of the South*, Preview, Ch. 1 (library)

Tindall and Shi, "The Old South an American Tragedy," *America: A Narrative History*, I: 555-634 (x)

JANUARY 29

Woodward, C. Vann, "The Political Legacy of the First Reconstruction," *The Burden of Southern History*, Ch. 5 (library)

Cash, W. J., "Of the Frontier the Yankee Made," *The Mind of the South*, Book 2, Ch. 1 (library)

Chronicle of the Civil War, taken from K. C. Davis, *Don't Know Much About History*, pp. 167-79

Megill, A. "Recounting the Past: 'Description,' Explanation, and Narrative in Historiography." *American Historical Review* 94, (1989). 627-53. [x]

Stanford, Michael. *A Companion to the Study of History*. 1994, pp. 88 - 92 , 102-106 [x]

Berkhofer, Robert F. "Emplotment: Historicizing Time," *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse*, 1995, pp. 106-37. [x]

suggested

James W. Loewen, "'Gone With the Wind': The Invisibility of Racism in American History Textbooks," *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*, pp. 131-63.

FEBRUARY 5

Absalom, Absalom!

FEBRUARY 12

Absalom, Absalom!

FEBRUARY 19

T. Tokaryk

Absalom, Absalom!

Bevilacqua, Winifred, "History into Narrative: William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*," *The Artist and His Masks: William Faulkner's Metafiction*, Ed. A. Lombardo, 255-78 [x]

Rollyson, Carl E. Jr., "The Recreation and Reinterpretation of the Past in *Absalom, Absalom!*," "The Past as a Product of Historiography in *Absalom, Absalom!*," *Uses of the Past in the Novels of William Faulkner*, pp. 3-98. [x]

suggested

Donnelly, Colleen E. "Compelled to Believe: Historiography and Truth in '*Absalom, Absalom!*,'" 104-122. [x]

MARCH 5

M. Johstone

Absalom, Absalom!

Wyatt-Brown, Betram, "Sexual Honor, Expectation and Shame," *Honor and Violence in the Old South*, 105-15 [x]

Sansing, David, "History of Northern Mississippi" [x]

Cooper, William and T. Terrill, "The Free Social Order," *The American South: A History*, 269-86 [x]

Bocktin, Ineke, "Stories of the South," *Character and Personality in the Novels of William Faulkner*, 249-65 [x]

suggested

Ayers, Edward, "In Black and White," *Southern Crossing: A History of the American South, 1877-1906*, 88-110 [x]

MARCH 13 [THURSDAY] 7:00 - 11:00, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, ROOM 30

MARCH 19

D. Millar

Ragtime

Georg Lukacs, "The Epic and the Novel."

M. M. Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel"

E. L. Doctorow, "False Documents."

MARCH 24 [MONDAY] 3:00 - 5:30

History/ Historical Novel Again

Jameson, F., "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," (excerpt)

Hutcheon, L., *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (excerpt)

Brinkley, Alan., *The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of the American People* (excerpt)

Henning, Doug. *Houdini: His Legend and His Magic* (excerpt)

Mooney, M. M. *Evelyn Nesbit and Stanford White: Love and Death in the Gilded Age* (excerpt)

MARCH 26

J-P. Seguin

Ragtime and Biography

Doctorow, E. L. "The Art of Fiction"

Parke, Catherine N. "Group and Collective Biography and Biographical Series," *Biography: Writing Lives*

Harter, C. and J. R. Thompson, "To Warn the Duke," *E. L. Doctorow*

Engler, B and K. Muller, *Historiographic Metafiction in the American Novel*

suggested:

Hughson, Lois. *From Biography to History: The Historical Imagination and American Fiction, 1880-1940*

APRIL 2

[FINAL PAPER TOPIC MUST BE APPROVED BY THIS DATE]

Ragtime

History / Historiography

APRIL 9

Loose Ends

History/ Fiction / Narrative / Literature

Barthes, Roland, "Historical Discourse" [x]

Genette, Gerard, "Fictional Narrative, Factual Narrative" [x]

Weinryb, Elazar, "If We Write Novels So, How Shall We Write History?" [x]

Cohn, Dorrit, "Fictional *versus* Historical Lives: Borderlines and Borderline Cases" [x]

suggested

Parks, John G. "Compositions of Dissatisfaction: *Ragtime*" [x]

Ronen, Ruth. "Theories of Naming and the Completeness of Entities" [x]

MAY 9

FINAL PAPER DUE*

*Essays handed in **up to three days before the due date** will receive **3 bonus points**; those handed in **up to a week after the due date** will be **penalized 3 points**; those handed in **after one week following the due date** will be **penalized 5 points**. ***DUE TO THE DEPARTMENTAL DEADLINE FOR MARKS SUBMISSION, MAY 16, 1997 IS THE ABSOLUTE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF THIS PAPER; PAPERS RECEIVED AFTER THIS DATE MUST RECEIVE AN "F"***

Responsibilities:

Seminar Presentations (1 each term), notes:

Major 25%

Minor 15%

Class Participation (questions, general contributions, annotated bibliographies) 15%

Short paper (8-10 pp) DUE NOVEMBER 29 10%

Final paper (25 pp.) DUE MAY 9 35%