

History 393

Approaches to History: Telling Stories Winter 2015

3:30-4:50 Tuesdays and Thursdays

Instructor: Kevin Boyle
Office: 227 Harris Hall
Phone: 847-491-4964
Email: kevin.boyle@northwestern.edu
Office hours: 11:00-12:00 WF and by appointment

Course Description

You can think of telling stories in two ways. It's an action: the telling of tales. It's also a description: a story that in its details reveals something larger, that has something to say. In this course we'll be exploring both those forms of telling stories. We'll be drawing on a scholarly framework developed by anthropologists and adopted by historians. We won't simply be reading other scholars' work, though. We'll be doing the work of history, digging deeply into one profoundly troubling story to see what it has to say.

This is seminar. I expect you to come to class prepared to discuss the day's material and to participate in classroom activities. You're also required to complete a series of assignments, detailed below. The course centers on a horrific event – a lynching – in 1930s Indiana. So much of the material you'll be reading will be challenging and disturbing. It will also be revealing. Your job is to decide exactly what those revelations are.

Required Reading

This course has only one required book, Robert and Helen Lynd's classic sociological study, Middletown. Copies are available at the Northwestern bookstore. Please feel free to buy a used copy; there should be plenty available, if not at the bookstore then on-line.

In addition to Middletown, you'll be reading a substantial amount of material available on the course's Canvas site and a couple of pieces available through the library.

Course Grades

Your grades will be determined by six components: a summary essay (15 percent); a draft of an introduction (15 percent); a detailed outline (10 percent), a final essay (40 percent) and class participation and discussion (20 percent).

Written assignments will be graded on three criteria: the strength of argument presented in the paper (except for the summary paper, for which no argument is required); the quality of the paper's analysis; and the precision of the paper's prose. Grammar, style, and clarity count; this is a course about telling stories, after all. All papers must be typed in standard, 12 point type, double-spaced, and presented with one inch margins. All assignments must be handed in on time. I won't accept late papers.

Attendance is mandatory. One unexcused absence will result in your discussion grade being reduced by one half (for example, from an A to an A-); two unexcused absences will result in a full grade reduction (for example, from an A to a B), and so on. If you miss a class for a legitimate, serious reason (a medical emergency, for instance) you must receive permission prior to the class; I won't grant permission after a class meeting. You also must complete all assignments to pass the course.

It is your responsibility to be familiar with the university's rules of academic integrity. Those rules are available at <http://www.weinberg.northwestern.edu/handbook/integrity/index.html>.

I will report any suspected cases of academic dishonesty to the university's disciplinary system immediately.

Students with disabilities who require special arrangements should contact the instructor as soon as possible.

Course assignments

Summary paper

Each student will write a three page paper summarizing historians' analyses of one of the most disturbing phenomena of the American past. Your job is to explain – not to evaluate but to explain – their arguments.

Introduction Draft

Each student will write a draft of the introductory portion of his or her final essay. The draft will include an opening designed to draw in the reader, an appropriately revised version of the summary paper, and a clear, comprehensive thesis that positions the student's argument in relation to other historians' work.

A Detailed Outline

Each student will prepare a detailed outline of his or her final paper. The outline must include a section breaking down the component parts of the introduction, another section walking through the central argument and the evidence in support of it, and a third section detailing the essay's conclusion.

The Final Paper

As the name implies, the final paper is the culminating experience of the course. Each student will write a fifteen-page historical essay, making an original argument premised on his or her reading of primary and secondary sources and engaged with the arguments other historians make. This essay can – and should – draw on the introductory drafts and outlines the student has already prepared, appropriately revised. Writing counts: I expect essays to be carefully, gracefully written, and of course to be grammatically correct. Quotes are perfectly acceptable. But they must be kept to a minimum; under no circumstances should they be longer than a few sentences and never so long as to require a block of text. When quoting, students must provide a correctly formatted footnote or endnote.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

- Jan 6 Introduction
- Jan 8 Thick Description
Reading: Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, chapter one
- Jan 13 Christmas 1955
Reading: Kevin Boyle, “The Kiss: Racial and Gender Conflict in a 1950s Automobile Factory,” Journal of American History 84 (September 1997), 496-523 (available through JStor in the library catalogue)
- Jan 15 A Problem from Hell
Readings: Leon Litwack, “Hellhounds,” and Hilton Als, “GWTW,” in James Allen, et al., eds., Without Sanctuary
- Jan 20 Historians and the Horror of Lynching I
Readings: W. Fitzhugh Brundage, Lynching in the New South, chapters four and five.
Joel Williamson, A Rage for Order, pp. 78-126
- Jan 22 Historians and the Horror of Lynching II
Readings: Orlando Patterson, Rituals of Blood, pp. 171-218
Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, pp. 137-157.
Summary papers due in class
- Jan 27 Reconstructing Events
Readings: NAACP documents, newspaper accounts
- Jan 29 Reconstructing Events

- Feb 3 Building the Context: The Economy and Social Structure
Reading: Robert and Helen Lynd, Middletown, chapters 3-8, 13-14, 28;
Census data
- Feb 5 Building the Context: The Invisible Empire
Reading: Leonard Moore, Citizen Klansmen, Introduction and
chapters 2-4 (available as an e-book through the library catalogue)
Kathleen Blee, Women of the Klan, chapters 5-6
- Feb 10 Building the Context: The Other Side of the Tracks
Reading: Emma Lou Thornbrough, Indiana Blacks in the Twentieth
Century, chapter two.
Barbara Stevenson, An Oral History of African Americans in Grant
County, pp. 9-30, 46-47, 55-68, 93-108
Arthur Raper, The Tragedy of Lynching, 400-406
- Feb 12 Inside the Mob I
Readings: James Cameron video, Indiana oral histories
Raper, Tragedy of Lynching, 385-397
- Feb 17 Inside the Mob II
Reading: Court Depositions, manuscript census records (via ancestry.com)
- Feb 19 Inside the Mob III

Introduction drafts due on Sunday, Feb 22, at midnight

Feb 24 Work-shopping

Feb 26 Work-shopping

Mar 3 Telling Stories
Outlines Due in class

Mar 5 Telling Stories

. Final Papers Due at Scheduled Exam Time