

History and Literature 97
Wednesdays, 2-5 pm, Barker 128

Tutors:

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The sophomore tutorial provides an introduction to the interdisciplinary study of American history and literature. Our principal goals are to help you become acquainted with some of the central issues and texts in American history and literature, and to help you develop the skills you will need to do interdisciplinary work in this field. In particular, the materials and methods in the course will help you address some of the key questions in interdisciplinary study in History and Literature:

- What is history? What is literature? How do we know?
- How do we identify our objects of study?
- What techniques do we use to analyze texts (“historical” and “literary”)?
- How do we put texts into historical perspective and how do we use “literary” texts to inform historical interpretation?
- What constitutes evidence in History and Literature and how is it used?

The course includes two topical units. Unit I, on representations of the Vietnam War, uses an event (the Vietnam War) to focus our analysis of the cultural and political work performed by literary texts, movies, songs, and images. We will consider how writers, filmmakers, historians, and others have interpreted the war, especially after the fall of Saigon. Unit II will focus on a place (New York) with particularly rich cultural resonances. We will examine the emergence of urban culture in New York during the nineteenth century through the study of key documents, events, and literary texts. As this range of materials and topics suggests, our concern is not only with what you learn in our tutorial but with how you learn.

Course requirements: The primary requirement is active participation in the tutorial. You will be evaluated on your ability to read all assigned texts thoroughly and thoughtfully; to share your opinions of these texts in class; and to express your opinions in writing. In a small class, every voice counts. We hope to create an environment in which your questions, theories, and protests can be heard—an environment in which you can acquire confidence in your argumentative abilities. Writing assignments, meanwhile, will range from close reading and response exercises, to more formal essays (both short and long), to a final 3000-4000-word research essay due in May (more on this in due course). You will find the due dates for all of the writing assignments on the syllabus and more detailed instructions for each assignment in the separate assignments packet. At the end of the semester, you will take the sophomore exam, designed to test your ability to synthesize historical and literary materials and speak effectively about ideas, texts, and interdisciplinary methods of study (more on this in time, also). We expect to work closely

with you this semester, both as a group and individually, to develop skills in critical and creative thinking, analysis, oral communication, and academic writing.

Course Requirements:

Class Participation (includes in-class contributions and specified assignments):	20%
Close Reading Paper	10%
Unit I Paper (includes preparatory exercises)	30%
Unit II Paper (includes preparatory exercises & oral presentation)	40%

Reading: Assigned reading for each week is listed below. The starred items are available for sale at the Coop, and many are available at other bookstores as well; other texts are available on-line, as indicated on the syllabus; films are on reserve at Lamont, and we will provide the other materials in a course pack. You may, at times, feel the need for more “background” on subjects we cover in class. For quick reference, we recommend that you obtain a good history textbook (such as *A People and a Nation*, often used in American history survey courses) and a good anthology of American literature (such as the Norton or the Heath). You might also consider purchasing Kloppenberg and Fox’s *A Companion to American Thought*, which provides short encyclopedia-type entries on key people and ideas in American history and culture. Remember that the sophomore tutorial is not a comprehensive survey of American history and literature, and we will not always have time in class to supply all the information you want. Ideally, the work we do in tutorial should leave you with questions and wanting more information, as it prepares you to follow your individual interests in junior and senior years.

Schedule of Readings

Jan. 30: The “Objects” of History and Literature

Edward Hallett Carr, “The Historian and His Facts,” from *What Is History?* (1961) (CP)

Terry Eagleton, “Introduction: What Is Literature?” from *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983) (CP)

William Cronon, “A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative,” *Journal of American History* (1992), available on tutorial website and JSTOR

Larry H. Addington, *America's War in Vietnam: A Short Narrative History* (2000)*

UNIT I: REPRESENTING THE VIETNAM WAR

Feb. 6: American Anti-Communism: Vietnam and the "Domino Theory"

Graham Greene, *The Quiet American* (1955)*

Film: *The Quiet American*, dir. Joseph L. Mankiewicz (1958)

Assignment: Notes Toward a Close Reading

Feb. 13: Camaraderie and Alienation: Representing Combat

Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (1977)*

Film: *Apocalypse Now*, dir. Francis Ford Coppola (1979)

Feb. 20: American Innocence: Old Plots, New Narratives

“Hearings of the Armed Services Investigating Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, Ninety-First Congress, 2nd Session, under Authority of H. Res. 105” (Hearing Transcripts and Report) available on-line http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/ML_investigation.html

Tim O'Brien, *In the Lake of the Woods* (1994)*

Tim O'Brien, “How to Tell a True War Story,” from *The Things They Carried* (1990) (CP)

Van Jordan, M-A-C-N-O-L-I-A (excerpts) (CP)

Assignment: Close Reading Paper

Feb. 22: History and Literature Event with poet Van Jordan, 2-4 p.m. Sever 113

Feb. 27: “Coming Home”: Domesticating the War

Film: *Coming Home*, dir. Hal Ashby (1978)

Film: *The Deer Hunter*, dir. Michael Cimino (1978)

Bobbie Ann Mason, *In Country* (1985)*

Mar 5: Reagan’s Vietnam: Vietnam Veterans and Cultural Memory

Film: *Rambo: First Blood Part II*, dir. George P. Cosmatos (1985)

Kristin Ann Hass, *Carried to the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (1998)*

Bruce Springsteen, "Born in the U.S.A." (1984) (CP)

George F. Will, "Bruuuuuce," *Newsweek* (September 13, 1984)

Assignment: Unit I Paper Prospectus

UNIT II: BECOMING MODERN: NEW YORK IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Mar. 11: Circulate Unit I Paper Draft by 9 p.m.

Mar. 12: New York Gothic

George Foster, *New York By Gas-Light and Other Urban Sketches* (1850)*

Paul Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias* (1994)*
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Eric Homberger, *Scenes from the Life of a City: Corruption and Conscience in Old New York* (1994), Chapter 1, pp. 10-85. (CP)

Assignment: Writing Workshop

Mar. 14: Unit I Paper Due by 4 p.m.

Mar. 19: Sensational Stories

Patricia Cline Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett* (1999)

Assignment: Follow the footnote

Apr. 2: Manhattan Kosmos

Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (1855 edition)*

Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance" (1841), "The Poet," and "Experience" (1844)*

David Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance* (1988), Chapter 11, pp. 309-333 (CP)

Apr. 4: Unit II Paper Close Reading of Primary Source Due

Apr. 9: Working in New York

Herman Melville, "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street" (1853)

Barbara Foley, "From Wall Street to Astor Place: Historicizing Melville's 'Bartleby,'" *American Literature* (2000)

<http://web.ebscohost.com.ezp1.harvard.edu/ehost/pdf?vid=6&hid=116&sid=6804927a-a938-4a7b-b35d-059b8089f673%40sessionmgr102>

Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (1990), Chapter 1, pp. 11-82. (CP)

Apr. 14: Unit II Paper Annotated Bibliography Due

Apr. 16: Gilded Age New York

William Dean Howells, *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890)*

Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America* (1982), Chapter 3, pp. 70-100 (CP)

Assignment: Oral Presentation on Paper Topic

Apr. 23: Elite New York

Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* (1920)*

Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), Chapter 7, pp. 167-187 (CP)

Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (1989), Chapter 2, pp. 40-72 (CP)

Apr. 25: Unit II Paper Draft Due

Apr. 30: Immigrant New York

Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (1890)*

Abraham Cahan, *Yekl* (1896)*

Henry James, *The American Scene* (1907), Chapter 2, pp. 76-88 (CP)

Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (1986), Chapter 5, pp. 149-173 (CP)

May 5 & 6: Oral Examinations (tentative dates)

May 7: Unit II Final Essay Due