History 394 & Concurrent Courses*
Fall 2015 – Spring 2016 Descriptions

Fall 2015 Sections

HIST 394A and HIST 362: Sex, Gender and Holiness in Medieval; Europe, 300-1500
Professor Frans van Liere
Times: 394A – M 3:30-5:00 pm  362 – MWF 10:30-11:20 am

This course offers an exploration of the ideas of medieval people on sexuality and gender roles, especially in relation to the religious ideals of the Christian faith. It will examine male and female models of sainthood, medieval attitudes towards the body, and the different respective roles of men and women within monasticism, asceticism, mysticism, and medieval prophetic movements. It also will explore the role of the church in establishing normative religious ideas on sexuality, and compare these to the actual experience of medieval men and women.

HIST 394 is the senior seminar, concurrent with HIST 362. It will guide you through the process of writing your senior research paper. This paper will be 20-30 pages in length, and should be based on original research, using a variety of primary sources (most likely in edited, and translated form, but original archival sources can be used also) and secondary sources. The topic should be thematically connected to HIST 362.

HIST 394B and HIST 372: Global Empires: Russia & China—Capitalism, Communism, & Empire
Professor Bruce Berglund
Times: 394B – T 3:30-5:00 pm  372 – M 6:00-9:00 pm

At the start of the twentieth century, the governments of the two largest land empire–Russia and China–were overturned in revolutions. Led by Lenin and the Bolsheviks, Russia set off on an experiment to create a Marxist-inspired “dictatorship of the proletariat,” leading eventually to communism. Meanwhile, China experienced attempts at democracy, division of the country into warlord enclaves, and single-party nationalist rule, before the armed takeover by the communists. At first, the world’s two largest communist states, ruled by Stalin and Mao, but disagreements led to open conflict between them, at the same time as they engaged in a Cold War with the capitalist West. In the late 1980s-early 1990s both communist-ruled states were transformed. Russia is now ruled by the increasingly authoritarian and aggressive Vladimir Putin, while China continues its remarkable economic and social changes, while still governed by the Communist Party. Both countries are still powerful empires that rule over much of Eurasia. What can we learn about their current place in the world—and the role of empire in the contemporary world—by looking at their histories side-by-side?

Students enrolled in the 394 seminar will write an article-length (20-25-pg) paper of original research, based largely on primary sources, focusing on any facet of the history of the former Soviet Union or China, from the early 20th century to today. Students may also research the place of these two states in their broader regional or international contexts, or the history of US relations with either the USSR or China.

*All 394 courses must be taken with a concurrent 300 level course.
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Spring 2016 Sections

HIST 394A and HIST 338: Mexico and the Americas
Professor Dan Miller
Times: 394A - M 3:30-5:00 pm
338 - MWF 9:00-9:50 am

This course examines the history of Mexico from its pre-Columbian and Iberian origins through its recent embrace of neoliberal economics and democratic politics. Topics that receive substantial emphasis include the fusion of Old and New World cultures during the colonial era, struggles between conservatives and liberals in the 19th century, the 1910 Revolution and its aftermath, the search for a path to modernity in the 20th century, and Mexico’s complex relations with the United States. Attention is also paid to the role of religion—pre-Columbian, Catholic, and Protestant-Pentecostal. The course concludes with an examination of the Mexican diaspora in the US.

HIST 394 is designed to give you the opportunity to demonstrate your mastery of the skills of history that you have been practicing during your major program. Your main task will be to prepare a publishable quality, article-length essay (approximately 25 to 30 pages typed, double spaced) based on based on the most relevant primary and secondary sources. Since this section of HIST 394 is taken in conjunction with HIST 338 (Mexico and the Americas), the topic of your essay should be related to Mexico, Latin America, U.S.-Latin American relations, or Latinos in the U.S. You will prepare a bibliography of the most relevant primary and secondary sources for your topic, develop a thesis that offers an accurate and insightful explanation of what your sources can teach us about the topic, and place your own work in the context of ongoing historical interpretations of the topic. HIST 394 is a seminar so you will also will meet with your colleagues to critique each other's work and offer your own research findings in an oral presentation at the end of the semester. The essay you prepare for HIST 394 substitutes for the major semester project that is required of students who enroll only in HIST 338.

HIST 394B and HIST 353: Culture Wars: A Religious History (Studies in U.S. Religious & Intellectual History)
Professor Kristin Du Mez
Times: 394B - Th 3:30-5:00 pm
353 – TTh 1:30-2:45 pm

We hear a lot about the culture wars today: from Hobby Lobby to Christian bakeries to Kim Davis, the news is filled with stories of religious cultural warriors. This class will look at the history that brought us to this seeming impasse. Tracing the religious polarization within American Protestantism over the past century, we’ll look at some of the most innovative and celebrated works that help make sense of America’s religious past and present. We’ll examine fundamentalism, evangelicalism, and the rise of the Religious Right. We’ll also look at traditions of social justice Christianity and the fate of the Christian left. And we’ll look at the intersections of religion, politics, big business, sex, gender, and race as we come to terms with Christianity in American public life today.

Students enrolled in the 394 seminar will produce a polished, article-length (20-25 pp.) paper that conducts original research, largely in primary sources, on a well-defined topic of the student's choice within the domain of religion and culture in twentieth-century America. Sample topics (broadly construed) include: Evangelical views on Iran from the 1970s to the present; changing interpretations of “religious freedom” from 1950 to the present; Progressive Protestantism and Planned Parenthood; Evangelicals and birth control; Christian approaches to creation care and climate change; Barack Obama and Ben Carson: race, politics, and American evangelicals; Christianity and the American labor movement; Evangelicals, big business, and philanthropy: a West Michigan story; Purity and Patriarchy—Sex and Purity in the Evangelical Subculture; etc., etc.

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