

Professor Ruth Feldstein (she/hers)  
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Remote Office Hours: Wednesday 12-1 and by appointment

### **Topics in Transnational History: Cultural History Across Borders**

History: 26: 510:508

American Studies: 26:050:521:08

**Spring 2022**

**REMOTE LEARNING:**

Synchronous meetings: Wednesday, 5:30-8:10

Asynchronous discussion board requirements: Due by Sunday night 9 pm.

#### **Summary**

This graduate seminar considers scholarship and primary sources that engage with transnational cultural history, primarily in the decades since World War II. How have scholars made sense of the transnational flow of cultural commodities, and related questions about politics, production, consumption, reception, and desires? How can a transnational approach to culture shape (or reshape) scholarly understandings of US history, domestic activism, migration, and more? How can a cultural approach to transnational history shape (or reshape) scholarly understandings of diplomatic and political history, space and place, encounters, and power dynamics that are not anchored in a specific nation state? And how can a transnational focus affect how we analyze primary sources—film, photographs, written texts and music?

#### **Objectives and Goals**

- Students will learn to read scholarship critically.
- Students will learn to analyze written, visual and aural primary sources critically.
- Students will familiarize themselves with some of the ways that scholars have forged transnational cultural histories, and the range of methods and approaches scholars employ to do so.
- Students will learn to write several different types of analytic essays and responses.
- Students will learn to listen to and respond to each other—both remotely in writing, and in synchronous discussions.

#### **Required Sources**

- Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche, *Americanah* (Anchor Books, 2014)
- Viet Than Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (Harvard, 2017)
- Saidya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (Farrar Straus, 2008)

#### **AND/OR**

- Hazel Carby, *Imperial Intimacies: A Tale of Two Islands* (Verso, 2019)

#### **Recommended Sources**

- Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Harvard, 2006)
- Alicia Schmidt Camacho, *Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (NYU, 2008)
- Melani McAlister, *The Kingdom of God Has No Borders: A Global History of American Evangelicals* (Oxford, 2018)

NOTE: You will all be reading all of Adiche's novel and significant portions of Nguyen. Hartman's *Lose Your Mother* is also required, but for those of you who may have read it before, or for those of you with a particular interest in British history, Carby's *Imperial Histories* is an alternative. In other words, you need not buy both books (though both are wonderful and you may want to own them). Since you will be reading significant sections of Von Eschen, Camacho, and McAlister, you may want to purchase these books, but relevant chapters will be available on canvas. All other required sources—written texts, music clips, and films-- will be available on canvas.

## **Format**

--Each week will have two components:

- Online asynchronous reading and writing requirements based on your analysis of primary sources. Your online written responses to the sources are due by **Sunday at 9 pm**; your two responses to other posts are due any time before class but preferably by **Tuesday at noon**.

**(NOTE:** These days/times are tentative and we will discuss/confirm at our first meeting.) Please post on the discussion board, organized by date.

--Synchronous discussions, which will focus on secondary sources. We will meet remotely each Wednesday at 5:30. Your cameras **must** be on during class.

## **Grading and Requirements**

- Attendance and Participation in Synchronous Discussions (20%)
- Discussion Board Posts: Responses to primary sources, and responses to other posts (20%)
- Two short essays (30% combined)
- Final essay (30%)

### 1. Attendance/Participation (20%)

This crucial component of the class includes:

- Attendance and consistent participation in synchronous class discussions. Your comments must suggest that you've done the reading thoughtfully and thoroughly; and, that you are not making dinner, responding to emails, or engaging in any other tasks during our remote discussions. Please have your camera on for these meetings.

This is not a passive learning environment, and simply showing up on zoom will not be enough to succeed in this component of the course. Because participation is so important, **missing more than two classes** will affect your final grade. If you miss one synchronous meeting, that will be an excused absence, no questions asked. If you miss more than one, you must be in touch with me for it to be an excused absence. **Any student who misses four or more class sessions --through any combination of excused and unexcused absences-- may not earn credit in this class.** Such students should withdraw to avoid getting an F.

- That being said, these are challenging times and challenging circumstances. If possible, please let me know in advance if you will not be in class, OR if you have cannot access our online discussions, OR if you need to be on mute and/or no audio because of where you are and what is going on around you.

### 2. Discussion Board Posts about Primary Sources and Responses to Posts (20%)

- Posts: Most weeks, I will post several questions to guide your reading/listening/watching of primary sources. You must read/listen/watch, and then respond to **one** (sometimes two) of these questions. For two of these assignments, you may generate your own question and answer that, if you prefer. Post your answers to these questions on the canvas discussion board by every **Sunday at 9 pm**, at the latest. Answers should be 2-3 paragraphs. Although these are not essays, please write these posts in full sentences and with attention to grammar, punctuation, etc.

- Responses: Each week you are required to respond to **two** posts from other students. These are due at any point before our synchronous meetings on Wednesdays at 5:30, but I encourage you to respond by **Tuesday at noon** (so that you have time to complete the secondary source reading). Please respond to a post for a question that you did NOT answer yourself for that week. These responses can be shorter than your posts (1-2 paragraphs), but again, you should write in full sentences. In your response, please note an idea that you agreed/liked/appreciated in your peer's post (and explain why); and/or offer one way in which you disagreed (and why); and/or explain how you might have answered the same question differently.

- NOTE: Each of you may take a "pass" and skip this assignment (both posting and responding) ONCE. This does **not** mean that you are not required to complete the assignment that week.

- **NOTE:** These days/times are tentative and we will discuss/confirm at our first meeting.

### 3. TWO essays, 3-4 pages (30% combined)

- With a focus on one article or book chapter/s, write two essays in which you explicate an author's main argument and its significance to the study of transnational cultural history.

This assignment asks you to engage specifically with secondary sources, and offer your own thesis rather than simply a summary. To do so, ask yourself the following questions:

1. What questions does this book or article seek to answer? What are the author's main concerns? What story does this author seek to tell?

2. With whom is the author in dialogue? What intervention is this author trying to make and what is the significance of this intervention? In other words, what is the larger professional, intellectual, and political context in which the author develops these questions, tells the story, and approaches this topic?

3. What methods does the author employ? What are their sources? Why these and not others? How does the author use these sources and organize information to answer the main questions and forge an analysis?

4. What are the primary benefits and/or problems with this method of doing research? What is most and least convincing about how the author uses the evidence and develops the argument? What might a given approach allow, and/or disallow?

5. What do you like and not like about this book/article, and why?

**IMPORTANT:** Please keep in mind that these **are the questions you should be asking yourselves as you do the required reading each week** and will be particularly relevant for your final essay.

You need not answer all five of these questions; indeed, you would not be able to do so in an essay of this length. While questions 1-2 and 5 are likely the most relevant for this assignment, even briefly considering all of them will help you to write a review essay in which you offer your own thesis, and do not simply summarize.

• **OPTIONAL:** One of these two essays may be a close reading of a primary source. If you choose this option, this essay too must have a thesis and be a summary of the source.

• Essays are due on Wednesdays on canvas before our synchronous meeting, and must be about the material we are reading and discussing on that day. If possible, I'd prefer to get these essays in advance of our synchronous discussions (preferably Wednesday by noon), but that is not required. You will sign up for what weeks you want to submit this essay no later than the second week of the semester, Jan. 26.

4. Final Essay, approximately 12-15 pages, double spaced, (250 words pp) (30%)

• In this historiographical essay (also sometimes known as a comparative literature review), put in conversation with each other 2-3 required readings. Drawing on the 5 questions above as your jumping off point, consider how scholars have approached a given theme, episode, cultural commodity, time period, etc. How can you use these readings to create connections among scholars and across the scholarship? How can you use this discussion of the scholarship to develop your own thesis? Your focus must be the scholarship; you may draw on a required primary source if doing so strengthens your discussion of the secondary sources.

If you would like to include a secondary source that is not on the syllabus, you may do so as well; please email me to discuss and confirm.

- Brief proposal: **March 30**
- **Optional** Draft/Outline/first paragraph: **April 27**. More TBA
- Final Essay: **May 4**

### **Names and Pronouns:**

An important part of creating a respectful learning environment is knowing and using the name you use, which may differ from your legal name, as well as the gendered pronouns you use (for example, I go by she/her/hers). Please feel free to let me know your name (and please, please correct me if I mispronounce your name), and/or the pronouns you use.

### **Citizenship and Community**

We will be reading and discussing material on which we may not all agree; some of the themes and imagery we encounter in the sources may seem offensive or otherwise controversial. In this context especially, it is crucial for us to combine the free expression of ideas with respect for each other. This is your community and your class; each one of you has a responsibility to that community.

Technology. During our remote synchronous discussions, please silence cell phones and put phones (etc.), away. Treat our discussions as you would a "regular" in-person seminar: The required materials and our conversation are your focus for these class meetings. It is **very important** that you have the required readings with you during our

discussions, whether that means printing out hard copy or having multiple windows open. Again, all of this should be a “given” in a graduate seminar, but it worth emphasizing.

Our discussions will usually run for about two+ hours, and will include a 10-15 minute break.

### **Policy on Academic Integrity (Cheating and Plagiarism)**

As an academic community dedicated to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, Rutgers University is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment based on the principles of academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the University’s educational and research missions, and violations of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the entire academic community. The entire Academic Integrity Policy can be found here: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>.

Rutgers University treats cheating and plagiarism as serious offenses. Cheating is both a moral and an ethical offense. It violates both your own integrity and the ethics of group commitment: when you cut corners and cheat, you undermine those students who took the time to work on the assignment honestly. As a standard **minimum penalty**, students who are suspected of cheating or plagiarism are reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. Pending investigation, further penalties can include failure of the course, disciplinary probation, and a formal warning that further cheating will be grounds for expulsion from the University.

Please learn to resist the urge to cut and paste, either literally or figuratively, by using other people’s ideas. If I find that you have used other people’s ideas (e.g., Wikipedia, Amazon reviews, book jacket descriptions, etc.), I will not accept the assignment because I will not be able to consider it your own work. You will get a failing grade for that assignment and will not be able to make it up.

### **Support Services**

I welcome students with different learning styles, and Rutgers University Newark is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students. These have been challenging times, and systems of support are especially critical. RU-N has identified the following resources to further that mission of access and support:

- **Students with Disabilities:** Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter barriers due to disability. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact ODS, register, have an initial appointment, and provide documentation. Once a student has completed the ODS process (registration, initial appointment, and documentation submitted) and reasonable accommodations are determined to be necessary and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be provided to the student. The student must give the LOA to each course instructor, followed by a discussion with the instructor. This should be completed as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at [ods.rutgers.edu](http://ods.rutgers.edu). Contact ODS: (973) 353-5375 or [ods@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:ods@newark.rutgers.edu).

- **Covid-related Resources:** These two links provide a comprehensive list of information about Rutgers and covid, and available resources: <https://www.newark.rutgers.edu/covid-19-operating-status#SupportingOurStudents>; and <https://myrun.newark.rutgers.edu/covid19>.

- **Counseling Services:** Counseling Center Room 101, Blumenthal Hall (973) 353-5805 or <http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu/>.

- **Students with Temporary Conditions/Injuries:** Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury that is adversely affecting their ability to fully participate in their courses should submit a request for assistance at: <https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu>.

- **Students Who are Pregnant:** The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist students with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy: (973) 353-1906 or [TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu).

- **Rutgers Learning Center** (tutoring services)

  - Room 140, Bradley Hall  
(973) 353-5608

  - <https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/learning-center>

- **Writing Center** (tutoring and writing workshops)

  - Room 126, Conklin Hall

(973) 353-5847  
nwc@rutgers.edu  
<https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/writing-center>

### **Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance**

Rutgers faculty are committed to helping create a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. Rutgers has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The University strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the University. To report an incident, contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance: (973) 353-1906 or [TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu). To submit an incident report: [tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm](http://tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm).

Please be aware that **all Rutgers employees** (other than those designated as confidential resources such as advocates, counselors, clergy and healthcare providers as listed in Appendix A to [Policy 10.3.12](#)) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the University. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment or sexual violence, or other related misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the University's Title IX Coordinator. If you wish to speak with a staff member who is confidential and **does not** have this reporting responsibility, you may contact the Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance at (973)-353-1918, or at [run.vpva@rutgers.edu](mailto:run.vpva@rutgers.edu). Learn more about the office here: <http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu/vpva>

Finally, please note that this syllabus is a work in progress and we will very likely be making modifications along the way, based both on scheduling issues and on *your* interests and priorities. I will communicate with all of you via canvas, so please make sure that you check that email regularly.

### **CLASS SCHEDULE:**

#### **Wed. Jan 19. Introductions: Cultural history, transnational history, & transnational cultural history**

Required readings **before** our first meeting:

- Laura Briggs, Gladys McCormick, J. T. Way, "Transnationalism: A Category of Analysis." *American Quarterly* Vol. 60, No. 3 (September 2008): 625-648.
- Stuart Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing the Popular" from J. Storey, ed., *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader* (Prentice Hall, 1998), pp. 442-452, (orig. 1981).
- Amy Kaplan, "'Left Alone with America': The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture," in Kaplan and Pease eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Duke, 1993), pp. 3-21.

NOTE: If you have read these essays already, please re-skim so that you are ready to discuss, but also read any 1-2 of the following:

- Mae Ngai, "The Promises and Perils of Transnational History," *Perspectives on History*, December 1, 2012.
- Paul Kramer, "Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World," *American Historical Review* 116 (December 2011): 1348-1391.
- Shelly Fisher Fishkin, "Crossroads of Culture: The Transnational Turn in American Studies: Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, 12, November 2004," *American Quarterly* 57:1 (2005): 17-57.

Please post one question or comment about **each of the three readings** (whichever three you prioritize) on the discussion board **in advance** of our first meeting on January 19, preferable by noon o 1/19.

### **Wed. Jan. 26. Performers Crossing Borders, I**

#### **Required Primary Sources for Discussion Board Posts (and responses to posts)**

- Louie Armstrong and Dave Brubeck, "The Real Ambassador," *The Real Ambassadors* (1962), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cF625TM9mCg>
- Louie Armstrong and Dave Brubeck, "Cultural Exchange," *The Real Ambassadors* (1962), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tp0XnEKfUzU>
- *Come Back, Africa* (film, 1960), Lionel Rogosin, director. For rent on Amazon for \$3.99.

#### **Required Reading for Synchronous Discussion**

- Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Harvard, 2006), chapters 1 and 3.
- Ruth Feldstein, "Screening Anti-Apartheid: Miriam Makeba, *Come Back, Africa*, and the Transnational Circulation of Black Culture and Politics," *Feminist Studies* 39 (2013): 12-39.

### **Wed. Feb. 2. Migration, I: Labor, Ethnicity and the Cold War**

#### **Required Primary Source for Discussion Board Posts (and responses to posts)**

- *Salt of the Earth* (film, 1954), Herbert Biberman, director.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FE1oKQCww04>

#### **Required Reading for Synchronous Discussion**

- Alicia Schmidt Camacho, *Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (NYU, 2008), introduction and chapter 3.
- Ana Raquel Minian, *Undocumented Lives: The Untold Story of Mexican Migration* (Harvard, 2020), selections.

### **Wed. Feb. 8. Transnational Religious Cultures**

#### **Required Primary Sources for Discussion Board Posts (and responses to posts)**

- Jerry Falwell and Jesse Jackson, *Nightline* (1985), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLBG8TVPhb8>.
- "Special Report: The Untold Story, South Africa," *Fundamentalist Journal*, October 1985, pp. 1-16. Please focus on:
  - Jerry Falwell, "Why Did We Go to South Africa?," p. 1;
  - Deborah Huff, "Special Report: Falwell and Jackson Debate South Africa," p. 16.
- Look at 1-2 other stories and pay attention to the visuals, in James Owens, "Divestment: Churches Act to Thwart Apartheid," *Report from the Capital*, April 1985, p. 11 (and see cover).

#### **Required Reading for Synchronous Discussion**

- Melani McAlister, *The Kingdom of God Has No Borders: A Global History of American Evangelicals* (Oxford, 2018): Introduction; chapter 7, "'The Suffering Church': Apartheid South Africa," pp. 117-143; chapter 14: "'The Power of a Weeping Christian': Sexual Politics and HIV/AIDS in Africa," pp. 247-267. **(Focus especially on chapter 7.)**
- Lauren Tureck, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations: Evangelical Influence on Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Relations* (Cornell, 2020), chapter 6, "The Challenge of South African Apartheid," pp. 151-180.

**Wed. Feb. 16. “Memory,” I: The Personal and the Transnational**

**Required for Discussion Board Posts (and responses to posts)**

- Please post two questions about either Hartman or Carby; or post two passages that you feel are particularly significant/important to discuss and explain why.

**Required Reading for Synchronous Discussion**

• Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press, 1995), pages TBA.

- Saidya Hartmann, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*

NOTE: If you have read *Lose Your Mother*, and/or if you have particular interests in British history and colonialism, then your required reading is:

- Hazel Carby, *Imperial Histories*

**Wed. Feb 23. “Beauty,” Consumption and Economics**

**Required Primary Sources for Discussion Board Posts (and responses to posts)**

- TBA

**Required Reading for Synchronous Discussion**

• Evelyn Nakanno Glenn, “Yearning for Lightness: Transnational Circuits in the Marketing and Consumption of Skin Lighteners,” *Gender and Society* 22 (June 2008): 281-302

• Sharon Heijin Lee, “Beauty Between Empires: Global Feminism, Plastic Surgery, and the Trouble with Self-Esteem,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 37 (2016): 1-31

• Lynn Thomas, *Beneath the Surface: A Transnational History of Skin Lighteners* (Duke, 2020), chapter 4, “Beauty Queens and Consumer Capitalism,” pp. 98-149

**Wed. March 2. Music and Empire**

**Required Primary Sources for Discussion Board Posts (and responses to posts)**

- TBA

**Required Reading for Synchronous Discussion**

• Ronald Radano and Tejumola Olaniyan, eds., *Audible Empire: Music, Global Politics, Critique* (Duke 2016), selections:

- Radano and Olaniyan, “Introduction: Hearing Empire- Imperial Listening,” 25-44
- Chapter 1: Michael Denning, “Decolonizing the Ear: The Transcolonial Reverberations of Phonograph Music,” pp. 25-44
- Nan Enstad, “Smoking Hot: Cigarettes, Jazz, and the Production of Global Imaginaries in Interwar Shanghai,” pp. 45-65
- Penny Von Eschen, “Di Eage and di Bear: Who Gets to Tell the Story of the Cold War?,” pp. 187-208
- Nitasha Sharma, “Post 9/11 Brown and a Hip Hop Critique of Empire,” pp. 292-313

**Wed. March 9. “Memory,” II: Narrating War**

**Required Primary Sources for Discussion Board Posts (and responses to posts)**

- TBA

**Required Reading for Synchronous Discussion**

- Viet Than Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (Harvard, 2017), pages TBA

**Wed. March 16:** No class- spring break. I encourage you to read *Americanah* over break.

**Wed. March 23: Migration, II. Fiction and Nation**

**Required for Discussion Board Posts (and responses to posts)**

- Please post two questions about the novel (and respond to two posts). These can be about a big picture theme, or you may hone in on a quote or a specific passage that you think is important to explore further.

**Required Reading for Synchronous Discussion**

- Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche, *Americanah*
- Bernie Lombardi, “Hetero-trans-nationalism and the Queer Diasporic Child in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah*,” *Research in African Literatures* 51 (Fall 2020): 216-235
- Katherine Hallemeier, “‘To Be from the Country of People Who Gave’: National Allegory and the United States of Adichie’s *Americanah*,” *Studies in the Novel* 47 (Summer 2015): 231-245

Note: If you can only read one article in addition to the article, prioritize Lombardi.

**Wed. March 30. Travel and Tourism**

**Required Primary Sources for Discussion Board Posts (and responses to posts)**

- TBA

**Required Reading for Synchronous Discussion**

- Jennifer Kelly, “Subjection and Performance: Tourism, Witnessing, and Acts of Refusal in Palestine,” *Feminist Formations* (2020)
- Hillary Kaell, “Pilgrimage in the Jet Age: The Development of the American Evangelical Holy Land Travel Industry, 1948-1978,” *Journal of Tourism History* 2 (2010): 23-39
- Edward Said, *Orientalism*, excerpts

**PROPOSAL FOR FINAL ESSAY DUE**

**Wed. April 6. TBD**

**Wed. April 13. Afro-Futurism/AfricanFuturism**

**Required Primary Sources for Discussion Board Posts (and responses to posts)**

- Janelle Monae, selections
- *Pumzi*, Wanuri Kahiu, director (2009) – available on youtube.

**Required Reading (primary and secondary sources) for Synchronous Discussion**

- Nnedi Okorafor, *Kabu Kabu* (Prime, 2013), selections
- Alondra Nelson, “Introduction: Future Texts,” *Social Text* 71 (Summer 2001): 1-15
- Hope Wabuke, “Afrofuturism, AfricanFuturism, and the Language of Black Speculative Literature,” *Los Angeles Review of Books*, August 27, 2020

**Wed. April 20. Covid and Transnational Cultural History**

**Required Primary Sources/Personal Reflection for Discussion Board Posts (and responses to posts)**

- TBA

**Required Reading for Synchronous Discussion**

- Priscilla Wald, Nancy Tomes and Lisa Lynch, “Introduction: Contagion and Culture” *American Literary History* (Special Issue) 14 (Winter, 2002): 617-624
- Priscilla Wald, “Cultures and Carriers: ‘Typhoid Mary’ and the Science of Social Control,” *Social Text* 52/53 (Autumn/Winter 1997): 181-214
- Nukhet Varlick, “Rethinking the History of Plague in the time of Covid,” *Centaurus* 62 (July 27, 2020): 285-293. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1600-0498.12302>

**Wed. April 27. Drafts/conclusions/peer review. More TBD.**