

Rutgers University  
Department of History  
Fall 2015

History in Fiction and Fact (21:512:391)

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Office Hours: Monday and Thursdays, 11:30-1, Tuesday and Wednesday, by appointment

In this course we shall explore what history how it is made, and why it matters by reading, talking about, and writing about a half dozen books, fiction, non-fiction, and drama, in which the main character is a historian or someone doing the work of a historian, which is doing research about, thinking about, analyzing, and often writing about the past. In other words, we shall study history by watching and thinking about what historians do.

In that much of our observation will be done in the pages of fiction, we will also need to be thinking about the relation between fiction and history (and nonfiction more generally); the similarities and differences between truth in history and truth in fiction; the ways in which historians and novelists use facts, sources, evidence, narrative, analysis, and imagination to arrive at historical understanding and truths; the things that happen to the content of our representations when they are transformed by genre and form; the literary dimensions of historical literature and the historical dimension of fiction. We will practice criticizing history as literature and fiction as history.

Requirements:

**Attendance: You are required to attend class.** If the class goes according to plan, there will be no quizzes, tests, or in class exams in this class. If all goes according to plan. A large part of what happens in this class happens in class, and there is no way to “get the notes.” A “C” is the very best—the very best--grade you can earn unless you are with us, from first minute to last, every single class. I am aware that "shit happens"—at work, at home, in the homes of your parents and siblings, out on the street. But unless that shit constitutes a real-live emergency (as the university and I define it), I am going to expect you to be in class. Every unexcused absence will take a bite, a big bite, out of your grade. And multiple excused absences will hurt too. I’ve pasted the university policy at the end of this syllabus.

**Reading:** Our reading, together, is the sine qua non (look that up if you don’t know what it means) of this class. You are required to do the reading for each class before that class, respond to that reading in your class journal before that class, and come to every class prepared to talk about what you have read.

**Journal: You must keep a class journal**—separate from the your notebook for this class. I will often ask you to read from or report from your journal in class and I will collect or look at your journals in class from time to time. You can keep it in a notebook or journal book or (if you prefer to type your entries) you can print out your journal entries before each class and keep them together in some sort of lightweight folder or binding. **This journal is the very heart of your writing in this class.** In it I want you to respond to readings, ask questions about readings, copy out words or sentences or even whole paragraphs that mean something special to you, respond to the same, connect one reading to an

earlier reading or to our discussion in class. You must have journal entries for each class meeting of our class, and they MUST be completed (and printed out) before the class on which the reading is due. Bring your journal to every class.

**Class participation:** Class participation is also required and absolutely essential to what we are here for. I am going to expect everyone to participate every single day we are together. The writing you do in your journal is partly intended to make it possible for even the shyest or most deliberative of you to be prepared to speak up. Your grade will be based on your participation as well as on your written work, and in borderline cases class participation will be determinative. Because Rutgers does not have an A- (or B), each term there are many borderline cases.

**Formal Writing:** This is a writing intensive seminar and you should not take it if you are not interested in writing regularly, sharing your writing with your classmates, and revising your writing over and over again in response to the comments and constructive criticism that comes from your classmates and from me. You must write and revise several short writing exercises and work throughout the term on one somewhat longer and repeatedly revised term project. All written assignments will be due in hard copy in class. In our in class writing workshops, you must read your fellow classmates writing with care and be prepared to work together in small groups to talk about it and help them make it better.

**Special Challenges:** Students with special challenges, including learning challenges, requiring assistance and/or accommodation should speak with Disability Services in a timely manner to set up appropriate accommodations.

NO LAPTOPS, TABLETS, PHONES OUT ON DESKS OR LAPS without extra ordinary reason.

All written work due in class ON THE DAY IT IS DUE

Required Books (all available at NJ Books and elsewhere; we will talk about the elsewhere in class):

Ethan Canin, The Palace Thief  
Josephine Tey, The Daughter of Time  
Octavia Butler, Kindred  
Robert Penn Warren, All the King's Men  
Art Spiegelman, Maus  
Rebecca Skloot, The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks  
Don DeLillo, Libra  
Tim O'Brien, In the Lake of the Woods

Highly Recommend:

Strunk and White, The Elements of Style (available in any bookstore, new or used)

**Schedule: Subject to Change with Notice**

Week 1 (9/3):	Thursday: Introduction: The Past and History
Week 2 (9/8-10):	Tuesday: Facts and Fictions Canin, "The Palace Thief," 156-205
Week 3 (9/17):	Monday: No Class Thursday: Trey, Daughter of Time (all)
Week 4 (9/21-24):	Monday: Butler, Kindred, 1-107 Thursday: Butler, Kindred, 108-188
Week 5 (9/28-10/1):	Monday: Butler, Kindred, 188-end Thursday: Warren, ATKM, 1-109
Week 6 (10/5-8):	Monday: Warren, ATKM, 110-191 Thursday: Warren, ATKM, 192-270
Week 7 (10/12-15):	Monday: Warren, ATKM, 271-354 Thursday: Warren, ATKM, 355-end
Week 8 (10/19-22):	Monday: Speigelman, Maus I: All Thursday: Speigelman, Maus II: All
Week 9 (10/26-29):	Monday: Skloot, Immoral Life, 1-83 Thursday: Skloot, Immoral Life, 84-169
Week 10 (11/2-11/5):	Monday: Skloot, Immoral Life, 170-258 Thursday: Skloot, Immortal Life, 259-end
Week 11: (11/9-12):	Monday: DeLillo, Libra, 1-80 Thursday: DeLillo, Libra, 81-168 169-249, 250-340 418, 466
Week 12: (11/16-11/19):	Monday: DeLillo, Libra, 169-249 Thursday: DeLillo, Libra, 250-340
Week 13: (11/23-11/26)	Monday: DeLillo, Libra, 341-418 Thanksgiving
Week 14: (11/30-12/3)	Monday: O'Brien, In the Lake of the Woods, 1-150 Thursday: O'Brien, In the Lake of the Woods, 151-233
Week 15: (12/7-12/10)	Monday: O'Brien, In the Lake of the Woods, 234-end Thursday: We Shall See

Academic Integrity: If you haven't already, familiarize yourself with RU academic integrity policy at

<http://judicialaffairs.rutgers.edu>. You should not plagiarize because it is wrong, academia's highest crime. But in case you need extra incentive you should realize that your odds of getting away with it in this course are extremely slim: the questions I ask, the assignments I give, are very particular to this class and my approach to this subject and these books. I will be reading your writing all term longer, not just once or twice, and I read for a living. Unless you hand in some one else's writing – one other person's writing – all term long, in every assignment, formal or informal, I am going to catch you.

Honor Code Pledge: Each of you is required to sign the Rutgers Honor Code Pledge. To receive credit, every assignment must have your signature under the following phrase "On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this assignment."

Official Attendance Policy: "Attendance at all regularly scheduled meetings of a course is expected. The course instructor is expected to state in writing the attendance requirements for each course. The recognized grounds for absence are illness requiring medical attention, curricular or extracurricular activities approved by the faculty, personal obligations claimed by the student and recognized as valid, recognized religious holidays, and severe inclement weather causing dangerous traveling conditions. The president of the university or an official appointed by the president is authorized to cancel classes, or any part thereof, in the event that weather conditions so dictate."

### **Books:**

NJ Books should have 10 copies of every book and if they sell out they will order more.

Other possibilities:

- 1) Local libraries have most if not all of these books
- 2) Local bookstores – if you still have a local bookstore – will have many of them and they can order and quickly obtain the ones they don't have
- 2) Strand Bookstore in NYC has copies – 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway, a fun store in a fun neighborhood, Union Square
- 3) ABEBOOKS.com
- 4) Amazon.com (students can get FREE trial of Prime)
- 5) Barnes and Nobles

IF YOU HAVE A HARD TIME GETTING A COPY OF ANY OF THE REQUIRED READINGS PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE SEND ME AN EMAIL OR COME SEE ME AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND WAY AHEAD OF OUR READING THEM. I CAN HELP YOU GET THEM.