

History 642:  
Documenting American Social Change

Dr. Barbara Loomis

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Office hours: Tuesday, 2-3:45, and after class, if requested.

**Readings:**

- Watson, Harry. *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America*. American Century Series. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1990.
- Rosenzweig, Roy. *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920*. Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Modern History Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Plus, a number of articles available on e-reserve or through the History Department website. You might also find the following textbook to be a helpful review of nineteenth-century developments:

Barney, William L. *The Passage of the Republic: An Interdisciplinary History of Nineteenth-Century America*. Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1987.

I have placed a personal copy on 48-hour reserve.

**Course Overview:**

The history department's proseminars are intended to utilize and expand the skills that students have acquired throughout their history major. In this class, students explore and analyze what other historians have written about a particular topic and then they conduct their own original research, based on primary sources. Our proseminar will focus on the transformation of American culture in the nineteenth century.

Changes in political practices and values coincided with dramatic and significant changes throughout the United States generally. Slavery came to an abrupt end; urbanization increased more rapidly than at any other time. First the market revolution, then the rise of the national corporation, reshaped the economic institutions of what had originally been a country of largely self-sufficient farming households. Completed family size declined by half; commercial sex districts emerged in every city. New leisure institutions burst into public attention, and political movements emerged to shape and to respond to all of these changes.

Students in this course will examine the dynamics of social change in nineteenth-century America as these developments moved into the broader world of politics and ideology. We will begin with two works, which will introduce you to some of the major issues of nineteenth-century history. Each student will create their own bibliography of significant secondary works on a topic of their choice. Then, each student will have the chance to research and analyze one aspect of nineteenth-century social change in a 15-20 page essay.

## **Requirements:**

Grading will be based on oral participation and on written work. Both elements are central to success in the course. Because it is difficult to participate in the course if one is not there, attendance is mandatory. **All** written assignments must be completed in order to receive a passing grade.

1. Class participation, including scheduled oral presentations, will account for 20 percent of the final grade.
2. A report on primary sources, due on March 27, will be worth 5 percent of the grade.
3. Two short essays, responding to specific questions about the reading assignments, will each be worth 5 percent of the total grade for the class.
4. A bibliography of some of the major secondary works related to your research topic, compiled to the format in the University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, will be worth 5 percent of the grade. The bibliography should include monographs and articles in scholarly journals.
5. A written proposal for a research topic is due on March 13. This proposal will not be graded, although it will receive extensive feedback and suggestions.
6. A medium-length (6-8 page) review essay, analyzing some of the major secondary works related to your research topic and due on April 3, will be worth 15 percent of the grade. [Note: any graduate students in the course will need to submit a 10-12 page paper for this assignment, and they will be required to do a more extensive search to make sure that they have included all the most important works on their subject.]
7. The culmination of the class is a 15-20 page research paper, based on primary sources. A rough draft will be due on May 1 and will be graded, accounting for 10 percent of the course total. The final version of the research paper, due on May 22, will make up 35 percent of the grade.

Each of these requirements will be explained in greater detail in class lectures or in hand-outs.

## **Reading Assignments and Calendar of Events:**

- Jan. 30:            Introductions to the Class and to Each Other.  
                         Discussion: Two Documents
- Feb. 6:            *Liberty and Power*, to 131. We will discuss this initial reading assignment.  
                         Lecture: Getting Started on a Research Project in Nineteenth-Century  
                         American History; Reviewing Note-taking Techniques
- Feb. 13:           *Liberty and Power*, 132-253. A short essay on the reading will be due  
                         today. In 2-3 pages, answer this question: According to Henry Watson,  
                         what were some of the central components of American political  
                         responses to social change in the Age of Jackson?

Lecture: Locating Primary and Secondary Sources.

Feb. 20: No class meeting. Instead, during this week, I will be meeting individually with each of you to talk about possible research topics and to help you get started on your project.

Feb. 27: *Eight Hours*, to 126. Discuss initial reading.  
Preliminary research proposals due today: a one-paragraph description of your topic, including a list of any primary sources that you already know about.  
In-class review exercise: Fine-tuning bibliographic citations and footnotes.

Mar. 6: *Eight Hours*, 127-228.  
Due today: a short essay, which answers the following question about the two books that we have just read. Thinking about economics, politics, values, social life, or culture, do you think that continuity or change best characterized the specific facet that you are analyzing for the nineteenth century? Provide concrete examples to support your claim.  
Lecture: Crafting Book Reviews and Historiographical Essays.

Mar. 13: Final research proposals due today; include a bibliography of secondary sources relating to your topic (at least three major monographs and three scholarly articles). We will not meet as a class, so you can use the time to begin collecting evidence for your research or reviewing one of the major secondary works about your topic. Please send your proposals to me as a word attachment via email.

Mar. 20: What are the elements of a first-rate historical essay?  
Reading assignment: three student-written articles from *Ex Post Facto*, the department's journal.  
Sarah Barkin, "Little Women & Evil-Looking Men: Rebecca Buffum Springs and the Politics of Motherhood in Abtebellum America," *EPF* 14 (2005), 53-70.  
Brenda Frink, "'God Give Us Men': Manliness, the American Protective Association, and Catholicism in San Francisco, 1893-1896," *EPF* 11 (2002).  
David Roberts, "Forgotten American Observance: Remembering the First of August," *EPF* 11 (2002).  
Complete the worksheet on the essays before coming to class.

Oral presentations: Themes in nineteenth-century history. (First groups.)

Mar. 27: Primary source report due today.

Oral presentations: Themes in nineteenth-century history.

- Apr. 3:           Reviews of secondary literature due today.  
Oral presentations: Themes in nineteenth-century history.
- Apr. 10:          SPRING BREAK--no classes.
- Apr. 17:          Thirty note cards, from primary sources, due when you come to class today. Be ready to organize notes into a working outline, and be thinking about your thesis sentence.
- Apr. 24:          At work on rough drafts; no class meeting.
- May 1:            ROUGH DRAFTS DUE!
- May 8:            Individual meetings throughout week to return drafts. The last of these meetings will be scheduled during our class time, so we will not be meeting as a group.
- May 15:          Oral presentations on research discoveries.
- May 22:          Oral presentations on research discoveries. All final drafts due today!!!