Fall Semester 2015

Teaching the Past: Anglo-Saxon Literature, from Beowulf to the Battle of Maldon
Friday, October 16, 2015, 9am—2:30pm
Stacy S. Klein, Associate Professor, Department of English, Rutgers

This seminar will provide a range of tools for teaching early medieval literature to high school students in a manner that strives to balance historical responsibility with modern relevance. We will focus on the 3182-line alliterative poem Beowulf, one of the longest, and yet most enigmatic, of Old English heroic poems. After an introductory study of Old English, the vernacular language written and spoken in England from approximately 450-1100 AD, we will move to the poem’s historical, literary, and material contexts, with particular attention to how the various monsters, cannibals, military endeavors, and pagan rituals featured within the poem might have resonated with Anglo-Saxon audiences. Our seminar will conclude by considering how these seemingly alien cultural practices from a distant past might be made meaningful to modern readers.

Slave Culture and Resistance in History and Memory
Friday, October 23, 2015, 9am—2:30pm
Walter Rucker, Associate Professor, Department of History, Rutgers

In the long arc of American histories and remembrances of the peculiar institution of slavery, images of decultured and pliant "Sambos," loyal and asexual "Mammies," or hypersexual and aggressive "Jezebels" came to represent the range of human possibility and potential of enslaved peoples. Though mobilized for clearly political or psychological purposes by slavery's many defenders, these stereotypes endured well into the twentieth century in the form of racist memorabilia, characters in popular movies, and personas around which professional historians built elaborate book-length interpretations. This workshop seeks to track the long trajectory of "Sambo," "Mammy," and "Jezebel" in the American imagination. These flat, one-dimensional caricatures will be juxtaposed against the more nuanced, multidimensional--indeed, human--depictions of enslaved people appearing in slave narratives, WPA interviews, confessions and trial testimonies, and slave folklore. In addition, the workshop will emphasize modern depictions of slavery--in recent movies, novels, and music--as means of complicating or contesting how high school students envision the past.

Shakespeare and Performance: Teaching and Reading
Friday, October 30, 2015, 9am—2:30pm
Emily Bartels, Professor, Department of English, Rutgers
Director, Bread Loaf School of English, Middlebury College

This workshop will explore various ways of using performance exercises in the classroom as a tool for opening Shakespeare's texts up to interpretation. Using the texts of Othello and Macbeth, we will work together on theatrical strategies to see what Shakespeare's language asks, and allows, us to do. Our goal is to begin to develop collaboratively an innovative tool kit for the teaching of Shakespeare -- one that draws on our students' own creative energies to take them farther as critics than they otherwise might go.
The Ottoman World Empire  
Friday, November 13, 2015, 9am—2:30pm  
Tuna Artun, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Rutgers

The Ottoman Empire had its humble beginnings in the early fourteenth century, when a small Turkmen principality emerged on the Byzantine frontier in northwestern Anatolia. Over the next six hundred years, this political entity would come to rule over a dizzying variety of ethnic and religious communities on three continents and show a remarkable ability to adapt and survive into the twentieth century. Due to its chronological and spatial expanse, the history of the Ottoman Empire is well suited to teaching broad themes in global history. This talk will first introduce the Turko-Mongol, Islamic, and Byzantine roots of the Ottoman state and then focus on a number of significant episodes from Ottoman history. These episodes will shed light on wider issues including, but not limited to, the rise of the Safavids and the ensuing Sunni-Shi‘i struggle in the sixteenth century, the so-called “Sultanate of Women” and the role of women in early modern Ottoman society, diplomatic, economic, and cultural exchange between the West and the Ottoman world, and confessional violence and nationalist struggles in the modern era.

Health, Culture, and Society  
Wednesday, November 18, 2015, 9am—2:30pm  
Leslie Fishbein, Associate Professor, Departments of American Studies and Jewish Studies, Rutgers

This workshop examines classic American debates over such issues as vaccination from the smallpox controversy among the Puritans to the current controversy over the relationship between autism and vaccines; childbirth and midwifery; national mobilization against diseases like polio and AIDS; race, ethnicity, and access to quality medical care, including organ transplants; the gendered nature of the treatment of mental illness from nineteenth-century female nervous disorders to modern female madness; and sex education. Among the texts that we may examine are John Q (2002), a film starring Denzel Washington about a father who resorts to hostage taking to insure that his son gets a heart transplant; Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s novella about a woman’s descent into madness, The Yellow Wallpaper (1899), Ken Kesey’s One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest (1962) and the film starring Jack Nicholson (1975); and Susanna Kaysen’s Girl, Interrupted (1994) and 1991 film starring Angelina Jolie and Winona Ryder.

Lincoln and the Civil War  
Friday, December 11, 2015  
Louis Masur, Distinguished Professor, Departments of American Studies and History and Acting Chair 2015-1016, Department of American Studies, Rutgers

Lincoln once proclaimed that "the dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present." In this workshop we shall examine Lincoln's ideas about nation, secession, slavery, emancipation, democracy and peace. His beliefs never remained static and he changed his mind in response to changing conditions. We will pay particular attention to his ideas for how to reconstruct the nation once the war was over, ideas he did not live to see come to fruition.
Spring Semester 2016

The Black Death
Friday, February 5, 2016, 9am—2:30pm
Leah DeVun, Associate Professor, Department of History, Rutgers

In the spring of 1348, a fearsome epidemic arrived at the borders of Europe, ultimately killing at least one third of the population. Although they lacked modern scientific understandings of contagion, medieval Europeans fought the plague through medical, religious, and legal remedies, and they faced a society transformed by the sheer volume of deaths. Some villages were almost completely depopulated, while others remained unscathed; survivors recorded dramatic and emotional accounts of the disease’s progression. This seminar examines the experience of the plague through contemporary reports, and it explores the epidemic’s influence on scientific and religious discourse, literature, and visual art. We will also familiarize ourselves with a wave of new scholarly studies that brings together historical thinking and cutting-edge research in genetics and bioarchaeology to answer questions about what “really” caused the epidemic. Because the plague followed on the heels of another catastrophe, the Great Famine, and coincided with a series of brutal territorial battles, the fourteenth century is considered among the most tumultuous in European history. This seminar will examine how this dynamic period set the stage for the culture of the Renaissance that succeeded it.

America in the Great War
Friday, February 19, 2016, 9am—2:30pm
Jennifer Keene, Professor and Chair, Department of History, Chapman University

Understanding World War I is perhaps more important than ever. The war, quite simply, shaped the world in which we live. The conflict also presented Americans with challenges remarkably similar to those confronting contemporary American society. We can learn a lot about the past and the present by studying World War I. The centennial of the First World War has spurred a flurry of new scholarly works. Recent trends in the scholarship include re-examining Woodrow Wilson’s foreign policies, investigating American humanitarian intervention overseas, establishing the war as a turning point in the long civil rights movements, evaluating the coercive aspects of home-front war culture, analyzing what went “right” and what went “wrong” for Americans on the Western Front and examining the difficulties of war veterans coming home. These topics are not accidental, they stem from the times in which we live. The post-9/11 political, cultural, and social environment has encouraged scholars to examine World War I with fresh eyes. 9/11 was a turning point for the nation, changing governmental policies but also Americans’ conception of their role in the world. The same was true of World War I.

The Crusades: What Were They?
Friday, February 26, 2016, 9am—2:30pm
Stephen Reinert, Associate Professor, Department of History and Director, Modern Greek Studies, Rutgers

As recent American presidents have discovered, to their dismay and political embarrassment, evoking the word “crusade” can elicit emotional reactions of surprising passion. But as such episodes consistently reveal, neither speechmakers nor their reactive audiences have any informed understanding of what the crusades were, as a phenomenon and indeed key dynamic of European and Middle Eastern history. The aim of this workshop is to provide teachers with a broad overview understanding of how crusades are defined, characterized and interpreted in current scholarship. We will also devote time to exploring how and why the concept still resonates in the popular mind with such intensity, even though the last official crusade was launched ... in what year was it? Come and enjoy the debate!
Emperors, Gladiators, and Vestal Virgins
Friday, March 11, 2016, 9am—2:30pm
Sarolta Takács, Professor, Department of History, Rutgers

Rome, the eternal city; Rome the empire. Founded in the mid-8th century BCE, Rome grew from a small village to become the superpower of the Mediterranean basin. Its empire reached as far north as Britain, in the south it included Northern Africa, and in the east it encompassed areas of present day Iraq and Iran. This vast political entity, ever transforming, lasted for more than a millennium. Rome allows us to study closely the formation of an empire, the development of a complex socio-political, economic, and legal system as well as a discourse of power that is still discernible today. In this workshop we will look at emperors, gladiators, and Vestal Virgins and through them discover reasons for Rome’s success and its ability to transform over an extended period of time, which, in turn, resulted in the development of modern Europe.

Imperialism and Its Global Impact
Friday, April 1, 2016, 9am—2:30pm
Michael Adas, Abraham E. Voorhees Professor of History and Board of Governors’ Chair, Rutgers

A central force in the last two and a half centuries of global history, and right up to the present day, has been Industrialized Colonial Expansion or Imperialism from its western European origins through more recent manifestations, especially those associated with the United States and Japan. After an overview of the meanings of the term and the nature of the historical processes imperialist domination set in motion, we will look at some of its major repercussions from violent conquest and the critical roles played by collaborative groups in colonized societies to the longer-term effects of colonial domination on the peoples of Africa and Asia and the cultural legacy of imperialist systems. We will discuss (and read several together) primary sources that can be used in the classroom, including artistic representations, literary works, photography and music. We will also consider source books and key secondary historical accounts that can assist in the preparation of units and specific classes on these pivotal dimensions of modern global history.

History of the 1980s
Friday, April 15, 2016, 9am—2:30pm
Jennifer Mittelstadt, Associate Professor, Department of History, Rutgers

It was the era of Ronald Reagan, Wall Street wolves, “Top Gun,” and the Moral Majority -- the triumph of modern conservatism. But the 1980s also witnessed a widespread peace and anti-nuclear movement, the spread of multi-culturalism, and radical HIV AIDS activism. For many years historians did not attempt to reconcile the complex stories that animated the 1980s. They considered it as part of the “recent past,” and ceded its analysis to journalists and contemporary observers. In the past ten years, however, scholars have taken up the challenge of writing the history of the 1980s, placing that decade into the wider interpretive stream of the twentieth century. This seminar will feature this new history of the 1980s, and offer ways to incorporate it into the classroom.
Teaching American History Through Images
Friday, May 13, 2016, 9am—2:30pm
Jonathan Lurie, Professor Emeritus, Department of History, Rutgers-Newark
Maxine N. Lurie, Professor Emerita, Department of History, Seton Hall University

The workshop will have two objectives. The first is to discuss the issues involved in understanding images (such as the difference between the artist’s view and reality, or how photographers select or arrange people and objects to make a dramatic point). The second is to provide examples of images that can be used to spark student interest and discussion while teaching American History. These will include paintings, photographs, statues, documents, artifacts and more, from Native American settlement to 2014. All the examples will be taken from Envisioning New Jersey, an illustrated history of the state that will be published by Rutgers University Press in 2016. The images will be relevant to the history of the U.S. (as well as that of the state).

To register for any of the seminars listed above, please mail the enclosed registration form or register on-line at rcha.rutgers.edu

Remember to register early!