1. Introduction to the Course

The purpose of this course is to acquaint you with a variety of approaches to the past used by historians writing in the twentieth century. Most of the books on the list constitute, in my view (and others), modern classics, or potential classics, in social and economic history. We will examine how these historians conceive of their object of study, how they use primary sources as a basis for their accounts, how they structure the narrative and analytic discussion of their topic, and what are the advantages and drawbacks of their approaches.

Historians as a community pursue a huge variety of topics with widely disparate methodologies. A central concern of ours will be the question: is history a discipline? Do historians have anything in common? Or are they a rather random collection of people united only by a shared interest in the past (excluding geologists, paleontologists on one end and journalists on the other)?

It would be impossible to survey everything that historians do. The works I have chosen emphasize long-term social processes, the experiences of ordinary people, collective mentalities, and the structures of material life. They downplay the prominence of great leaders (kings, queens, generals, philosophers, scientists), the simple narration of political events, or the analysis of idea systems divorced from their political and social context. They share an openness to the use of concepts from related social sciences (anthropology, sociology, and economics). They aim to reconstruct the experience of everyone who lived in the past, and they pay special attention to the obscure, the oppressed, and the poor. They try to transcend the narrow boundaries inflicted on historians (and everyone else) by an exclusive concentration on the fortunes of the nation-state and its leaders.

This approach to history originated with the French founders of the Annales school, Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, around the turn of the century. (The school is named after the journal which they founded and coedited) Since its founding, the Annales historians have exerted tremendous influence on historical writing around the world. As a historian of China and Japan myself, I also want to emphasize the significant impact of this approach on non-Western history, especially Asia. Of course, many other trends contributed to and altered the Annales paradigm. Things did not look the same when Annales topics migrated to England, the U.S. or China. But following the themes of this historical approach over time provides a useful way to unify the course and get some sense of the commonality of historical problems across time and space.

Our focus is on structure, methodology, and conceptualization, not on specific historical content. A sizeable proportion of the studies here focus on early modern Europe (roughly 1500 - 1800 A.D.). As you can see, there is also representation from nineteenth-century Europe, America, and China. I would urge you to read in areas with which you are not familiar as well as in home ground. It is not necessary to "know the facts" or become an expert in any of these areas; the point is to find out how similar historical approaches work in different cultural areas and time periods.
Requirements for the course: 1) Read the core readings for each week and be prepared to discuss them in class. Many of these classics are large, fat books. I will give you some hints to devise the best way of tackling them. (Starting at page one and plowing straight through is almost never the best method.) 2) Read or skim at least one of the works from the supplementary list. Each week you should submit before the class meeting (Tuesday afternoon at the latest), a one-page essay with your reactions to the reading (not summaries, but critiques: reasoned argument is preferred, but gripes and raves are allowed). These will be useful in stimulating discussion. This is mainly a discussion course; I may sometimes give brief orienting lectures, but I will try to keep them short. To be fair, I will commit myself to producing a similar reaction paper, or something longer.

Also, someone may be assigned each week to report on one of the supplementary readings, orally: this can be more of a summary with critique, like an extended book review. (Look at reviews in the American Historical Review or New York Review of Books for examples)

3) Finally, at the end of the term, a longer paper is due (10-15 pp). You are free to choose the subject, but you should take one of two tacks: 1) "Horizontal": examine the characteristics of the same historical approach used in several different countries and time periods (one of these countries should be non-Western), e.g.: the historical demography of 17th century France and Japan; the history of women in twentieth-century Russia and China; 2) "Vertical": examine a variety of perspectives on the same historical topic (the French Revolution is the classic one: it is open to Marxist, populist, economic, cultural, feminist, and many other interpretations. Other good possibilities are the English Industrial Revolution, American slavery, European imperialism). In either case, you need to search out the major works in the literature, analyze the basic problématique, discuss the different analytic tools and sources employed, and evaluate the relative merit of different approaches. You might even have ideas of your own about where work in this subfield should go, which you should feel free to develop. You will find, I suspect, that science and technology get short shrift in most historians' accounts. Think about how they might usefully be integrated into general history.

SYLLABUS
Nearly all the core books are available at the MIT Bookstore, and at the Reserve Room of the Hayden Library. Other readings will be provided as handouts.
# Available at MIT Bookstore
& Copy available as handouts

Sep. 3. Introduction
Sep. 10. The Annales School: Origins and Establishment
Core Reading:
&Marc Bloch, "The Advent and Triumph of the Water Mill", in Bloch, Land and Work in Medieval Europe, p. 136-68 [Copies available in STS Reading Room]

Supplementary:
Peter Burke, The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School, 1929-1989
Traian Stoianovitch, French Historical Method: The Annales Paradigm;
Carol Fink, Marc Bloch: A Biography;
Lucien Febvre, A New Kind of History (collected writings)
Marc Bloch, Feudal Society; The Historian's Craft
Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Montaillou
Journal of Modern History, 1972/12, special issue on Braudel[PCP3]

Sep. 17 Labor History; Class as a Historical Category
Core Reading:

Supplementary:
Alex Keyssar, Out of Work: The First Century of Unemployment in Massachusetts;
David Montgomery, The Decline of the House of Labor;
Herbert Gutman, Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America
Andrew Gordon, The Evolution of Labor Relations in Japan;
Gail Hershatter, Flying Hammers, Walking Chisels: The Workers of Tianjin (China)

Sep. 24. Race, Culture, and War
Core Reading:
&John Dower, "Race, Language and War in Two Cultures"; "Fear and Prejudice in U.S.-Japan Relations", in Japan in War & Peace: Selected Essays, pp.257-335
#Eugene Genovese, Roll Jordan Roll, pp. 1-112, 162-93, 255-79, 588-612

Supplementary:
Barbara Field, "Racial Ideology in American History", in Region, Race, Ideology:Festschrift for C.Vann Woodward
Landeg White, Magomero: Portrait of an African Village
George Frederickson, Racism
Oct. 1. Women's History; Gender and Textiles

Core Readings:
#Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife’s Tale*, p.3-134
&Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China*, p. 173-273

Supplementary: &Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, p. 15-50

Oct. 8 Global History: Economic and Environmental

Core Reading:
#Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*

Supplementary:
William McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples*
Kenneth Pomeranz and Steven Topik: *The World that Trade Created*
Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*
Fernand Braudel, *Capitalism and Material Life, 1500-1800* (3 vols., especially look at volume 1)
Charles Tilly, *Huge Structures, Big Comparisons...* (reviews and critiques some of the above works)
*Journal of World History* (scan a few articles and reviews)
Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*
K.N. Chaudhuri, *Asia Before Europe*
Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce,1450-1680* [2 vols.]

Oct. 15 Historical Demography

Core Readings:
#James Z. Lee and Wang Feng, *One Quarter of Humanity: Malthusian Myths and Chinese Realities*

Supplementary:
M.W. Flinn, *The European Demographic System*
Massimo Livi-Bacci, *Population and Nutrition*
Anne McCants, *Civic Charity in a Golden Age: Orphan Care in Early Modern Amsterdam*

Oct. 22. The New Cultural History[1]: Microhistory

Core Readings:
#Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre, p. 3-107*
Clifford Geertz, "Notes on the Balinese Cockfight", in Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, p. 412-453
#Philip Kuhn, Soulstealers

Supplementary:
Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Montaillou
Lynn Hunt, ed., The New Cultural History (esp. chapter by Alberta Bierstadt)
Carlo Ginzburg, The Cheese and the Worms
Jonathan Spence, The Death of Woman Wang

Oct. 29. Environmental History
[Taught by William Turkel]
Core Reading:
#John R. McNeill, Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World

Supplementary:
William Cronon, Changes in the Land
Alfred Crosby, Ecological Imperialism
Donald Worster, Rivers of Empire
Richard White, The Middle Ground
"A Round Table: Environmental History", Journal of American History, 1990/3

Nov. 5 The New Cultural History [2]: Post-modern and Post-structural Approaches to the Representation of Space

Core Reading:
&Timothy Mitchell, Colonising Egypt, p. 1-33, 161-179
&Stephen Kotkin, Magnetic Mountain, 106-197
#Thongchai Winichakul, Siam Mapped
Benedict Anderson: Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism, p.163-185
Supplementary:
Paul Rabinow, French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment

Nov. 12 New Military History, in Print and on Film

Core Readings:
#John Keegan, The Face of Battle
Ken Burns, The Civil War [Video]; or Henry V [Olivier and Branagh versions]

Supplementary:
Robert B. Toplin, ed. Ken Burns “The Civil War”: The Historians Respond
Nov. 19 Historical Memory and History Wars
Core Reading:
#Edward Linenthal, Tom Engelhardt, eds. History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past

Supplementary
Laura Hein, Mark Selden, Censoring History: Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States

Nov. 26 History and Fiction
#Amitav Ghosh, In an Antique Land

Dec. 3: Frontiers in History
& Vannevar Bush, Science: The Endless Frontier, p. 5-9

Dec. 10 Where are Historians Going? The Future of the History Profession
Look back at Charles Tilly's article, "How and What are Historians Doing", and compare it to the following:
#Appleby, Jacob, and Hunt, Telling the Truth About History

Supplementary:
"AHR Forum: The Old History and the New", articles by Theodore Hamerow, Gertrude Himmelfarb, Lawrence Levine, Joan Scott, John Toews; in American Historical Review, June 1989
Peter Novick, That Noble Dream (last chapter); Symposium on Peter Novick's book in American Historical Review: articles by Hexter, Megill, Hollinger, et.al.[PCP12]