History of Science
Seminar on Biography

HSCI 5970 -- Spring 2007
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Tuesdays, 626 PHSC, 6:30-9:20 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course serves as a continuing introduction for graduate students to the conventions and practices of the field of history of science. The focus of the seminar will be on biography and the history of science. Through focus on biography we will explore past and contemporary historiographic currents in the profession. The course will provide opportunities to further develop students’ skills in the areas of research, writing, and critical analysis. We will examine a wide range of sources, from early biographical accounts of scientists, to recent scholarship on scientific biography, to bibliographic tools and resources. We will also take this opportunity to read classic biographies of important scientists.

In addition to participation in weekly discussions, students are expected to complete a number of individual research tasks. These will include both oral and brief written reports. The substantive work for the seminar will be a research paper (~15 pages) on a scientist selected by the student. In selecting a topic, students should assume they are preparing for an upcoming scholarly conference on biography and the history of science. The paper should be informed by readings and discussion in the seminar and should show evidence of engagement with key theoretical and methodological issues raised. Students will report on their research progress throughout the semester through oral reports and brief written updates.

COURSE MATERIALS

1. Books:
   -- Students will also select one of the following to read:

2. Weekly Readings:
   -- These are indicated on the weekly schedule. Most are posted on D2L. Those that are not should be accessible through JSTOR/online. I will be providing more details on readings such as the book reviews as we progress in the semester.
   -- Students will also be asked to examine materials in the HSCI Collections and other library locations.

3. Background/Supplementary Materials:
   -- A shelf has been designated in Rm 626 for books and materials for this class. Most books currently housed there are reference and background materials related to biography. Some of these are cited in our required readings. These books may also give you ideas for research topics. Please leave a slip if you remove any books, as these are checked out in my name.
   -- Information on additional relevant materials, including bibliographical tools, reference sources, and professional resources will be posted on D2L.

Please get in the habit of checking periodically for updates under LINKS and CONTENT on D2L
COURSE FORMAT

The D2L course management system (http://learn.ou.edu) will be used for announcements, posting of required readings and supplementary materials.

Changes may be made to the schedule or readings as I learn more about your interests and experiences, and as I see how our work is progressing.

Additional instructions on specific assignments are forthcoming.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Discussion of readings will constitute the bulk of our work together. Every seminar participant is expected to keep up with the weekly readings and contribute regularly to discussion. I do expect that you will identify important issues and themes and bring your reflections to class. For some weeks, students may be assigned responsibility for focusing on a particular reading. While I am not expecting written reports on the readings, it is a wise strategy to do your best to take effective notes: 1) clearly, we will be discussing them, but also, 2) you will be expected to draw upon themes and issues in these readings in your research paper.

2. Students will complete a number of small research assignments aimed at increasing familiarity with sources and tools for biographical research and analysis. These will involve short oral and/or written reports.

3. A reflections paper (~4 pages) students will be required following our completion of the reading of the two main biographies. Here, you will be asked to reflect upon this classic work in the context of our discussions and with reference to your continuing research project.

4. A substantial research paper is the end goal of this course. Students will select a figure in the history of science in consultation with me at a point early in the semester. Throughout the semester, students will report on their progress through oral reports and written updates (proposal, abstract, bibliographies). At the end of the semester, we will critique the papers. We will also consider how you would choose to present the paper at a conference.

COURSE GRADING

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Tasks (Reports on Isis, Bio Sources, DNA Reviews)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflections Short Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>60%</td>
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COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 … Introduction: Life Stories and the History of Science ……………………
1/16

Assignment
-- Participate in class exercises and discussion of experiences as historians-of-science in-training.
  Complete survey/ Browse Reference Area and report on sources/Read article on papers
-- Selections
  Choose decade for Isis analysis/Select between Newton/Darwin

Week 2 … Trends and Issues in Biography I …………………………………………
1/23

Readings

Supplementary Readings (continue through week 3)
-- Excerpts from The Encyclopedia of Life Writing, including: Autobiography; Biography; Memoirs; Biography and History; Nature, the Environment, and Life Writing; Science and Life Writing; Scientific Autobiography

Assignment
-- Come to class prepared to discuss what you see as the key themes, issues, turning points related to the biographical approach to history of science.
-- Begin thinking about research paper topics
Week 3 … Trends and Issues in Biography II…………………………………………………
1/30

Readings
-- Söderqvist, Thomas. “Existential Projects and Existential Choice in Science: Biography as an
Edifying Genre,” in Telling Lives.
-- Carson, Cathryn, and Silvan S. Schweber. “Recent Biographical Studies in the Physical Sciences.” Isis
-- Söderqvist, Thomas. “Why are there so Few Scholarly Biographies in the History of Medicine and
Public Health?”

Assignment
-- Oral report on biographical trends in Isis by decade (Plus, handout w/highlights or main points)
-- Submit research topic/short bibliography

Week 4 … Collective Lives I …..........................................................
2/6

Readings
-- Yeo, Richard. “Alphabetical Lives: Scientific Biography in Historical Dictionaries and
Encyclopaedias.” In Telling Lives.
-- Shapin, Steven, and Arnold Thackray. “Prosopography as a Research Tool in History of Science: The
-- Pyenson, Lewis. “‘Who the Guys Were’; Prosopography in the History of Science.” History of Science
-- “Collective Lives.” In Encyclopedia of Life Writing.

Assignment
-- Oral report and bibliographic annotation of Biographical Source
-- Viewing of Collection Works

Week 5 … Collective Lives II …..........................................................
2/13

Readings
chapter 1, chapter 10
-- Reviews of Lankford

Assignment
-- Oral report and bibliographic annotation of Biographical Source
-- Research progress report (preliminary abstract, updated bibliography)

Week 6 … Case Studies I: Biography in Historical/Historiographical Perspective 2/20

Readings

Assignment
-- Viewing of materials in Collections

Week 7 … Case Studies II: Biography in Historical/Historiographical Perspective 2/27

Readings

Assignment
-- Research progress report
-- Viewing of materials in Collections
Week 8 … Case Studies III: Biography in Historical/Historiographical Perspective
3/6

Readings
-- Westfall, Richard S. “Newton and His Biographer.” In Introspection in Biography: The Biographer’s Quest for Self-Awareness, edited by Samuel H. Baron and Carl Pletsch, 175-189 (University of California, 1985)
-- Reviews of Newton Books
-- Reviews of Darwin Books
-- Continue Never at Rest OR Darwin

Assignment
-- Viewing of materials in Collections

Week 9 … Case Studies IV: Biography in Historical/Historiographical Perspective
3/13

Readings
-- Finish Never at Rest OR Darwin

Assignment
-- 4-page Reflections on Biography after experience reading of Newton and Darwin, as appropriate, in relation to your own research project

Week 10 ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~ SPRING BREAK ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~
Week 11 … Gender and Biography ………………………………………………
3/27

Readings
-- Pycior, Helena M. “‘Marie Curie’s ‘Anti-natural Path’” In Uneasy Careers and Intimate Lives.
-- Reviews of Evelyn Fox Keller’s A Feeling for the Organism.

Assignment
-- Oral report and bibliographic annotation of Biographical Source

Week 12 … On Recent Lives in Science………………………………………………
4/3

Readings
-- See links to additional examples on D2L

Assignment
-- Oral Report: A Review of the Reviews – Life Stories and the Discovery of DNA. Each student will examine reviews (at least five) of an autobiography/biography related one of the four key figures (Watson, Franklin, Crick, Wilkins). You may select different reviews of the same work, or look at comparative reviews of two different books. I’d like us to cover all four figures. Provide a bibliography to the class.

Week 13 … Research Consultations …………………………………………………
4/10

Assignment
-- Schedule individual consultation on research project
ALL STUDENTS ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND THE MIDWEST JUNTO FOR THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE
April 13-15th at Iowa State University

Week 14 … Student Presentations: Junto or Research Progress Reports …………..
4/17

Assignment
-- Report on Junto Trip or Research Paper Progress

Week 15 … Review of Drafts …………………………………………………………….
4/24

Readings
--Student research paper drafts

Assignment
-- Circulate Paper Drafts by Friday (4/19) of previous week and be ready to discuss, and present author with written response.

Week 16 … Telling History of Science Life Stories: How, Why, and For Whom? …
5/1

Readings
TBA

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE MAY 8