This course provides an introductory survey in the historical sociology path of the sociology major. Historians and historical sociologists attempt to reconstruct the past. In this endeavor, they use a variety of evidence that is left behind from previous times. They use and shape this evidence to make convincing arguments about how processes, events and practices unfolded over time. The processes and events they attempt to explain can be as varied as the construction of race and racism, the rise of capitalism, the French Revolution or social practices of medieval society. The course will focus on the reconstruction of the past, the manner in which history and sociology approach the past, the problems encountered with evidence and the different ways of reconstructing the past.

Course Requirements

Students are required to keep up with the readings and be prepared for class discussion. Class attendance and participation will count as 20% of the grade.

Students will be asked to prepare one short (10 double-spaced pages) book report and one final longer (20 double-spaced pages) paper to fulfill the requirements of this course. The reports will be written on one of the books discussed in class. The report will be due a week after the discussion of the book. The report should aim at a discussion of what the book is trying to explain, how the past is reconstructed in it and the success or failure to make a sociological argument. The report will count as 30% of the grade.

The topic of the longer paper will be decided in consultation with the instructor and the TA. We will devote three to four classes to discussion of paper topics. You will have to be prepared to present your paper topic and your concerns for 10-15 minutes. The paper will be due December 12. This final paper will count as 50% of the grade.
The following are possible frameworks for papers.

--Students can choose a particular historical period or event of interest and discuss the histories of the period, exploring the ways in which the narratives were constructed, and how these narratives could be related to the more theoretical concerns that sociology has. This kind of exercise works really well when there are contradictory narratives of particular events; when historians do not agree and the reader has to adjudicate between versions. How do we go about this task?

--Students can choose an historical account of a period or an event and identify the sociological variables, mechanisms and processes that are at work. They would then discuss the ways in which these mechanisms and processes are transportable to other contexts.

--Students can compare two different outcomes of the same type of historical process, in different societies, time periods or regions.

The following books will be available for purchase at the Labyrinth Bookstore: Julian Barnes, Flaubert's Parrot Philippe Aries, Centuries of Childhood Marion Kaplan, Between Dignity and Despair Anthony W. Marx, Making Race and Nation Carlo Ginzburg, The Cheese and the Worms

The books and articles will also be available at the Butler Reserve Room. Articles are part of a xerox package ready to borrow and copy.

Readings

Section I

Introduction & Recapturing the Past
September 4 & September 9

Recapturing the Past
September 11 & September 16
Julian Barnes, Flaubert's Parrot.
Section II

Reconstructing Causes and Conditions
September 18 & September 23 & September 25
Theda Skocpol, "Recurrent Strategies and Emerging Agendas in Historical Sociology," Chapter 11 of Vision and Method in Historical Sociology.

Reconstructing Causes and Conditions
September 30 & October 2
Anthony W. Marx, Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of the United States, South Africa and Brazil

Section III

Reconstructing Events
October 7 & October 9 & October 14


Section IV
October 16 & October 21
Reconstructing Practices
Philippe Aries, Centuries of Childhood

October 23 & October 28
Carlo Ginzburg, The Cheese and the Worms
Section V
Reconstructing Relations
October 30

November 6 and November 11
Selections from Guilain Denoeux, Urban Unrest in the Middle East

Section VI
Papers
November 13 & November 18
November 20 & November 25 & 27

These two weeks will be spent discussing paper topics. By this date you need to have decided on a topic, discussed it with me or the TA and prepared a preliminary 10-15 minute exposition of the material you would like to use. These presentations should be seen as a group effort to discuss and improve ongoing projects.

Section VII
Reconstructing Identities
December 2


Reconstructing Identities
December 4 and December 9
Marion Kaplan, Between Dignity and Despair.

Conclusions
December 11