

Northeastern University - Department of History

HST 3593 — Seminar in Global Social History

Fall 2000 - Wednesday 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

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This is a graduate research seminar in world history. It is intended to give students experience with the questions and methods of social history, and their exploration through the use of primary sources in topics of global scope. In addition to background reading, students will define and conduct research on two projects: (1) a collaborate project on the history of migration in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries, based on materials in the British parliamentary papers, and (2) an individual project on family history in global context, based on documentary sources selected by the student.

*Social History at the global level.*

Social history, a long-standing field of study, experienced substantial innovation and significant expansion from the 1960s through the 1980s. The field has included studies of family, community, class, race, gender, labor, leisure, popular culture, migration, and demography. In general it is the study of groups of people rather than individuals; it is more the study of social forces than of leadership. Studies of social history utilize theory drawn from the fields of sociology, anthropology, demography, political science, literary studies, and psychiatry.

But studies of social history have been restricted overwhelmingly to the local and national levels. Family, gender, and class are generally studied within communities or nations. Studies of slavery represent one exception, in that which cross-national comparisons of slave systems have been influential in the literature on each national unit.

World history is a rapidly growing field of historical research, expanding in the wake of the development of area studies, economic history, social history, and environmental history. World historians have achieved some signal successes in identifying processes and patterns cutting across national boundaries and spanning the oceans.

But the strongest work in world history has focused on political, economic, and environmental patterns. The world history literature includes few studies of family, community, class, gender, or popular culture. Migration studies address more than one nation at a time, yet still tend to be captured by the logic of a single place, as is reflected in the terms "immigration" and "emigration."

The interpretive purpose of this seminar is to pursue the development of transnational studies in social history. Without denying either the vitality or the autonomy of localized social processes, our purpose here is to locate and scrutinize the patterns and interactions of social processes over broad areas. The global redistribution and restructuring of populations through migration is one such topic; the maintenance and transformation of familial ties over long distances is a second.

### *Documentary research in global history*

The field of world history arose from roots in synthesis, teaching, and research. The synthetic efforts of Oswald Spengler, Arnold J. Toynbee, William H. McNeill, Leften Stavrianos, and Immanuel Wallerstein, among others, created a solid framework of interpretive generalizations that have led to fruitful discussion and advanced the conceptualization of world history. A much larger numbers of teachers, followed by textbook writers, have developed a range of detailed yet connected stories of world historical change that have gained a leading place in the curricula of most high schools and many colleges and universities. Only rarely, however, did these synthesizers and teachers of world history conduct detailed research to back up and test the interpretive statements.

Research in world history started late and slowly. It began with individuals working in isolation, each reinventing the methods for global study, but documenting many important points in the process. Philip Curtin became the most widely known creator of world history monographs with a set of comparative studies (focusing on demography and trade) which yielded global interpretations. Global historical research is now expanding rapidly, but its real character has yet to be established.

Northeastern's program of graduate training in world historical research has been in place since 1994, but it is only now that, in addition to emphasizing the conceptualization and the methodology of global studies, we are focusing on the experience of documentary research. We begin with perhaps the best collection of documents for global research on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the British Parliamentary Papers. Out of this experience it is hoped that our program will locate and expand its purview to other documentary collections appropriate for graduate study.

### *Collaborative Project — global history of migration*

- Groups of at least 3 students to research and interpret, in common, records of at least two streams of migration
- Compare streams of migration and their treatment in the documents
- (Work from official statistics, employer records.)
- Each group is to submit a full draft research report (but not a polished paper) by the end of the term

***Individual Project — global history of the family***

- Find records on a family spanning at least two distant regions.
- Trace local and overall patterns in the family.
- (Work from Business accounts, biographies, sacramental records, census, diaries.)
- Each individual student is to submit a detailed research design including illustrative data (but not necessarily a systematic set of research results) by the end of the term

***Reading*** (all on reserve):

R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas*

E. A. Wrigley & R. Schofield, *Population History of England*

Articles by Peter Laslett, Daniel Scott Smith, and others

Background reading in social history: monographs and journal articles

Background reading in global research design

***Library holdings of British Parliamentary Papers***

BPL — full set of parliamentary papers on microform

BU — Irish University Press selection of parliamentary papers

BC — Irish University Press selection

Tufts — Irish University Press selection (modest holdings)

Brandeis — Irish University Press selection (modest holdings)

Northeastern — select list of parliamentary papers, Percy Ford, ed.

Harvard — full set of parliamentary papers, hard cover and microform

## Class meetings

**Week 1. September 27, 2000. 206 Meserve**

Literature review, research design, and data sources.

**Week 2. October 4, 2000. Meet at Boston Public Library.**

The complete set of the British Parliamentary Papers.

Migration data in the British Parliamentary Papers.

**Week 3. October 11, 2000. Meet at Boston University Library**

The Irish University Press selections from the British Parliamentary Papers.

Research design: group project on migration history.

Reading: Cohen, *Global Diasporas*

**Week 4. October 18, 2000. (No class)**

Reading: Wrigley & Schofield, *Population History of England*  
Articles on migration history

**Week 5. October 25, 2000. Meet at 3:00 p.m. at the Mass Historical Society**  
Boston-area holdings of family history data.

Reading: articles on migration history

**Week 6. November 1, 2000. Meet in 206 Meserve**

Research design: individual project on family history.

Reading: articles on family history

**Week 7. November 8, 2000. Meet in 206 Meserve**

Discussion of research in progress.

**Week 8. November 15, 2000. Meet in 206 Meserve**

Discussion of research in progress.

**Week 9. November 22, 2000. Meet in 206 Meserve**

Discussion of research in progress.

**Week 10. November 29, 2000. Meet in 206 Meserve**

Submission of group project on migration history.

**Week 11. December 6, 2000. Meet at 44C Burroughs St., Jamaica Plain**

Submission of individual projects on family history.