

# HIST212: THINKING ABOUT THE DEAD

Philipp Gollner

Meeting: M,W 11am at WY319, F varies - see below; 3 Credit Hrs.

Office Hours: per appointment only this Fall - sorry!

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*Why do we remember the past? How do we talk about those that have died and can't talk back anymore? How do we judge their good and terrible choices that still affect us? This course travels the foreign country that is the past. It explores how wrestling with these big questions moves us beyond our degree, and connects us to meaningful careers and empathetic leadership by understanding ourselves and others better. It includes hands-on study about how, and what, our home culture chooses to remember today - and what it prefers to forget - including an exploration of the local history that surrounds us in Elkhart County. And it provides opportunities to become skillful in library and internet research, and to improve our writing and speaking skills.*

## The Goals:

1. Learning to value, and empathize with, those who live and think differently from us
2. Connect a concrete past - our family's, our countries - to our own context now
3. Experience what decentering ourselves can teach us
4. Increase our skills in critical thinking, elegant and concise writing, our reading quicker and more efficient, our perception of others' arguments sharper, and our own arguments more empathetic.

## REQUIRED TEXTS:

1. Fea, John. *Why Study History: Reflecting on the Importance of the Past*. Baker, 2013.
2. Sam Wineburg, *Why Learn History When It's Already on Your Phone*. Chicago University Press, 2020.
3. Shorter readings are either hyperlinked in the syllabus or, if not linked here, on Moodle

## ASSIGNMENTS:

### Participation: 20%

Active class **participation** via discussion, cooperation with other class members, and attentive engagement, as well as being on time for class. *A participation rubric is posted on Moodle*. Remember, this is worth *more* points than either paper or project - and it will be decisive for a grade. Absences or silence pile up quickly. Be on time.

### Notebook: 10%

You are expected to purchase an actual **notebook** of your choice which will then serve as your own throughout the class. Each day of reading of the semester should have at least one pages front and back, devoted to the reading and topic of each day, and should include two things: two quotations (indicated by the page and paragraph number) from that week's reading assignment as well as reflection on that week's topic. Not "I found this interesting" but "this was well argued *because...*" or "I disagree *because...*" And a question you would like others to answers. I will periodically check

these books when I feel like it, and they will be graded at the end of the semester. Think of these as reading responses, only better.

**Four Short Papers, 10% Each, 40% total** (Assignments turned in later on the day receive a 20% penalty. Assignments turned in the following day receive a 30% penalty, etc.)

**Paper 1: Why do Americans Fight so Much (Over Dead People)?** Working from the Sasse reading as a possible baseline, identify at least one primary source from the last 5 years and one from at least 20 years ago about America's cultural divide(s). Sources can be written (newspapers, letters), oral/audio (interviews? though you do have a family history paper coming up) or visual (movies, news clips). Whatever type of source they are, they should provide you with sufficient material to 1) assess how this nation's cultural divides changed over time 2) discover a little about what was its context then, and what is it now (a war? a particular political divide? religion? race?) 3) at least suggest causes for this divide that can reach back longer than your oldest primary source 4) highlight the choices that Americans made, and make, that influenced/s this culture's divides and 5) to grasp at least a little complexity behind these issues, i.e. no obvious villains and heroes in your stories please. 1200 words, notes in MLA or Chicago style.

### **Paper 2: Family History and Reflections**

1200 words again, if you cite, cite in MLA or Chicago style but census research should be documented with screenshots instead. To prepare, ask yourself: 1. what is one family story that you hear about but wonder if it is true; and 2. what (passed) person in your family would you like to know more about? The census research is one possible avenue here - they should supplement it by some interviews, however. After your research, use your 1200 words to reflect on the following: Students are asked to pick one or two individuals from their families and

1. interweave their personal stories with an event or force operating at the "national" level. Thus we might hear how the G.I. Bill created upward mobility by allowing a veteran to attend college; how pacifists avoided armed service; how their ethnicity influenced their mobility; how U.S. law or policy presented hurdles for prospective immigrants; how family members moved from one place to another because of economic change or a federal program; how passage of suffrage legislation permitted a great grandmother to vote for the first time; how a social movement such as women's or civil rights created opportunities (or challenges) that had not been present before; or how U.S. foreign policy led to ancestors experiencing war or dislocation. There are many, many possibilities.
2. interweave these stories of their family past with who they are, or want to be, in the world today. Do these stories inspire? Do they induce trauma? Are they stories to be emulated, or overcome?

### **Paper 3: Wineburg and Fea Response**

Don't jump to writing your paper! First, prepare:

- Re-read your notes from the Fea and Wineburg readings
- Make sure you understand the distinction in Fea's chapter 1 between "the past" and "history," his ideas about a "usable past" and the past as a "foreign country" (cpts. 2 and 3), and Wineburg's various critiques of how history is taught.
- Draft an answer to the question "What does it mean to study history?" that is no more than 30 words long. You can describe what it means to you, or what it should mean for others - there is no right answer here. Obviously, 30 words will force you to focus on certain aspects of history, not others. That is ok. Include that definition at the top of your paper, in bold or cursive.

Now you can start writing your 1000-1200 paper, which should explain and elaborate on your 30-word answer. I will be grading the paper based on how well (with quotes and references) you integrate class themes as well as the readings from Fea and Wineburg - but also watch your prose. Make sure that the paper has a structure, that paragraphs are connected to each other and not a stream of consciousness only. Beware of mere summaries of the books! I have read them myself - focus on your explanation for why you answered the question “what does it mean to study history” the way you did. Feel free to also make an arguments against uses of history that you don’t think are helpful. Citations and notes in MLA or Chicago.

#### **Paper 4: What is an Authentic Life at GC?**

1200 words again - this is intended as an extension of the last question I gave you for project 3: “For better or for worse, you have inherited this place as these students, professors and alumni before you left it. What has surprised you about the history of this place, and how its different people wrestled over what kind of place it should become?” More specifically, connect at least one aspect of your group’s work (a person, an ongoing argument, a joy, a fear, a thread of campus culture) to a bit of historical prophesy: Based on the research you did, what kind of place will Goshen College likely be in 20 years, in your opinion? How does your life now fit, or not fit, with this trajectory - i.e., when do you feel like an authentic part of GC’s journey? And when not?

**Three Group Projects, 10% Points Each, 30% total. Criteria/guidelines for group work on Moodle (top of the page) Working with three other students, you’ll prepare 15-minute oral, multi-media presentation to be delivered in class. Groups will be shuffled, you will be graded individually, guidelines are on Moodle.**

**Project 1:** You have 4 options to pick from, each a “usable past” from ch. 2 in *Why Study History?*

- How do Americans “use the past... as a source of inspiration”? (pp. 30-33)
- How do Americans use the past as “an escape from the pressures and anxieties of modern life”? (pp. 33-35)
- “The past reminds us who we are”: (pp. 39-42): How do Americans use the past to promote “a particular understanding of... national identity”? Or how do Christians and other religious Americans use the past to promote “a particular understanding of... religion”?
- How do Americans use the past to promote social reform or political change? (pp. 43-45)

You’ll then spend at least 2 meetings together looking for examples of your chosen “usable past,” looking to popular culture (movies, TV, music, video games, advertising), public history (museums, monuments, memorials), social media and blogging, politics, hobbies... any “past-related activities” that go beyond the academic discipline of history. I’ll leave it to each group to determine how best to conduct this research, but I’ll expect you to get started by meeting as a group in Week 3.

**Project 2:** Shadows at Dawn: An Apache Massacre and the Violence of History. All details and assignments are [HERE](#)

**Project 3:** Keeping Goshen College Weird - see the folders on Moodle for primary source documents to answer these questions in your group presentation:

- on the surface, what is at stake in these conflicts?
- what really is at stake in these conflicts?

- how do college life and one's identity connect in these instances?
- do they relate to today?

Your presentation will support your answers to each of these questions with the primary sources you interrogated here. They will end with at least one discussion question for the rest of the class to reply to.

**CLASS PROCEDURE:** This class emphasizes reading, listening, speaking and writing. I expect you to read the assignment before class and to come prepared to ask questions. We will spend all of our time discussing the assigned readings for the day. Finally, we will view a few multimedia selections. I will communicate with individual students and the full class by email too, so please do check email regularly. If I need to communicate with you, I will email the class and/or post a message to Moodle. Check both regularly. If you need help before an assignment, please contact me – and plan ahead. I am good with e-mail, and bad with phone.

**GET HELP EARLY:** easy sign ups for any help with reading or writing in this class is available [HERE](#). Use it early.

#### HOW TO TAKE THIS COURSE:

##### WADING:

- *You need the basic outlines of America's past because... well, you do; the highlights, the main characters and ideas, the basic context.*
- *Waders are mostly concerned with WHAT happened and what was said, and don't care much about the tensions, paradoxes, and deeper arguments involved.*
- *There is nothing necessarily wrong with staying in the shallows; this approach may work for you if all you want is a certain grade.*

##### SNORKELING:

- *You have a grasp of the basics and are interested in more questions and exploring what's below the surface.*
- *Snorkelers challenge basic assumptions, are not satisfied with basic answers, and seek to understand the HOW of the discussion.*
- *Perhaps you have taken a few history classes, and are ready to step up and answer nagging questions.*

##### SCUBA DIVING:

- *You want to go deeper into the topic, and employ the cognitive equipment and tools of critical thinking that set apart a leader from someone eyeing a career.*
- *"Divers" don't take any of the course's structure and content for granted. They see, and fill in the course's gaps. They are concerned with WHY the discussion MATTERS.*
- *You are aware of issues, tensions, and controversies, and actively seek new ideas, sources, and interpretations*

**Attendance Policy:** you have 2 unexcused absences free. There is no need to e-mail me about them or about how you are feeling on that day. Save these absences for sudden illnesses or non-life threatening emergencies. Every missed attendance beyond those 2 must be either excused (by another professor, a doctor or medical professional, the police or your religious authority... an e-mail note from you does not count) or will result in 2% of your *overall course grade* (not just your participation grade) deducted. Unless the Academic Success Center says differently, I will never allow "attendance" via Zoom.

**Technology Policy:** We will be very intentional and focused in how we utilize technology during class sessions.

1. Smartphones are to be turned off and kept out of sight (put away inside your purse, backpack, etc.) whenever you are in the classroom. That includes the time before the class session begins.
2. Laptops/tablets are to be switched off and put away (or in sleep mode, with laptop screens closed) unless you have been instructed to utilize them for a specific activity.
3. Unauthorized use of electronic devices in class will negatively impact your participation grade for the course
4. To take notes, come prepared with paper and pen/pencil and your notebook (see above). Having more than one color of ink is helpful. Research has shown that handwritten note-taking is more effective for both comprehension and recollection of material as compared to taking notes on an electronic device. If you don't like reviewing handwritten notes for an exam, type them up after class and store them on your device for later review. Rewriting and revising your notes your understanding of the concepts and your ability to recall the material.

### **Accessibility Accommodations**

Goshen College is committed to providing all students equitable access to programs and facilities. Students who need accommodations based on disability should contact the Academic Success Center (ASC). Students must register with the ASC before faculty are required to provide reasonable accommodations. For more information or to register, please contact the Director of Academic Success, Michelle Blank, Good Library 112, [mblank@goshen.edu](mailto:mblank@goshen.edu) or 574-535-7526. To ensure that learning needs are met, contact the ASC the first week of classes. More information at: <https://www.goshen.edu/campuslife/asc/disability-services/>.

### **Academic Integrity** (*May adapt wording to fit academic dishonesty circumstances in your course*)

Academic dishonesty is any act that misrepresents your academic work or interferes with the academic work of others. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, the following: cheating on assignments or exams, falsification of data, submission of the same or similar paper without professor consent, depriving others of academic sources, or sabotaging the work of another. Academic dishonesty also includes submitting someone else's assignment as your own or helping someone else commit academic dishonesty.

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's ideas or words (sentences, clauses, or distinct phrases) without quotation or citation. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask. Assignments in this course will be submitted to **Turnitin**, which detects borrowed material and generates a "similarity report" for assessment of assignment originality.

The use of artificial intelligence (such as ChatGPT) to complete assignments is also considered plagiarism when it misrepresents work as a student's own words and ideas. In some cases, professors may allow or even require the use of AI for instructional purposes. Such exceptions apply only when a professor has given explicit permission to use these tools.

Cases of plagiarism and cheating are reported to the Associate Academic Dean, who oversees the [Academic Integrity and Grievance policy](#). Penalties for academic dishonesty are listed in the college catalog and range from redoing the assignment to dismissal from the college.

**Inclusive Classroom:** I commit to maintaining a learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. In this class, we will not discriminate on the basis of national or ethnic origin, religion, race, color, sex, disability, body size, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status or political views. Any suggestions as to how to further such an environment will be appreciated and given serious consideration in accordance with the policy of Goshen College. If you have any concern about class material in this regard, please see me.

**Contacting Each Other:** I want to make sure that I do everything possible to help you learn. If you cannot make office hours, please contact me so we can set up another time to meet. You can reach me by email (*much* preferred to phone), but please give me 24 hours to respond to you during the work week. I will communicate with individual students and the full class by email (via Moodle) too, so please do check email regularly. And if you need help before an assignment, please plan ahead.

**Religious Holidays:** Please notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, an assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holiday, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

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## BASICS IDEAS

### WEEK 1:

**M, 8/28:** Intro to the Course, Each Other ... *What is the course about? What are the requirements? How are we going to learn together?*

**W, 8/30:**

**Reading:** Ben Sasse *Them: Why We Hate Each Other, And How to Heal*, pp 1-45 (PDF on Moodle);

**F, 9/1 - in class:**

**Reading:** Sasse, ctd.

## BASIC TERMS

### WEEK 2:

**M, 9/4:**

**Honor workers.** Labor Day is a creation of the labor movement and is dedicated to the social and economic achievements of workers, many of whom never saw a college classroom from the inside. Honor them on this day, and consider our privilege, small as it may seem. Labor has a particularly rich history in Northern Indiana, where the day was celebrated even before it became a national holiday - for a quick history of that day, see Karen Zraick's brief piece "What is Labor Day?" (PDF on Moodle)

**W, 9/6:**

**Reading:** Michael Conway, The Problem With History Classes (PDF)

**F, 9/8 - in class:**

Source workshop on Paper 1 **Reading:** Steven Pearlstein, "[Meet the Parents who Wont Let their Kids Study Literature](#)"

## WHY BOTHER ABOUT THE DEAD?

### 1. TO USE THE PAST

#### WEEK 3:

M, 9/11:

**Reading:** Fea cpt. 2. Getting started on Group Project 1

W, 9/13:

**Due:** Paper 1, at classtime. **Reading:** Wineburg cpt. 3

F, 9/15: - in groups:

Groupwork for Project 1

#### WEEK 4:

M, 9/18:

**Reading:** [Linford Fischer, "Your Hitler Analogy is Wrong, and Other Complaints from a History Professor"](#)

W, 9/20:

Group Project 1 due (hand in the filled out doc with group member feedback forms), presentations.

F, 9/22 - in class:

Presentations, ctd.

### 2: TO ENGAGE DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

#### WEEK 5:

M, 9/25:

Service Day, no class

W, 9/27:

**Reading:** Fea cpt. 3

F, 9/29:

**Reading:** [Hanna Rosin, “The End of Empathy”](#), preparation for Paper 2 and Group Project 2, see [this timeline for the project](#)

**WEEK 6:**

**M, 10/2:**

**In class:** Joe Springer, Mennonite Historical Library, on Family History;

**W, 10/4:**

**Read:** The excerpt assigned to your group from Karl Jacoby, *Shadows at Dawn: An Apache Massacre and the Violence of American History*. In class: workshop re. Group 2

**F, 10/6:**

**Paper 2 due.** Meet in groups for project 2 to discuss the sources assigned to your group on the *Shadows at Dawn* Website under [The Documents](#); organize your group’s presentation.

**WEEK 7:**

**M, 10/9: Read:** “Justice” (only 11 pages, PDF on Moodle) Source workshop for presentations in class.

**W, 10/11: Presentations and Arguments for Group Project 2**

**F, 10/13: Fall Break**

**WEEK 8:**

**M, 10/16: Fall Break**

**W, 10/18: Read:** the “Memory” portion of your group, all as PDFs on Moodle under Week 8. In groups: responses to other Groups’ presentations, recorded as a video, are due to be uploaded to Moodle during classtime. See the [guidelines](#) for this project again, for questions to respond to and time limit. Upload to Moodle.

**F, 10/20:** Watching response videos, discussing

**TO BECOME GOOD NEIGHBORS**

**WEEK 9:**

**M, 10/23:**

**Reading:** Fea cpt. 6



W, 10/25:

**Reading:** Wineburg cpt. 7

F, 10/27:

**Asynchronous Online:** forum reflections on Fea and Wineburg, due 5pm

WEEK 10:

M, 10/30:

**In class:** “Lisa the Iconoclast,” *The Simpsons* Season 7 Ep. 16

W, 11/1:

**Reading:** Wineburg cpt 8.

F, 11/3:

**Asynchronous Online:Workshop for Paper 3**, study of samples and forum response, due 5pm

WEEK 11:

M, 11/6:

**Reading:** on Goshen as a Sundown Town: 1. [rougaloo.edu](http://rougaloo.edu) In class: **Case Study: Goshen as a Sundown Town**

W, 11/8:

**Read:** on Confederate memorialization in Indiana: 1. Paul Mullins, “[Race, Reconciliation and Southern Memorialization in Garfield Park](#)” 2. “[Public Divided on Decision to Remove Confederate Memorial](#)”

F, 11/10:

**Not meeting in person. Paper 3 due at classtime;** Respond to reflection questions from Wednesday’s reading **online (forum), due 5pm**

## TO LIVE HAPPILY IN COLLEGE AND EVER AFTER

WEEK 12:

M, 11/13:

**Reading:** Intro from John Roth, a Mennonite College for Everyone

W, 11/15:

**No reading - pooling our knowledge on GC’s history, beginning to explore primary sources in class.**

F, 11/17:

**Work in groups on primary sources on Goshen College**

**WEEK 13:**

**M, 11/20: Read:** Epilogue from John Roth, a Mennonite College for Everyone

**W, 11/22: Thanksgiving Break**

**F, 11/24: Thanksgiving Break**

**WEEK 14:**

**T, 11/27: Group Project 3 Due, in class presentations;**

**R, 11/29: Group Project 3 Due, in class presentations;**

**F, 12/1: Meeting in person, debrief**

**WEEK 15:**

**M, 12/4: Paper 4 due; Party.**