

HIST 230-302:
The History of Truth
(draft, subject to change)

Prof. Sophia Rosenfeld

Spring 2019

Class meetings: Wed., 2-5

Professor's office hours:

Professor's office address and email: CH 307 and srosenf@upenn.edu

Truth has become a controversial topic lately. This course will take a historical look at truth and its opposites, including lies and false beliefs, in the history of the West from the Renaissance to the present. We will consider changing conceptions of evidence and knowledge in law, religion, science, the arts, and politics and the media. We will also consider the historian's responsibility to truth, in the past and today.

Part of the course will focus on the discussion of readings in common, including both primary sources and secondary sources that introduce students to interpretative problems in this field. Part will be devoted to the construction of an extensive research paper in which students grapple with a problem of their choice related to the history of truth claims or lies. Class time will also be devoted to discreet steps involved in this process, including framing a question, building a bibliography, analyzing various kinds of evidence or sources, constructing an effective outline, and writing an argument-driven and well substantiated seminar paper.

Course requirements: 1) Class participation (40% of final grade), which will entail submitting a thoughtful question for discussion in the evening prior to each class meeting and then coming to class every week prepared to engage in a vigorous discussion of the assigned reading, and 2) Writing of an approx. 20 page research paper (60% of final grade), including handing in on assigned dates: a paper proposal, a preliminary bibliography of primary and secondary sources, an outline, and a final paper, as well as a brief (10 min.) class presentation in the last weeks of the semester centered on a key piece of evidence and the argument you are building around it.

Course readings: Readings marked (X) designate books that can be found on reserve in Van Pelt Library and are also available for purchase through amazon.com. All other readings are available either as electronic reserves on Canvas--marked (C) in each case--or as links embedded in this syllabus.

Schedule: Class Meetings, Assignments, and Readings

Wed., January 23: **Introduction to the Course**

*discussion of course subject matter and of the steps involved in constructing a research paper

*handouts

*Law*Wed., January 30: **Truth in the Courtroom and the Historian as Judge**

*Natalie Zemon Davis, The Return of Martin Guerre (1983)

*Carlo Ginzburg, “Checking the Evidence: The Judge and the Historian”

Wed., February 6: **Truths, Lies, and Heresies in the Era of the Inquisition**

*Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica (1485), in Edward Peters, ed., Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe, 182-83

*Dallas Denery, The Devil Wins: A History of Lying from the Garden of Eden to the Enlightenment (2015), excerpts

*Lisa Silverman, Tortured Subjects: Pain, Truth and the Body in Early Modern France (2001), excerpts

Wed., February 13: **The Rise of the Fact**

*primary sources in Van Pelt library

*Lorraine Daston, “Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe”

*Barbara Shapiro, A Culture of Fact: England, 1550-1720 (2003)

Wed., February 20: **Truth Detection in the 20th Century**

*Jennifer Mnookin, “The Image of Truth: Photographic Evidence and the Power of Analogy”

*Ken Alder, The Lie Detectors: The History of an American Obsession (2007)

[or Geoffrey Bunn, The Truth Machine: A Social History of the Lie Detector (2012)]

***library resources meeting during class** (come ready with a broad idea of a research direction)

*Science (and Religion)*Wed., February 27: **The New Science and New Kinds of Truth Tellers**

*Peter Dear, “Mysteries of Nature. Authority, Knowledge and Expertise in the Seventeenth Century” in States of Knowledge: The Co-Production of Science and the Social Order, ed. S. Jasanoff, (2004), 206–224

*Steven Shapin, The Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in 17th-Century England (1995), excerpts

***two-paragraph paper proposals due in class**

SPRING BREAK

Wed., March 13: **Inventing Objectivity, Inventing Probability**

*primary sources in Van Pelt library

*John Hedley Brooke, Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives (1991)

*Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, Objectivity (2008), one chapter on the 19th c.

*Ian Hacking, The Taming of Chance (1990) or Theodore Porter, The Rise of Statistical Thinking, 1820-1900 (1986)

Politics and Media

Wed., March 20: **Free Speech as the Way to Truth**

*John Milton, Areopagitica (1644) at

http://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/areopagitica/index.shtml

*Perez Zagorin, How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West (2003) chapt. 1

* Frederick Schauer, Free Speech: A Philosophical Enquiry (1982), 15-72, 209-14

Wed., March 27: **Democracy and Truth-Telling**

*Rosenfeld, Democracy and Truth: A Short History (2018)

*David Runciman, Political Hypocrisy, 2nd ed (2028), excerpt

***preliminary bibliography, including primary and secondary source lists, due in class**

Wed., April 3: **Propaganda**

*primary sources in library

*Jason Stanley, How Propaganda Works (2015), ch. 1

*David Welch, The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda (1993)

***paper outline due in class, incl. statement of the paper's question and argument**

Wed., April 10: **History as Truth?**

*Greg Grandin and Thomas Klubock, eds., "Truth Commission: State Terror, History, and Memory," special issue of Radical History Review (winter 2007)

*Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, Telling the Truth About History (1995)

Your Research

Wed., April 17: **Brief presentations of a key source and accompanying project**

Wed., April 24: **Brief presentations of a key source and accompanying project**

Wed., May 1: **Brief presentations of a key source and accompanying project**

The final paper will be due on Fri., May 3, and must be submitted by 5 pm that day, both in hard copy and electronically, in order to be on time. Late papers will lose a full grade each day that they are late.

Note on Academic Integrity: Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the University of Pennsylvania's Code of Academic Integrity, which presents standards regarding plagiarism, multiple submissions (i.e., using a paper or portions a paper to fulfill requirements in more than one course), and other actions. If not familiar with the Code, students should become familiar with and follow the standards set forth at http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/ai_codeofacademicintegrity.html