In 1988 historian Peter Novick published one of the most important books in American History. In *That Noble Dream: “The Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession*, Novick challenged the so-called “Rankean” historical tradition, which was made popular during the 19th century and still resonates with many scholars today. He did so by questioning the ability of historians to be objective in their historical writing. In the process he provided one of the best discussions of some of the historiographical and methodological debates in American history to date.

Relying on Novick’s framework for analysis this course is designed to introduce you to the major historiographical and methodological trends in American history. By examining some of the important topics of the last century—including The Civil War, World War One, Progressivism, World War Two, The Holocaust, The Cold War and The Vietnam War—the course looks at whether American historians have been successful in their quest for “objectivity”.

“Historiography” can best be understood as a study of historical interpretation. It highlights the changes in methods, interpretations and conclusions that historians have made over time. In short it is a history of history. Those interested in questions of historiography have generally assumed that there is no one single “history”. Instead many scholars, including myself, believe that historical stories must be understood as a series of incomplete and contradictory narratives that are “ideological” in nature and sometimes tell us more about ourselves than the event or period under examination. This is of course a controversial argument but it is one in which every history student should be familiar with.

The term “methodology” applies to the methods, framework, or lens through which one examines the past. Historical methods can include marxism, gender, class, geo-politics, and etcetera. Hence methods like one’s historiographical position are also ideological.

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1 For Novick the term ideology implies “an overarching and at-least-tacitly coherent outlook on the world. Ultimately, to be sure, every ideology implies—or is based upon—an ontology, an epistemology, and aesthetic, and so on.” Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: “The Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.p. 59-60. If you do not know that the terms “ontology,” “epistemology” or “aesthetic” mean you should either look them up, by the second week of the course, or drop the class.
Required Textbook

There are three required textbooks for this course. They are Peter Novick That Noble Dream: “The Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession; John Lewis Gaddis, The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past, Oxford University Press, 2004; and Bruce Cummings, Dominion From Sea to Sea: Pacific Ascendancy and American Power, Yale University Press, 2009.

Copies of these books are available at the bookstore or they can be purchased as E-books. You will also be required to a set list of articles for your essay. The articles are outlined below.

Class Requirements

Assignments 10% X 5 = 50%

For the class you are required to complete five assignments. There are six opportunities to write assignments. You can decide which of the five assignments you want to do. Each assignment must be one page, single-spaced, with a twelve point font such as times new roman or an equivalent. The one page must include your analysis, your footnotes, your name and your student number. Not title page is necessary. Assignments over one page will be returned to students with a grade of F. All assignments are due by 2:00 pm on their assigned day. Assignments must be E-mailed to Dr. Corke at scorke@dal.ca. Assignments will be considered late if they arrive after 2:01 pm. You will lose one mark for each day your assignment is late. There will be no opportunities to make up assignments. All assignments must be well-written and proof read for spelling and grammatical mistakes. Should you wish to complete six assignments instead of five, I will take your five highest grades. Please note that although the assignments are only one page they do take some time to complete. Please make sure you schedule your time accordingly.

Essay 30%

In 1994 I attended a conference put on by the Society of Historians of American Foreign Relations. One of the key events of the conference was a panel discussion between two senior historians in the field, John Lewis Gaddis and Bruce Cumings. The hostility between the two men was palatable: You could literally cut the tension in the room with the knife. Their disagreement was rooted in a number of factors but at its core was the debate over how history should be written in the postmodern age. In this class you are to examine this debate and complete an eight to ten page essay that explains how these two historians have approached the question of objectivity in their most recent work. In order to do this, you must complete the set of readings I have outlined below. You are, of course, encouraged to go beyond these readings. The essay is due by midnight on Monday, March 30, 2015. Without appropriate medical documentation you will lose 5 marks for every day your essay is late. Each essay must be well written and proof-read for spelling or grammatical mistakes.

Participation 20%

You are required to attend and actively participate in the seminar discussions. Students who come to each class and who do not do the readings on a regular basis will not receive a grade higher than a C- for participation. Those who do the readings but fail to participate will not receive a grade higher than a B- for this component of the course.
**Class Schedule**

**Week One: Monday, January 5, 2015**
Course Introduction

**Week Two: Monday, January 12, 2015**
(S) The European Legacy
- Required Reading
+ Peter Novick, That Noble Dream, p.p. 1-47

**Week Three: Monday, January 19, 2015**
(S) Becoming “historians”
Assignment #1: In what way have book reviews changed since the turn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century? In order to complete this assignment you must look at five book reviews on John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2004.
- Required Reading
+ Peter Novick, That Noble Dream, p.p. 47-110

**Week Four: Monday, January 26, 2015**
(S) “The New Historians”
Assignment #2: Identify and discuss the significance of the “New Historians”.
+ Peter Novick, That Noble Dream, p.p. 111-168

**Week Five: Monday, February 2, 2015**
(S) “Professionalism Stalled” and “Divergence and Dissent”
Assignment #3: Why does Novick argue the “professionalism” of history stalled?
- Required Reading
+ Peter Novick, That Noble Dream, p.p. 168-249

**Week Six: Monday, February 9, 2015**
(S) “The Battle Joined” and “Objectivity Reconstructed”
Assignment #4: Identify and explain the methodological differences between Charles Beard and Carl Becker.
- Required Reading
+ Peter Novick, That Noble Dream, p.p. 250-319

**Week Seven: Monday, February 16, 2015**
(*) February Break No classes
(**) It is strongly recommended that you complete the readings for weeks eleven through thirteen during this week.

**Week Nine: Monday, February 23, 2015**
(S) “Objectivity Reconstructed” continued
Assignment #5: Why did the relativist critique disappear in the 1940s and 1950s?
- Required Reading
+ Peter Novick, That Noble Dream, p.p. 320-414
**Week Ten: Monday, March 2, 2015**
(S) “Objectivity in Crisis”
Assignment #6: What role did the “New Left” play in the dissolution of the cold war liberal consensus?
- Required Reading -
+ Peter Novick, That Noble Dream, p.p. 415-469

**Week Eleven: Monday, March 9, 2015**
(S) “Every Group His Own Historian”
Class Discussion: Gaddis versus Cumings
- Required Reading –
+ Peter Novick, That Noble Dream, 469-521

**Week Twelve: Monday, March 16, 2015**
(S) “The Center Does not Hold”
Class Discussion: Gaddis
- Required Reading -
+ Peter Novick, That Noble Dream, p.p. 522-572

**Week Thirteen: Monday, March 23, 2015**
(S) “There was no king in Israel”
Class Discussion: Cumings
- Required Reading -
+ Peter Novick, That Noble Dream, p.p. 573-630
+ Bruce Cummings, Dominion From Sea to Sea: Pacific Ascendancy and American Power, Yale University Press, 2009. (E-book)

**Week Fourteen: Monday, March 30, 2015**
* Essays Due
* Storm Day: Should classes be canceled for any reason we will simply move the course schedule up one week.
I expect you to have a clear thesis in your paper. This should not be difficult. The objective of the essay is to explain to the reader how Gaddis and Cumings dealt with the historiographical and methodological challenges that have arisen over the last twenty years. Your thesis should specifically address how their understanding of “objectivity” has influenced the way in which they constructed their histories. The answer you arrive at, or your thesis, is the central point to which all other information relates. Your thesis informs the reader of the conclusions you have reached. It is always an arguable or debatable point. It is never a general statement of fact. Your thesis must be more than a description of the topic. Rather it should present your interpretation of the sources you have examined. In order to do this successfully you must identify the major theoretical debates that have influenced both Gaddis and Cumings.

Once you have decided on a thesis, and related it to a central historiographical and/or methodological theme, the paper itself should then concentrate on “proving” the thesis. Keep in mind that whichever trend you identify, your argument must be articulated clearly in the introduction, developed coherently throughout the paper and summed up in the conclusion. Make sure that you stick to your thesis throughout the paper. Try not to get off track. As you are writing the paper, continually ask yourself; “How does this relate to my thesis?” If it does not directly relate to your argument, cut it out. Avoid introducing new ideas or new arguments at the end of the paper. Throughout the paper, provide the reader with clues that remind s/he what your main argument is. In short explain to the reader why this or that point is important and why it helps prove your central argument. Try to avoid using repetitive language. Take time to do more than one draft and have someone read it over before you submit the final product. Others will often see some of the simple mistakes that you as the writer will have missed. Last but not least, take some time to think about your thesis. Write an initial draft and then set it aside for a few days, go back to it when you have had some time to reflect on your arguments. In no uncertain terms this thinking stage is the most important part of writing an historical paper or essay. It is the difference between an A paper and a B+/A- paper.

Each paper must have footnotes or endnotes (bracketed social science footnotes are not acceptable in historical papers) and a bibliography. All footnotes and bibliographic citations must conform to the History Department's Style Guide. Students will receive a copy on the first day of classes but it is also located at the history department or on line at: http://history.dal.ca/Student%20Resources/Style_Guide.php

Do not include sources in your bibliography that you do not use in your paper. In your footnotes you must cite both direct quotations (and/or preferably paraphrases of direct quotations) and all ideas that you take from a primary or secondary source. The average undergraduate paper has at least three footnotes per page. When in doubt: footnote. Avoid using sources for multiple notes in a row. This suggests that you have not thought about your topic and that you simply copied someone else’s ideas.

Your goal in the paper should be to collect as much information, from as many different sources as possible, and then construct an argument using primary and secondary sources as evidence to support your case. Students who do not include footnotes or endnotes in their papers will not be graded. I also expect all students to use two explanatory footnotes in their papers. Explanatory footnotes allow an author to elaborate on a certain point or idea presented in the paper, without
getting off track. Students who do not use explanatory footnotes will have their mark dropped by one-third of a letter grade i.e. from a B+ to a B.

Required Reading for Essay

Articles: Please read the articles in chronological, rather than alphabetical, order.


Books

Bruce Cummings, Dominion From Sea to Sea: Pacific Ascendancy and American Power, Yale University Press, 2009. (E-book)

You are also encouraged to read beyond the sources above. Book reviews are strongly recommended.

Accommodation Statement:

Students may request accommodation as a result of barriers related to disability, religious obligation, or any characteristic under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. Students who require academic accommodation for either classroom participation or the writing of tests and exams should make their request to the Advising and Access Services Center (AASC) prior to or at the outset of the regular academic year. Please visit www.dal.ca/access for more information and to obtain the Request for Accommodation – Form A.

A note taker may be required as part of a student’s accommodation. There is an honorarium of $75/course/term (with some exceptions). If you are interested, please contact AASC at 494-2836 for more information.

Please note that your classroom may contain specialized accessible furniture and equipment. It is important that these items remain in the classroom, untouched, so that students who require their usage will be able to participate in the class.
Academic Integrity Statement:

All students in this class are to read and understand the policies on academic integrity and plagiarism referenced in the Policies and Student Resources sections of the academicintegrity.dal.ca website. Ignorance of such policies is no excuse for violations.

Any paper submitted by a student at Dalhousie University may be checked for originality to confirm that the student has not plagiarized from other sources. Plagiarism is considered a serious academic offence which may lead to loss of credit, suspension or expulsion from the University, or even to the revocation of a degree. It is essential that there be correct attribution of authorities from which facts and opinions have been derived. At Dalhousie there are University Regulations which deal with plagiarism and, prior to submitting any paper in a course, students should read the Policy on Intellectual Honesty contained in the Calendar or on the Online Dalhousie website. The Senate has affirmed the right of any instructor to require that student papers be submitted in both written and computer-readable format, and to submit any paper to be checked electronically for originality. As a student in this class, you are to keep an electronic copy of any paper you submit, and the course instructor may require you to submit that electronic copy on demand.

Class Drop Dates: February 3, 2015 is the last date by which a student may drop a fall-term class without a W appearing on your transcript. March 13, 2015 is the last day to drop a class with a “W”