Norwegian National Graduate School in History: Program for the Theory and Methods
Course spring term 2018

The course web page:  
https://www.hf.uio.no/iakh/forskning/aktuelt/arrangementer/phd/2018/iakh-graduateschool-introcouse.html

The aim of the course in theory and method for doctoral candidates in history is to facilitate thorough discussions on a broad range of theoretical and methodological problems, including scientific theory and ethical issues. It is tailored to first-year candidates, but open to anyone on a PhD-track in history or PhD students using historical methods and approaches.

Each module will address one or a few foundational problems in the discipline of history related to theory (ideas/principles to explain a practice or account for a situation) and method (planned procedure to pursue knowledge). It shall highlight connections between such problems and introduce current debates in international historiography in relation to them.

On the modules

The course will have three kinds of modules. The lectures will last for 45 minutes and will have a longer talk by the teacher with some student involvement.

The seminars will last for 2x45 minutes. They will be opened by an introduction by the teacher, before the group enters into discussions on a select number of questions. The seminars may use printed or material sources, digital databases etc. Literature of the core reading list will form a basis for discussion, and everyone needs to be well acquainted with it.

The essay modules will last for 45 minutes and will focus on one manuscript. Everyone will be expected make suggestions for how to further develop the arguments, reasoning and textual basis of the essays. A student will chair the discussion and one teacher and one student will serve as main commentators. The main commentators will provide both oral and written comments. The essay will be made available no later than 2 June.

On the syllabus

All lecture and seminar modules will have readings that are part of the core syllabus of the course, approximately 50 pages for each module. They will also have additional texts as recommended supplementary readings. The syllabus for each module will be published as soon as it is ready.
# Program

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In order of appearance:

Lecture 1 «Being the better Historian – in 2018? Multi-method, Multi-perspectivity»
by May-Brith Ohman Nielsen, University of Agder

Abstract:

Required reading

[Sources that will be referred to as exemplification]:

Lecture 2 « How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Theory»
by Toufoul Abou-Hodeib, UiO

What is historical theory? How is it different from a theory or philosophy of history? And who needs theory when the facts can speak for themselves? Focusing specifically on social theory, this lecture looks at what role theory plays in history writing and research. Looking beyond what is regarded in the discipline as the empiricism/theory dichotomy, the lecture re-familiarizes the idea of theory by looking at some of the theories and concepts commonly taken for granted by historians. It further looks at how such assumptions influence both the selection and interpretation of facts. On the other side of this issue, several questions then arise: how does one link facts to theory without subordinating the former to the latter? What constitutes the starting point for thinking theoretically about one’s own work? And what relationship do sources, concepts, and theories have to each other? The lecture addresses these questions by looking at a text that crosses the disciplinary boundaries of history and the social sciences (Mitchell). The lecture concludes by looking at some of the methodological implications historical theory has for understanding the formation of an archive and for archival research.

Required reading:  

Suggested readings (strong suggestions marked with *):
https://academic.oup.com/ahr/article/120/3/884/19860  
Seminar 1 «History and Material Culture»
by Veronique Pouillard

Abstract:

Required reading:

Seminar 2 "'Space and scale' in the transnational turn"
by May-Brith Ohman Nielsen

Abstract:

Mandatory reading:

[Sources that will be referred to as exemplification]:
Seminar 3 « How to start Worrying about Past Worries: Theories, Methods, and Approaches of the History of Emotions»
by Wojtek Jezierski, University of Gothenburg.

Abstract: Historians are amateur psychologists: we explain actions, motives, and decisions. Surely emotions have some role in this? My lecture and seminar will address the potentials and problems attached to the history of emotions, particularly when studied in pre-modern, medieval contexts. The lecture will introduce the core concepts (“emotional communities”, “emotional navigation”, “theatricality and display of emotions”, “emotional regimes”, “emotional arenas” etc.) and approaches dominating in the field. In addition, I will discuss some, mostly text-based methods of studying emotions as well as address the question of what role materiality and focus on the body can play for studying past worries and sensibilities. The lecture will include examples of what results the employing tools of digital humanities – historical semantics in particular – can yield for the understanding and use of feelings in past contexts. Finally, I will make a case for why we should care about feelings in the past without necessarily “going native” and becoming historians of emotions altogether.

As a preparation for this module, please reflect on the following problem: is there a space in your PhD project for studying emotions related to the larger social/political phenomena you are studying? What new dimension could such focus add?

Mandatory reading:
Jan Plamper, The History of Emotions: An Introduction, tr. Keith Tribe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 40-74 (will be uploaded to course site in Fronter as PDF)

Sources that will be referred to as exemplification:

Additional reading (strong suggestions marked with *):


Hans Jacob Orning, ‘Royal Anger between Christian Doctrine and Practical Exigencies’, Collegium medievale (2009), pp. 34-54


**Lecture 3 «Narrative Causality»**

by Tor Egil Førland, UiO

Abstract: The lecture studies the relationship between two central concepts in the philosophy of history: narrative and causality. Both are so preeminent in historians’ writings that they can be claimed to be integral to historiography. The concepts will be examined and defined, and their link to a third critical concept, namely explanation, will be investigated. Two critical and interrelated issues are discussed: first, whether causality is a constitutive ingredient of narrative or whether the emplotting function of causality can be filled by other elements, and second, whether narrative can have an explanatory function independent of its causal elements. (Spoiler alert:) In the lecture the first question is answered in the affirmative and the second in the negative, but there is ample room for debate.

**Mandatory reading:**


Additional reading:


**Seminar 4 «Right to privacy and protection of personal information in historical research – law, ethics and history»**

Introduction by Vidar Enebakk, NESH, followed by roundtable discussion with Sunniva Engh, Svein Atle Skålevåg, and Hanne Hagtvedt Vik (Chair)

**Abstract:**

Mandatory reading:
https://www.etikkom.no/FBIB/Temaer/Personvern-og-ansvar-for-den-enkelte/Personvern/
https://www.etikkom.no/forskningsetiske-retningslinjer/Samfunnsvitenskap-jus-og-humaniora/

**Seminar 5 «The Epistemology of History»**

by Svein Atle Skålevåg, of the University of Bergen

What kind of knowledge does history provide? Does it provide knowledge of a specific object, i.e. History? Or does it rather provide knowledge distinguished by being acquired in a specific manner, or following a specific methodology? Or does it study objects in a certain perspective (i.e. how object are situated in a specific time)? The historicist answer to these questions was that history was the scientific study of History, and that it was characterised by a certain method, source criticism. This constituted the epistemology of history in the late 19th and early 20th
The assumption that there is such thing as History was challenged openly in the second half of the 20th century. Though it lingers on as a regulatory idea, few will today defend the idea of history as an epistemic object. But it remains debatable what kind of discipline history is after historicism. In this seminar we will study one seminal thinker in the assault on historicism, Michel Foucault, whose introductory pages to Archaeology of knowledge addresses the state of history. This will be contrasted to one major Scandinavian representative of historicism, Kristian Erslev. We will discuss these to texts, and the discussion will be supported by one of the more original interpreters of Foucault as a historian, French historian Paul Veyne.

**Required reading:**

**Additional reading:**
Paul Veyne: “Foucault revolutionizes history.” In Arnold Davidson et al *Foucault and his interlocutors* (1997)

**Lecture 4 «Publishing Strategies for PhD Candidates in History: When, What and How?»**
by [Hanne Hagtvedt Vik](mailto:), UiO