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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<td>9:15-10:30</td>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>Seminar 2 ‘Space and scale’ in the transnational turn May-Brith Ohman Nielsen, University of Agder</td>
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<td>17:15-18</td>
<td>Lecture 2: «Publishing Strategies for PhD Candidates in History: When, What and How?» by Hanne Hagtvedt Vik, UiO</td>
<td>Lecture 4 «Narrative Causality» by Tor Egil Forland, UiO</td>
<td>Concluding session</td>
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In order of appearance:

Lecture 1 « 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 *):
Seminar 1 «History and Material Culture»
by Veronique Pouillard.

Abstract: The place of objects in the work of historians is highly variable. It has grown significantly over the last decade, to the point that the expression of “material turn”, or “turn to materiality” is quite commonly used today. This material turn participates more widely to recent developments in the social sciences. The works of Michel de Certeau, Bruno Latour, some works of Jean Baudrillard, and renewed readings of Karl Marx play an important role in the discussion on the turn to materiality. This talk will take a pragmatic approach to address the question of what objects can do for us historians, and of what we can do with them. In particular we will examine how objects and materiality can become useful both in themselves and as concepts when writing transnational and global history.

Required reading:

Lecture 2 «Publishing Strategies for PhD Candidates in History: When, What and How?»
by Hanne Hagtvedt Vik, UiO

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:

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/Samfunnvitenskap-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 century. 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:
Michel Foucault “The archaeology of knowledge”, Introduction (pp3 – 17) 1969/1972

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

List of participants

1. Fredrik Wilhelmsen, Nord Universitet, «Decay and Rebirth: Conceptions of History in Norwegian Right-Wing Extremist and Right-Wing Radical Thinking”

Idealtyper i idéhistorien. I mitt essay vil jeg diskutere utfordringer ved å anvende idealtypiske beskrivelser av et fenomen som teoretiske fortolkningsrammer i idéhistoriske undersøkelser av ytringer. Idealtypen kan være anvendelige, og gi historikere et rammeverk å holde empiriske funn opp mot. Men kan bruka av idealtyper komme i konflikt med behovet for å se historiske ytringer i sammenheng med den historiske konteksten de ble uttrykt i? Spørsmålet relaterer til problemstillinger jeg støter på i doktorgradsarbeidet mitt. I avhandlingen vil jeg sammenligne hvilke historieoppfatninger som man finner i norsk høyreekstrem og høyreradikal tenkning i mellomkrigstiden og i dag. Prosjektet tar utgangspunkt i den britiske historikeren og fascismeideologikeren Roger Griffins idealtypiske beskrivelse av generisk fascisme: Begrepet «fascisme» brukes i denne sammenhengen ikke som en betegnelse på Mussolinis politiske bevegelse alene, men på ytterliggående, høyreorienterte ideologier som kjennetegnes av at de er revolusjonære, uforenelige med det liberale demokratiet, og at de inneholder en «mytisk kjerne» bestående av det Griffin omtaler som “a palingenetic form of populist ultra nationalism”. For en historiker utgjør Griffins idealtype et anvendelig verktøy, ved at den gjør det mulig å gruppere nazismen i mellomkrigstiden sammen med nyere høyreekstreme bevegelser, som kontrajihadismen. Men kan en slik overordnet tilnærming føre til at man finner likheter mellom fenomener som egentlig er vesensforskjellige? I Drømmen om det fullkomne samfunn finner for eksempel Øystein Sørensen ikke bare likheter mellom nazismen i Tyskland og fascismen i Italia –han finner sågar likheter mellom de to
ideologiene på ytterste høyrefløy og den leniniztske kommunismen og den radikale islamismen. Sørensens teorier om at nazismen, fascismen, kommunismen og islamismen forenes av en felles «totalitær mentalitet» ser ut til å være på kollisjonskurs med den britiske historikeren Quentin Skinner sin betoning av at vi må lese historiske ytringer i sammenheng med den historiske konteksten de ble uttrykt i. Men finnes det en måte å anvende idealtyper, samtidig som man ivaretar hensynet til historiske ytringers kontingente natur? Kan man forene Griffin og Skinner, samtidig som man unngår totalitarismforskningens fallgruber?

Merging Sociological Theory and Empirical Historical Research. My essay will focus on one of the key challenges I will confront while working on my Ph.D.-thesis. The thesis will seek to develop a general understanding of the mechanisms that come into play when a democratic system is exposed to anti-democratic reform. The empirical foundation for this will consist of a study of four northern Norwegian municipalities, and their reaction to attempts from Nasjonal Samling to overthrow democracy and reshape Norwegian society in accordance with the German Führer State. The challenge will consist of the attempted merging between this empirical study of a historical phenomenon and sociological theory regarding institutional change – specifically historical institutionalism and new institutionalism. How will I successfully apply this theoretical framework to my empirical research, without allowing it to drown and compromise the unique character of this specific incident? Is there a way to both develop a general understanding of the previously mentioned mechanisms and at the same time convey the stories that archives and other sources are disclosing? I hope the course and feedback on my essay will further my understanding of how to solve these challenges.

3. Jørn Weines, Arctic University, «Game-based learning in interdisciplinary learning organizations”
Implementing a historical resource crisis as a serious game: “Never again 18. April!”: This paper is about the use of history in game-based learning, in particular in interdisciplinary contexts. It presents theoretical challenges in developing a serious game based on a historical event: The closing of the Cod fishery in Norway on April 18, 1989. This moratorium was a shock for the fishers, and a turning point: from 1990 onwards, the historical open fishery was managed by quotas. While decreased fish stocks caused this event, the economic and social dimensions of sustainability must be included when teaching contemporary fisheries management. This poses interesting questions for historians: Confronted with contemporary/interdisciplinary demands, can history cease representing “the solution” when teaching about historical events, and rather serve as a source of inspiration for making educational games? Furthermore, does the potential for counterfactual outcomes in a game enable other ways for students to reflect on historical perspectives?

Actors in Environmental Politics: Dealing with the environment which per se is transnational, the PhD project “Regional Environments, International Politics and
Transnational Exchange: Nordic Environmental Cooperation, 1967-1995” uses the transnational approach analytically to trace connections and the development of political ideas. Challenges remain in how to entangle which actors are involved in the environmental policy making process that is placed within a wider web of scientists and environmentalists, international organisations, and a bipolar world structure, in which the Nordics present a ‘Third Way’. Hence, this essay will engage in the discussions of concepts and theories crossing history and social sciences. In particular it will focus on agenda setting and policy making, expertise in public policy, as well as social movements, and discuss their place in a transnational political history.

5. Thomas Brodahl, University of Oslo, “Comprehending the Oslo youth protests of the early 1980s”

Contextualization in historical research. Some of the foremost proponents of contextual explanation in intellectual history, Quentin Skinner, J. G. A. Pocock, and what has become known as the Cambridge school, argued for an awareness of the temporality of concepts and ideas, and the importance of understanding them in relation to the context in which they were situated. In the essay, I will explore the role of contextualization in historical research. Historians reconstruct contexts to be able to better understand the object of their analysis. The intellectual historian for instance, reconstructs the social or political context of the author of the text she is analyzing, so she can better understand what the author was trying to do. It is the historian that defines and to some degree constructs the boarders of the context. In what context should the object of analysis be situated? On what grounds should one then draw the boarders of contexts? A person, an organization, a text or an event, could relate to several different contexts. Take for example the French revolution of 1789, which have been understood in several different contexts. In the scholarly context of the enlightenment philosophers’ authority critique or the agronomical and economical context of failing harvests. Another way to understand this could be to see it as a field of different contexts, all of which impose their influence, but with unequal strength. I will grapple with these questions about contextualization in relation to my own project trying to understand how the Norwegian government comprehended and reacted to the youth protests in Oslo in the early 1980s.


Civil-military entanglements: Comparing institutions over time. My essay will outline theoretical and methodological approaches suitable to the study of the relationship between two similar but separate institutions as it (and they) develops over time. My PhD project has the working title «The ‘new state’ and the instruments of coercion: The Norwegian Police, Armed Forces and public sector reform, 1970-2010”. The original idea was to do a comparative analysis of these two institutions and how they reacted to the broad range of reforms that swept through the Norwegian public sector from the late 1980’s.

7. Geirr Olav Gram, University of Agder, Nasjonal gjenfødelse og modernitet. NS-utstillingene under okkupasjonen 1940-1945
Fascism on display: “Nasjonal samling” and the promotion of fascist culture through propaganda exhibitions. My research focuses on seven propaganda exhibitions produced by the Norwegian fascist party “Nasjonal samling” (NS) during the period that they controlled the Norwegian government between 1940-1945. Of primary interest are the ways in which these exhibitions expressed the political ambition to reinterpret the world and convey a fascist world view. As pointed out by G. L. Mosse, fascism is expressed through cultural symbols of community, and the exhibitions selected for this study can be seen to manipulate such symbols in order to recast and imbue them with fascist meaning. Inspired by Roger Griffin, I have a special interest in an issue previously not explored, namely how the exhibitions dealt with the relationship between fascism and modernity through their treatment of various discourses concerning politics and history. The project raises the fundamental question of how to understand the texts and images which make up these exhibitions, in light of their production by various individual “authors” working as bureaucrats and artists. I am trying to avoid reductionism in the sense that an exhibition merely reflects existing contexts prior to the event itself. Instead, I see the exhibitions as vehicles used by the various “authors” to articulate and spread differing concepts of fascism. To understand how, I wish to explore two ontological positions which differ with regard to their understanding of the historical subject as the author or the text, respectively. Informed by speech act-theory, Quentin Skinner has stressed the relevance of intentions by the author imbedded in the text. In comparison, actor-network theory states that connections made within the text itself create new meanings. While these ontological positions tend to exclude each other, both may nevertheless help to inform my project. Epistemologically, I will argue that these theories explain different parts of the historical process that took place when the exhibitions were produced.

8. Charlie Emil Krautwald, University of Agder, Fighting for the Streets. Radical youth, political culture and the control of public space 1917-1940

Spatial claims in radical street politics: A analytical frame for studying Interwar street fighting. During the interwar period, political movements took to the streets and squares of European cities in a radical struggle for the symbolic as well as physical control over public space. Militant forms of agitation were introduced in the political culture designed to vindicate the movements’ ‘right to the streets’ and to combat that of their opponents. This included new symbolic language, the use of uniforms and militaristic dramaturgy as well as confrontational and violent forms of collective action. These are the central themes of my project, a case study of radical street politics of interwar Denmark 1917-1940. However, studying collective actions and the dynamic relations between political movements and state power to exclude each other, both may nevertheless help to inform my project. Epistemologically, I will argue that these theories explain different parts of the historical process that took place when the exhibitions were produced.

9. Anne Mette Seines, University of Agder, Poisoning Scandinavia
Identifying mentalities in historical records. For centuries it has been common practice to use potent and dangerous poisons such as arsenic, strychnine and phosphor as a means of controlling our environment. Man has applied poisons to kill vermin and small pests to keep them from contaminating or even ruining food and produce, as well as killing large predators to keep them from harming livestock. The application of poisons to achieve these goals demonstrates a mentality. My goal is to identify which mentalities came into play in man’s application of poisons in everyday life from 1850 to 1960. What were the roots, or as Foucault would have said, genealogy of these mentalities? We know that they shift and change, but what caused these changes. I will be studying Scandinavian poison protocols from primarily pharmacies and police to identify which poisons were in circulation at different times, who used them and for what and enter this in a database. The real challenge is to put the database in a larger context through other records such as legislation, public debate, scientific literature from the relevant era and even debates in parliament(s). And it is though the merging of the database and other records that the traces of different and shifting mentalities hopefully will be recovered.

10. Svein Vatsvåg Nielsen, Kunturhistorisk museum, UiO, Zen economists? Demographic and economic changes in southern Norway (3900-1800 BC) **Allegories of neolithisation.** The question of how and why farming was introduced in Norway towards the end of the Stone Age has been a subject of debate among archaeologists for more than a century. Theories have focused on a range of different factors, such as migrations, environmental determination, basic human drives, and esoteric ideologies. However, what constitute the rationale of this discourse are our contemporary perceptions of Stone Age societies – of past hunter-gatherer societies. Such notions are not founded on, nor discovered in, the empirical data, but have their origin in prior (ideological, political, philosophical) beliefs. One such notion is that of an original affluent society; a self-sustained human collective where material wants were few and technical means adequate. The idea of such as society emerged at the Man the Hunter conference (Chicago, 1966), where Marshall Sahlins spoke of the hunter-gatherer lifeway as a “Zen road to affluence” – as the role model for the original affluent society. What Sahlins essentially said was that, if we believe, despite the difficulties to identify affluence in archaeological data, that past hunter-gatherers were living a life of affluence, how then should we interpret the transition to farming (in Neolithic times), a change that we can in fact positively identify in the data? The primary aim of my PhD project is to investigate the persistence of hunter-gatherer traditions in southern Norway in a period when farming was an available option (through case studies). However, I will also engage in a theoretical discussion of prior concepts such as affluence, primitiveness, and wildness, in order to better understand how contemporary (modern, Western) ideas of otherness are inscribed into scientific accounts of Stone Age societies.

11. Heidi Stenvold, Arctic University, Levekår, helse og motstands kraft i et krigsherjet samfunn- Tvangsevakuer fra Finnmark og Nord-Troms 1944-46 **Sannheter om tvangsevakueringen? Metodiske og teoretiske refleksjoner.** I 1944 ble befolkningen i Finnmark og Nord-Troms tvangsevakuet av den tyske okkupasjonsmakten. Jeg bruker ulike kilder, dvs. metodetriangulering i min avhandling. I essayet ønsker jeg å diskutere fire temaer. Faglitteraturen om tvangsevakueringen er basert på tidsvitnehistorier, og litteratur fra de to siste tiår baserer seg i stor grad på litteratur som ble utgitt de to første