

## History and the Senses (HIST 3390)

University of Texas at El Paso, Wintermester 2009  
M-F 9:00 am - 2:00 pm  
LA 306

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Office hours: M-F, 2:00-2:30, LA 334

“Touch the past!”  
“Step back in time!”  
“Experience history firsthand!”  
“Make history come alive!”

Claims like these commonly appear on promotional literature for historical sites, museums, and new media products—all with the underlying assumption that immersing participants in multi-sensory experiences will provide both education and entertainment.

Are these claims true? Does darkness feel the same in the twenty-first century as it did in the eighteenth? Would a twenty-first century person want to smell the manure that lined the streets of a frontier town? Is it really possible to re-experience, re-enact, or re-live the past?



### OBJECTIVES

- To experience a variety of immersive history presentations
- To analyze, interpret, and compare immersive experiences
- To articulate your analysis in written and oral forms
- To change the way you *feel* about history

### REQUIRED MATERIALS

- Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (Bedford edition)
- Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (Bedford edition)
- Selected readings available at <http://faculty.utep.edu/kaerekson>
- A bandanna or handkerchief
- \$3.00 for entrance fees (so much cheaper than a textbook!)

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Learning in this course will occur through reading, reflection, discussion, and experience. A significant portion of class time will be devoted to experiencing immersive presentations of history; a few class sessions will meet off campus. You will be expected to complete assigned readings, experience multi-sensory history presentations, participate in class discussions, and present written analysis about your experience with immersive history; communication with ghosts optional. What you get *out* of this course will flow directly out of what you put *in*!

**Experiential Play Points** – Every experience with immersive presentations of history will require you to “play the game.” Such *constructive play* involves participating in the experience, completing the things asked of you, and staying focused on the task at hand. Students who play the game will earn full credit (10 points per experience, 160 points).

**Warning:** On the other hand, *horseplay* –interfering with the experience of others or failing to represent UTEP well in public—will not be tolerated. This syllabus serves as the first warning against horseplay. Any student found engaging in horseplay will simply be “tapped out of the game,” thereby leaving the class activity, forfeiting all experiential play points for the day, and having nothing about which to write in the sensory journal entry.

**Discussion Participation** – Every day you will be expected to discuss class experiences and readings with your colleagues. These points may be assessed by in-class activities, quizzes, or observation (10 points per day, 90 points).

**Sensory Experience Journal** – Each night you will be expected to reflect on your experience with the immersive presentation of history. Your journal can record your feelings, thoughts, and reflections about the experience, the past, or your observations. Entries will be submitted at the end of each unit (10 points per entry, 100 points).

**Final Experience** – At the end of the course, you will have the opportunity to combine your readings, experiences, discussions, and reflections into a comparative analysis of a final experience. The use of notes will be strongly encouraged (50 points).

Experiential play points (16 experiences, 10 points each).....	160	_____
Discussion participation.....	90	_____
10 Journal entries (10 points each) .....	100	_____
Final Experience .....	50	_____
<u>TOTAL .....</u>	<u>400</u>	<u>_____</u>

Grade distribution will follow the standard scale: 60-69% D, 70-79% C, 80-89% B, 90-100% A

This course fulfills a 3000-level U.S. history field requirement or a Liberal Arts Humanities Block Elective (for non-history majors).

## CLASS SCHEDULE

January 5 (M)      Coming to Our Senses – Course Introduction

**Immersive Experience 1: Sightless Campus Tour**

### Part I: Progressive Era Cities

January 6 (T)

*Read before Class*

- Ackerman, *A Natural History of the Senses* [excerpts]
- Erikson, “Engulfed by the Past”
- Handlin, “Seeing and Hearing”



#### **Immersive Experience 2: Photojournalism**

Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*

9:00-11:30 a.m. in classroom

12:00-2:00 p.m. Meet in Old Main 214

*Complete after Class*

- Journal entry 2

January 7 (W)

*Read before Class*

- Murtagh, “Historic Districts”
- Paterson, “Digital Touch”
- Porteous, “Smellscape”

#### **Immersive Experience 3: Walking Tour**

Meet at the Plaza Theatre, 125 Pioneer Plaza, El Paso, at 9:00 a.m.

Downtown El Paso

#### **Immersive Experience 4: Digital Walking Tours**

12:00-2:00 p.m. Meet in Old Main 214

Google Earth: Ancient Rome

*Complete after Class*

- Journal entry 3

January 8 (Th)

*Read before Class*

- Runia, “Presence”
- Lowenthal, “The Benefits and Burdens of the Past”
- Steinberg, “Death of the Organic City”

**Immersive Experience 5: Novels**  
Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*

*Complete after Class*

- Journal entry 4



## Part II: Western Frontiers

January 9 (F)

*Read before Class*

- Hoffer, “New Worlds for Historians”
- Steinberg, “A Truly New World”

*Submit in Class*

- Journal entries 1-4

**Immersive Experience 6: Natural Landscape**  
Chihuahuan Desert Gardens

**Immersive Experience 7: Digital Landscape**  
12:00-2:00 p.m. Meet in Old Main 214  
Lewis and Clark

*Complete after Class*

- Journal entry 5

Weekend

*Read before the experience*

- Ekirch, “Terrors of the Night”
- Links to ghost web content



**Immersive Experience 8: Sunrise/set**  
A place of your choosing

*Complete during or after the experience*

- Journal entry 6

January 12 (M)

*Read before Class*

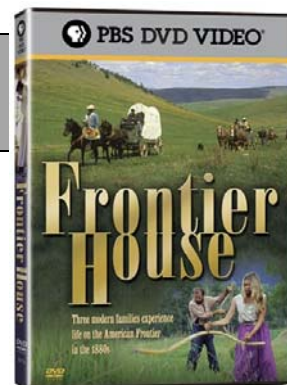
- Anderson, *Time Machines* [excerpts]
- Hunt, “Reality, Identity, and Empathy”
- Elkort, “Food in History”

**Immersive Experience 11: Cemetery**

Meet at Concordia Cemetery, Yandell Drive entrance, El Paso (\$1 entry fee)

**Immersive Experience 10: Reality TV**

PBS, *Frontier House* (2002)



*Complete after Class*

- Journal entry 7

January 13 (T)

*Read before Class*

- Classen, “Touch in the Museum”
- Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic* [excerpts]
- Glassberg, “Watching the Civil War”

*Submit in Class*

- Journal entries 5-7

**Immersive Experience 9: Living History/House Museum**

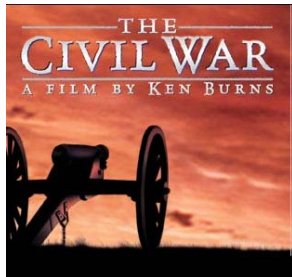
Meet at 9:00 a.m. at 1120 Magoffin Ave, El Paso, TX (\$2 entry fee)

Magoffin Home

### Part III: Slave Society

January 13 (T)

*Continued*



**Immersive Experience 12: Documentary Film**

Ken Burns, *The Civil War*

*Complete after Class*

- Journal entry 8

January 14 (W)

*Read before Class*

- Smith, “Learning to Make Sense”
- White & White, “Listening to Southern Slavery”

**Immersive Experience 13: Historical Writing**  
Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul*



**Immersive Experience 14: Digital Datasets**  
**12:00-2:00 p.m. Meet in Old Main 214**

Valley of the Shadow  
Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database

*Complete after Class*

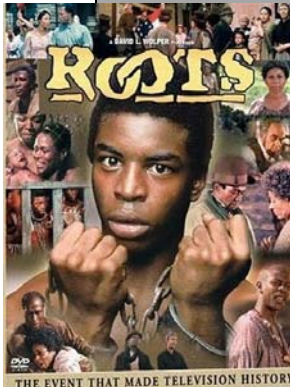
- Journal entry 9

January 15 (Th)

*Read before Class*

- Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different?”
- Haley, “Black History, Oral History, Genealogy”

**Immersive Experience 15: Oral History**  
Library of Congress, WPA Interviews



**Immersive Experience 16: Movie**  
PBS, *Roots* (1977)

*Complete after Class*

- Journal entry 10

January 16 (F)

*Submit in Class*

- Journal entries 8-10

**Immersive Experience 17: Final Experience**  
Olde Tyme Testin

## COURSE POLICIES

**Accessibility:** The University of Texas at El Paso is committed to providing services/access to students with documented disabilities. If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact the Disabled Student Services Office within the first two weeks of classes. For more information visit [www.utep.edu/dsso](http://www.utep.edu/dsso).

**Conduct:** You are expected to abide by UTEP's *Handbook of Operating Procedures*. Section II: Student Affairs, Chapter 1: Student Conduct and Discipline clearly defines cheating and plagiarism. Those who cheat or plagiarize face the prospect of dismissal from the class or the university. Any inappropriate behavior, disruptive conduct (e.g., incessant talking/laughing/joking, using cell phone/text messaging; leaving the classroom without permission), or non-compliance with faculty directions can result in a charge of Academic and/or Personal Misconduct, possibly resulting in sanctions imposed either by the instructor or the Dean of Students. Refer to <http://www.utep.edu/dos/acadintg.htm> for further information.

**Make-up Work:** Most immersive experiences cannot be made up because they involve collaboration with colleagues and frequently are hosted by third-party institutions—in other words, the experience will cease to exist after we are done with it. Therefore, alternate assignments (in the form of a 3-5 page written analysis of additional reading) will be offered to students who contact me in advance with a valid, documented excuse for extremely extenuating circumstances. All alternative work must be completed before the final exam. Because this course is only nine days long, each day of class equates to nearly two weeks of a traditional semester. Those students who foresee missing more than one day are advised not to enroll in the class.

**Time Commitment:** We will spend 5 hours in class each day. You should plan to devote about 4-6 hours per night to the course in addition to the time spent in class.

Do not hesitate to email me ([kaerekson@utep.edu](mailto:kaerekson@utep.edu)), call my campus phone (747-5878), or visit my office.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

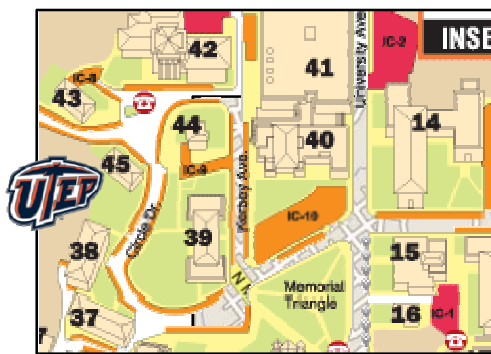
Many people have contributed to make this class experience a success. Please take the opportunity to thank them when you meet them. We are especially indebted to Mara Tavera of the Plaza Theatre, Henry Flores of the Paso del Norte Paranormal Society, Leslie Bergloff of the Magoffin Home, Gary Williams of the El Paso Community Foundation, and Edith Yanez and Stephanie Gonzalez of the History Department.



## SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

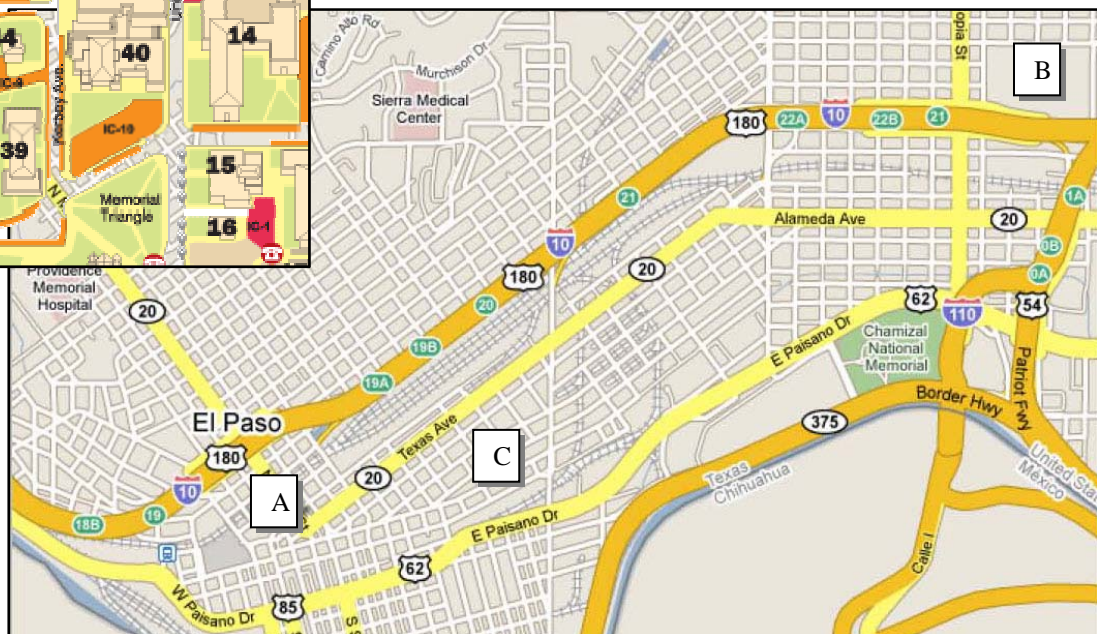
	<b>Mon 1/5</b>	<b>Tue 1/6</b>	<b>Wed 1/7</b>	<b>Thu 1/8</b>	<b>Fri 1/9</b>
<b>9-11:30</b>	LA 306	LA 306	Plaza Theatre	LA 306	LA 306
<b>12-2</b>	LA 306	Old Main 214	Old Main 214	LA 306	Old Main 214
	<b>Mon 1/12</b>	<b>Tue 1/13</b>	<b>Wed 1/14</b>	<b>Thu 1/15</b>	<b>Fri 1/16</b>
<b>9-11:30</b>	Concordia Cemetery	Magoffin Home	LA 306	LA 306	LA 306
<b>12-2</b>	LA 306	LA 306	Old Main 214	LA 306	

## MAPS AND DIRECTIONS



**14. Liberal Arts Building**  
**38. Old Main**

40-41. Union Building  
42. Education Building



### A. Plaza Theatre, 125 Pioneer Plaza, El Paso

*From I-10 take exit 19 (downtown), turn south on N. Oregon Street, turn west on W. Mills Ave*

**B. Concordia Cemetery, 3700 E. Yandell Drive, El Paso**

*From I-10 take exit 22A, turn north on N. Copia street, turn east on E. Yandell Drive*

**C. Magoffin Home, 1120 Magoffin Ave, El Paso**

*From I-10 take exit 19 (downtown), turn south on Kansas Street, turn left/east on Texas Ave, turn right/south on Octavia St, turn left/east on Magoffin Ave*