

Historiography Readings: Things to Consider
HST 300, Fall 2009, Professor Catherine Lavender

These are questions which you should apply to all of the readings assigned in the course. If you can comfortably address these questions, you are prepared to discuss the reading in class.

Questions of Authorship:

Who is the author of the reading? What do you know about him or her? What added dimension does this information bring to your reading of his or her work?

Can the author be said to have a “theory” of history? If so, what is that theory? What are its sources and antecedents?

Is the author engaged in a dialogue with any of the other authors we have read before in this class? If so, which ones, and what does the dialogue address? Why would there be this particular bone of contention or this point of agreement between the two authors?

Questions of Method and Epistemology:

According to the author, what is “History”?

According to the author, who determines what history is?

According to the author, what is the nature of the “fact”? What makes it “true”?

According to the author, what are the differences among supposition, argument, and proof?

According to the author, what are the processes of good historical method?

According to the author, who or what causes historical change?

According to the author, who or what is “great”? (Imagine here the “Great Man” – often represented by Caesar or Napoleon). Who is the hero of the author’s history? What makes that hero heroic?

Questions of Sources:

According to the author, what makes a source “good” or “reliable”?

According to the author, how should the historian utilize sources, including sources which do not agree with one another?