

Full title of the paper



The Professionalization of History
by
Clio Chronology

Author of the paper



Course name and number



Dr. Dusty Archives

Name of the instructor



HIS 2370 The Discipline of History

Saint Mary's University

26 November 2008

Date submitted





Set margins to 2.54 cm at top, bottom and sides of page.

The discipline of history has a history. Ancient Greeks such as Herodotus and Thucydides demonstrated a fundamentally different view of history than historical writers in subsequent centuries. In each generation or era, such as the medieval period, the Renaissance or the Enlightenment, historical writers reveal shifts in the understanding of history. In the nineteenth century, history began to emerge as a profession when departments of history formed in the universities of Europe and North America and began to train students in methods, approaches and research in history. This paper examines the rise of history as a profession and how the creation of university departments, historical societies and journals shaped the discipline itself.

In some eras, such as the 1500s or 1600s readers looked to history to provide models or examples of virtuous conduct, military strategy or political leadership. The idea of heroes in history even persisted through to the early 1800s, but then attitudes among historical writers began to change. As John Tosh argues

Block quotation

it was not until the first half of the nineteenth century that all the elements of historical awareness were brought together in a historical practice which was widely recognized as the proper way to way to study the past. This ... intellectual movement known as *historicism* ... began in Germany and soon spread all over the Western world.¹

Ellipsis

Tosh traces the origin of the historicism to Leopold von Ranke, active at Berlin

University from 1824 to 1872.² Ranke explained his approach to history in the preface to his

first published work. “History has had assigned to it the task of judging the past, of instructing the present for the benefit of the ages to come. To such lofty functions this work does not aspire.”

¹ John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*, 3rd edn (London: Longman, 1999), 5.

² Tosh, *Pursuit of History*, 5.

Footnotes are placed at the bottom of the page and are single-spaced

Example of a work “as cited in...”

Its aim is merely to show how things actually were (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*)”.³ This quotation from Ranke’s *Histories of the Latin and German Nations from 1494 to 1514* is one of the most famous lines ever written by a historian about the practice of history. But why did it become such an influential idea?

Ranke believed that historical documents provided the key to understanding the past. He used the development of language from oral to written form to distinguish between prehistory and history. “History cannot discuss the origin of society, for the art of writing, which is the basis of historical knowledge, is a comparatively late invention.”⁴ Ranke’s emphasis on the written traces of history would influence generations of historians as they scoured the archives in search of primary sources such as letters, diplomatic records or diaries.⁵ But Ranke did not simply believe in accumulating written historical records and extracting facts and events, instead he emphasized the “critical analysis” of these sources.⁶ Thus Ranke has been credited with changing the nature of historical inquiry by making the discipline of history as rigorous in its methods as science and yet retaining the “critical and readable” qualities of literary works.⁷ As George Iggers has noted: ‘the American Historical Association in 1885 elected [Ranke] as its first honorary member, hailing him as ‘the father of historical science’’.⁸

Footnotes are indicated by an Arabic numeral

Substitution identified by square brackets

³ Leopold von Ranke, *Histories of the Latin and German Nations from 1494 to 1514* as cited in Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, 5 [OR Leopold von Ranke, *Histories of the Latin and German Nations from 1494 to 1514* as cited in *ibid.*]

ibid

⁴ Leopold von Ranke, *Universal History: The Oldest Historical Group of Nations and the Greeks*, ed. and G.W. Prothero (New York: Harper, 1885), ix.

⁵ George G. Iggers, “The Professionalization of Historical Studies and the Guiding Assumptions of Modern Historical Thought,” in *A Companion to Western Historical Thought*, ed. Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 226.

As cited in

⁶ Iggers, “Professionalization”, 227.

Shortened footnote

⁷ J. D. Braw, “Vision as Revision: Ranke and the Beginning of Modern History,” *History & Theory* 46: 4 (December 2007): 45-6. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed November 3, 2008).

⁸ Iggers, “Professionalization”, 230.

Last name, first name

Bibliography

Bibliography listed in
alphabetical order

↓
Braw, J. D. "Vision as Revision: Ranke and the Beginning of Modern History." *History & Theory* 46:4 (2007): 45-60.

Iggers, George G. "The Professionalization of Historical Studies and the Guiding Assumptions of Modern Historical Thought." In *A Companion to Western Historical Thought*, ed. Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.

Ranke, Leopold von. *Universal History: The Oldest Historical Group of Nations and the Greeks*. Edited and translated by G.W. Prothero. New York: Harper, 1885.

Tosh, John. *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*, 3rd edn. London: Longman, 1999.

↖
Hanging
indent