

## METHODOLOGY, HISTORIOGRAPHY AND SOURCE STUDIES

UDC 378 (930)

DOI 10.25128/2225-3165.19.01.11



**Tetiana Orlova**

PhD hab. (History), Professor,  
Department of the History of Foreign Ukrainian Studies,  
Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Ukraine)

orlova.knu@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5246-6967>

**Тетяна Орлова**

Доктор історичних наук, професор,  
Кафедра історії зарубіжної україністики,  
Київський національний університет імені Тараса Шевченка (Україна)

### INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES IN THE UNIVERSITY COURSES OF HISTORY

**Summary.** The current highly competitive situation at the international arena causes the priority of intellectual assets to every state, especially those that only recently have won an opportunity of independent sovereign development. In recreation of intellectual assets, a significant role belongs to higher education as a social institution of intellectual activities conducive to creation of new non-material values (knowledge). Achieving a high level of competitive advantages of graduates as young professionals requires consistent renewal of knowledge containing the potential of innovative developments. In this regard the role of scholars and university lecturers is growing.

By the laws of synergetics, survival belongs to a complex open system that responds adequately to changes in the environment. The system of university education as a whole, and that in the field of history in particular, can be regarded in this aspect as well. Its perfection has to go on through modernization with timely correlation of the quality of educational services and scholarly research on the basis of analyzing their substance, methods and results.

Recently the Ukrainian historiography witnesses a growing interest in developing theoretical and methodological issues of contemporary science of history. Internal transformation is taking place in the character of intellectual research, as well as growing openness to the global historiographic experience. Throughout recent decades, radical changes occur in all spheres of the science of history, one of the most characteristic traits being the reinforced trend of integrating history with other disciplines. The interdisciplinary tendency is one of the consequences of radical change in the social functions of history in solving problems that are faced by a certain country.

Many years of experience in teaching at various humanitarian faculties of Kiev National Taras Shevchenko University, including such courses as "History of Civilizations", "Modern World History", "Contemporary Political History of World Countries", "The New Political History of Ukraine and Adjacent Lands", "Ukraine in the Context of World History", "Ukraine in the European Civilizational Dimension", confirms the importance of utilizing the opportunities offered by philosophy, sociology, political science, studies of religion, cultural studies, psychology, geography and other sciences. The knowledge acquired by the students are transformed into competences, which assist to better orientation in the contemporary world, building life strategies and tactics at various levels – from personal to statewise.

**Keywords:** intellectual capital, history, interdisciplinarianism, university, courses of history.

### МІЖДИСЦИПЛІНАРНІ ПІДХОДИ В УНІВЕРСИТЕТСЬКИХ КУРСАХ З ІСТОРІЇ

**Анотація.** Сучасна висококонкурентна ситуація на міжнародній арені зумовлює пріоритетність інтелектуального капіталу для кожної держави, особливо для таких, які не так давно вибороли можливість незалежного і суверенного розвитку. Значне місце у відтворенні інтелектуального капіталу займає вища школа як соціальний інститут сфери інтелектуальної діяльності, в результаті котрої створюються нові нематеріальні цінності – знання. Досягнення високого рівня конкурентних переваг випускників як молодих фахівців вимагає перманентного оновлення знань, що містять у собі потенціал інноваційних розробок. У цьому відношенні зростає роль науковців та викладачів, які працюють в університетах.

За законами синергетики, виживає складна відкрита система, яка адекватно реагує на зміну навколишнього середовища. Систему університетської освіти в цілому, історичної зокрема, теж можна розглядати у зазначеному ракурсі. Її вдосконалення має відбуватися шляхом модернізації із своєчасною кореляцією якості освітніх послуг та наукової діяльності на основі аналізу їх змісту, методів та результатів.

Останнім часом в українській історіографії можна спостерігати зростаючий інтерес до розробки теоретичних і методологічних питань сучасної історичної науки. Відбувається внутрішня трансформація у характері інтелектуальних пошуків, ширшає відкритість до світового історіографічного досвіду. Впродовж останніх десятиріч відбуваються радикальні зміни у всіх сферах історичної науки, однією з найхарактерніших рис є посилення тенденції до інтеграції історії з іншими науками. Тенденція до міждисциплінарності є одним з наслідків докорінної зміни соціальних функцій історії у вирішенні проблем, що стоять перед тією чи іншою країною.

Багаторічний досвід викладання на різних гуманітарних факультетах Київського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка таких курсів, як "Історія цивілізацій", "Історія сучасного світу", "Сучасна політична історія країн світу", "Новітня політична історія України і суміжних земель", "Україна в контексті світової історії", "Україна в контексті європейської історії", "Україна в європейському цивілізаційному вимірі", підтверджує значення використання можливостей, що надаються філософією, соціологією, політологією, релігієзнавством, культурологією, психологією, географією та іншими науками. Набуті студентами знання трансформуються у компетентності, а ті допомагають кращій орієнтації у сучасному світі, вибудовуванню життєвих стратегій і тактик на різних рівнях – від особистого до державного.

**Ключові слова:** інтелектуальний капітал, історія, міждисциплінарність, університет, історичні курси.

**The problem statement.** The current highly competitive situation at the international arena urges the priority of the intellectual capital to every state, especially to those that have just recently won an opportunity of independent sovereign development. An important role in the reproduction of intellectual capital is played by higher education as a social institution of intellectual activities, acting to create new immaterial value – knowledge. Achieving high competitive level of graduates as young specialists requires permanent renewal of knowledge, containing the potential of innovative developments. In this respect, the role of scholars and university teachers is growing.

**The presentation of the basic material.** By the laws of synergetics, survival is for a complex open system that adequately reacts to the change of environment. The system of university education at large, and historical education in particular, can be regarded in this aspect as well. Its perfection has to be carried out through modernization with prompt correlation between the quality of education services and research based on analyzing their sense, methods and results. Research conferences have a strategic aim, consisting in elevating the level of discussion, expanding the range and the agenda of research in the issues that are truly topical. Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University possesses the status of a research institution. This determines its role in the development of sciences, including the science of history. Hence, the activities of the University are targeted at defining the actual field of problems as well as exceeding the framework of traditional problems and methodological approaches already constituted.

It's worth emphasizing the goals of the faculty of history and of all the historians, namely, facilitating the shaping of new vectors in the public conscience, participating in the development of new discourse of social studies, that enables creating new senses. Also noteworthy is the role of a contemporary intellectual, who defines new issues, offers fruitful theses and expands the spectrum of relevant argumentation to elevate the level of discussion in the society. Discussion is vital to the latter, for without discussion a society turns into a swamp. In current conditions an intellectual is to be defined by the ability to be the first to sense something important, to identify crucial tendencies at the moment when others are not yet considering them, going on with their routine activities. A creative approach is important in developing

alternatives, as well as some courage to initiate innovations. The more so, when they are due.

The need of revision, renewal and development of the methodological arsenal and inventory of the historical science is conditioned by its current state, the historiographic situation that has been shaped at the turn of the millennium. Further development and specification of the discipline's methodology is due, at the level of conceptual approaches and methods of research, a kind of a paradigmatic shift. Quality increment of knowledge is impossible without mastering the methods of research and the theoretical developments of global science.

On the other side, in the conditions of informational revolution, a new informational environment is shaped, characterized by erasing the border between the scholarly and the educational, the fundamental and the applied knowledge. That is, it is important to expand the introduction of new methods not only into research, but also into the courses taught at universities.

Recently Ukraine is witnessing the growing interest in the development of theoretical and methodological issues of contemporary historical science. An internal transformation is going on in the character of intellectual pursuit, expanded to the openness to the global historiographic experience. Throughout recent decades, radical change occurs in all spheres of historical science. One of the most characteristic traits is the growing trend of integration between history and other sciences. On the one hand, it's worth considering the fact that the current postmodern age has dealt a lethal blow to the seclusion and self-sufficiency of certain disciplines, making interdisciplinarity come true.

On the other hand, reinforcement of interdisciplinary ties manifests the general tendency of modern science, the development of integrative processes, the mutual influence of different fields of knowledge at studying the common subject. Currently it is the human and the human society, that corresponding to the general tendency of development of humanities, namely, the anthropologization. For a long time, historical research has been characterized by mainly descriptive approach, and history has existed in the enclave state, so to say. Whereas interdisciplinarity orients at active contacts with other sciences, contributing to the analytical character of the discipline of history.

In his time L. Febvre, a well-known French historian, one of the founders of the "Annales" school, proclaimed: "Historians, be geographers! Be lawyers, sociologists, psychologists..." (Febvre, 1991: 37). The "new historical science" and the anthropologic turn themselves, associated largely with the "Annales" school, are considered to have laid the groundwork of interdisciplinarity. As the result of its founders' struggle with the allies of the old-fashioned, event-based history, prevalently the political and diplomatical history, before the 50s of the XX c. the Western historiography was dominated by the "new history" – the history of "long-lasting structures", economic and social history. The science of history has firmly adopted the concept of "total history", that aims to give a dimensional picture of historical life at its various levels. (Gurevich, 1993: 65).

Since the second half of past century, the scope of interdisciplinary cooperation and the chance of partner disciplines is changing. If early in the century historians were using the achievements and methods of geography, sociology, economy, psychology, then since the 1960–1980's the interdisciplinary approach is mostly addressed at anthropology, demography and linguistics. Generally, if the anthropologic turn refers to historical research, the subsequent linguistic turn has broader influence and directs the scientific knowledge towards humanities.

Considering interdisciplinarity in historical research, many Ukrainian and foreign scholars have spoken (Repina, 2003; Mogilnitskiy i dr., 2004; Mizhdystsyplinarni humanitarni studii; Mizhdystsyplinarni doslidzhennia: teoretyko-metodolohichni

vymiry; Porshneva, 2005; Sidortsov, 2001; “Steny i mosty”; Suchasni mizhdystsyplinarni doslidzhennia; Adetoro; Slavicek, 2012; Raab, 2015; Ritter, 1986; Rundel, 2014).

The core idea of their studies was: the trend towards interdisciplinarity is one of the consequences of radical change in the social functions of history in solving problems faced by a specific country. Two circumstances are noteworthy. First, the growing prognostic function of history, while the society expects the sociohumanitarians, the historians, to explain and forecast the phenomena unpredictable and inexplicable from the former standpoints. Second, the growing realization of the fact that the historical knowledge is a potent means of social influence with colossal potential. “Its skilful application is able to set human masses into motion, to change the world map, sometimes even to make impractical employing military means to conquer the adversary’s territory – instead, the brains of people of other countries can be conquered. In the current age, this function of history gains even more importance, as the conversion into information society is under way. Respectively, the influence of newest informational means, modern communications, make traditional ways of using history just limitless (Mirskiy, 2001: 518).

This requires an understanding that the historical profession now can not seclude itself in the narrowly positivistic framework of its own expert culture of comprehending the past by “pure“ historians. Contemporary science must reflect its subject and methods in the broad interdisciplinary context of elaborating innovations and technologies of learning the past of historic reality, that belongs to the entire complex of related social and humanitarian disciplines. This concerns research and teaching alike. Teaching history must be regarded as a process in progress. With amassing the academic experience of involving other social sciences, it is enriched by the new sense. Regrettably, part of the teaching staff is quite conservative, and narrow specialization prevents the expansion of interdisciplinary courses.

Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University has the status of a research institution. Its practice of teaching is constantly developed and introduces its corrections. Many years of experience of teaching such courses as “History of civilizations”, “History of the modern world”, “Contemporary political history of world countries”, “Newest political history of Ukraine and neighboring lands”, “Ukraine in the context of European history”, “Ukraine in the European civilizational dimension” at different humanitarian faculties of the University proves the importance of using the possibilities given by philosophy, of sociology, political science, religious and cultural studies, ethnology, psychology, geography, demography and other disciplines. Even in teaching ostensibly usual courses, like new and newest history, interdisciplinarity must be applied in a broader manner. Characterizing a specific state of a specific historical age requires not only retelling the facts but also reviewing such social spheres as economy, political organization, social structure, cultural and ideological fundamentals, giving political and psychological portraits of eminent persons. Or courses in ethnology or history of daily life. Ethnocultural studies help understanding the daily way of life of people of a certain geographic area, identifying main universal features of culture, including not only knowledge and spiritual achievements, but also traditions, stereotypes, beliefs and rituals. An essentially new, interdisciplinary direction emerges, that can be identified as microhistory.

At the same time, the level of macrohistory is reached by the course “History of modern world” (Orlova, 2006), that can be viewed as an integral one. Early in the 2000’s, such course was ordered by the management of the Institute of Journalism (as an evidence of evaluating the students’ demands, which is very important at the current stage of reforming higher education). It was to orient the listeners in the trends of global development in all domains: economy, politics, social sphere, spiritual spheres, to identify the essence of the industrial and post-industrial societies, globalization, as

well as the place and role of Ukraine in today's world. For many years this course was taught at various humanitarian faculties. Even now a course based on this textbook is read at Kyiv Medical Bohomolets University. "History of modern world" as a discipline could be a starting platform for the future analysis of the various specific problems of the present day not only during class hours, but also in the future at effecting expert research of various levels, as well as in resolving the young specialists' personal issues. This course could as well become a basic introduction in university education in general.

The book was written in 2005, reissued thrice in 2006, 2007, 2008, and posted broadly in the internet. Certainly, some change occurred since. For instance, the chapter on "Wars in the modern world history" dealt with the emergence of asymmetric warfare. At present day, there is the new phenomenon of hybrid warfare. The main danger that it brings is unawareness of its essence. The majority of our compatriots are feeling unsure for not understanding the social revolutions that came to Ukraine. And it's not about the Revolution of Dignity. In this aspect, great importance must be given to the research and popularization carried out by the teachers of the faculty of history, that can be exemplified by publications in the "Mirror of the Week" newspaper, such as the article "Revolution of Expectations" (Orlova, 2018). The latter is a vivid example of the social influence of historical knowledge.

The phenomenon of interdisciplinarity offers broad space to historical thought, that constantly has to seek answers for the complicated issues of the day. The burning problem is actualization of history. O. Savchenko, a known Ukrainian scholar and public figure, has voiced an opinion: "Many researchers as well as politicians construe the current situation (the basic characteristics) of contemporary Ukraine from the depths of history. And a completely erroneous idea predominates: the deeper into history you go, the more present phenomena you can explain. My stance (axiom) is contrary: the more remote the historic events are, the lesser their impact on today is ( $X=A/Y$ , where  $X$  is the intensity of a historic event's impact on today,  $A$  – the scale of a historic event,  $Y$  – the number of years between the event and the present day)" (Savchenko, 2017: 8). Regrettably, the great part of Ukrainian historians – researchers and teachers alike – evidently stick to the opposite concept.

**Conclusions.** As for the textbook on the "History of modern world", it might be worth editing, perfecting the contents with regard to the changes that have occurred in the past years, and reissuing. At the practical lessons of this course it would be useful to orient students at specific application of general topics of life of the society as well as that of an individual. The methodology of teaching should emphasize cultivating an integral type of thinking, which is critically important to an intellectual of the third millennium. In general, introducing the interdisciplinary approach into the teaching process would enable raising the level of theoretical and practical training of students, so that they stand up to the demands and challenges of our time. The knowledge they acquire would transform into competences, and those would help them better orient in the contemporary world, build life strategies and tactics at various levels – from personal to governmental.

### References

- Gurevich, 1993 – Gurevich A. Ya. Istoricheskiy sintez Shkola "Annalov": pamyati Yu. M. Lotmana. M.: Indrik, 1993. 327 s. [in Russian].
- Repina, 2003 – Mezhdistsiplinarnye podkhody k izucheniyu proshlogo / Pod red. L. P. Repinoy. M.: Aspekt Press, 2003. [in Russian].
- Mogilnitskiy i dr., 2004 – Mezhdistsiplinarnyy sintez v istorii i sotsialnye teorii: teoriya, istoriografiya i praktika konkretnykh issledovaniy / Pod red. B. G. Mogilnitskogo, I. N. Nikolaevoy, L. P. Repinoy. M.: IVI RAN, 2004. 168 s. [in Russian].
- Mizhdystsiplinarni humanitarni studii. Ser. Istorychni nauky.: Zb. nauk. prats. K.: NAN Ukrainy [in Ukrainian].

- Mizhdystsiplinarni doslidzhennia: teoretyko-metodolohichni vymiry. URL: [http://ns.iir.kiev.ua/uploads/files/tezi%20ceminar%20synthesis%205%2012%202017%20final%20\(1\).pdf](http://ns.iir.kiev.ua/uploads/files/tezi%20ceminar%20synthesis%205%2012%202017%20final%20(1).pdf). [in Ukrainian].
- Mirskiy, 2001 – Mirskiy E. M. Mezhdistsiplinarnye issledovaniya. Novaya filosofskaya entsiklopediya. 2001. T. 2. S. 518. [in Russian].
- Orlova, 2006 – Orlova T. V. Istoriia suchasnoho svitu: Navchalnyi posibnyk. K.: Znannia, 2006. 551 s. [in Ukrainian].
- Orlova, 2018 – Orlova T. "Revoliutsiia pretenzii". Dzerkalo tyzhnia. 2018. № 28. 21 lypnia. S. 13.
- Porshneva, 2005 – Porshneva O. S. Mezhdistsiplinarnye metody v istoriko-antropologicheskikh issledovaniyakh: Ucheb. posobie. Yekaterinburg: Izd-vo Uralskogo universiteta, 2005. 136 s. [in Russian]
- Savchenko, 2017 – Savchenko A. Antyukrainets, abo volia do borotby, porazky chy zrady. K.: Sammit-Knyha, 2017. 120 s. [in Ukrainian].
- Sidortsov, 2001 – Sidortsov V. N. Mezhdistsiplinarnost v istoricheskikh issledovaniyakh. Vybranyya navukovyya pratsy BDU. Minsk, 2001. S. 19–27. [in Russian].
- "Steny i mosty": mezhdistsiplinarnye podkhody v istoricheskikh issledovaniyakh: materialy Mezhdunarodnoy nauchnoy konferentsii, Moskva, RGGU, 13–14 iyunya 2012 g. / Otv. red. G. G. Yershova, Ye. A. Dolgova. M.: Sovpadenie, 2012. 344 s. [in Russian].
- "Suchasni mizhdystsiplinarni doslidzhennia: istoriia, sohodennia, maibutnie" – rezultaty pershoi zaochnoi mizhnarodnoi konferentsii (Kyiv, 24 veresnia 2013 roku). K.: Vydavnytstvo "Ahrar Media Hrup", 2013. 72 s. [in Ukrainian].
- Fevr, 1991 – Fevr L. Boi za istoriyu / Per. s frants. A. A. Bobovicha, M. A. Bobovicha, Yu. N. Stefanova. M.: Nauka, 1991. 635 s. [in Russian].
- Adetoro – Adetoro A. R. History and Related Disciplines URL: [http://www.academia.edu/15180099/Research\\_and\\_Interdisciplinary\\_Approach\\_History\\_and\\_Related\\_Disciplines](http://www.academia.edu/15180099/Research_and_Interdisciplinary_Approach_History_and_Related_Disciplines). [in English].
- Slavicek, 2012 – Slavicek G. Interdisciplinary – A Historical Reflection. International Journal of Humanities and Social Science. 2012. Vol.2, № 20. S. 107–113. [in English].
- Raab, 2015 – Raab N. A. Historical Origins of the Interdisciplinary Approach. The Crisis from Within: Historians, Theory, and the Humanities. History. 2015. S. 24–50. [in English].
- Ritter, 1986 – Ritter H. R. Interdisciplinary History: A Historiographical Review. The History Teacher. 1986. May. Vol. 19. S. 427–448. [in English].
- Rundel, 2014 – Rundel C. Theories and methodologies of translation history: the value of an interdisciplinary approach. The Translator. 2014. Vol. 20, № 1. S. 2–8. [in English].