

Senior Seminar: Examining the Evidence: Film and Memoir
HIST 4484 W
Tuesday 3:30 – 6:00 pm Pafford 202
Fall 2009

Professor: Dr. Elaine MacKinnon
Office: Technology-Enhanced Learning Center (TLC) 3222
Phone: 678-839-6048
Email: emcclarn@westga.edu
Office hours: T/Th 11:00 to 2:00, or by appointment

Course Description

This course provides students with the opportunity to conceive and execute their own original historical study. It represents the capstone of the history major's course of study at the University of West Georgia. In the first part of the course we will review important steps in the historian's craft. We will explore together various types of sources historians use, specifically memoir and film. We will discuss the ways in which historians construct historical arguments on the basis of evidence, and emphasize the importance of questioning and verifying historical sources. In the second part of the course, the focus shifts to the research and writing of students' own research and writing projects. Students will work towards a final product, a paper based on original research, through a series of steps as noted below in the syllabus.

This course is writing-intensive. Effective writing is essential to the historical discipline and to a liberal education. As stated in the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) guidance, the "W" designation for this course indicates that it is a WAC course. Students are required to complete successfully two "W" courses for an undergraduate degree in the College of Arts and Sciences. The WAC program is premised on the idea that writing is a valuable tool for learning and communication. The writing components of this course therefore are designed to help students learn the material and communicate that material.

Prerequisites

Each student must have already completed HIST 2302 and have senior standing. Any student registered for the course who has not completed the prerequisites must see the instructor.

Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to provide students with the opportunity to conceive and execute their own original research project. As part of that work this course is designed to permit students actively engaged in the learning process with the opportunity to develop further the following skills:

- to recognize and to pose significant historical questions;
- to find useful primary and secondary sources;
- to analyze sources critically;
- to cite sources properly;
- to write and to speak clearly;
- to construct a persuasive historical argument based on evidence; and
- to think historically.

Thinking historically requires one:

- to seek to understand the people of the past;
- to seek to understand the perspective of historical actors and to view those historical actors from a critical, scholarly perspective;
- to recognize that people, events, ideas, and cultures have influenced later people, events, ideas, and cultures;
- to recognize that history involves both change and continuity over time; and

- to draw and to explain connections between particular people, events, ideas, or texts and their historical contexts.

Required Materials:

Hellstern, Mark, Gregory Scott, and Stephen Garrison. *The History Student Writer's Manual*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998.

Francaviglia, Frank and Jerry Rodnitzky, editors. *Lights, Camera, History: Portraying the Past in Film*. Arlington, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2007.

Equiano, Olaudah. *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Vincent Carretta. New York: Penguin Group USA, 2003.

***There is one reserve reading for the course: the "Introduction" to Jon T. Coleman, *Vicious: Wolves and Men in America*. See the instructor for the required pass word to access the reading.

Grading

Participation	10 percent
Topic statement	5 percent
Question and bibliography	5 percent
Primary source presentation	5 percent
Introduction and historiography section	10 percent
Final presentation	10 percent
Research Paper	50 percent
Reflective essay	5 percent

RESEARCH PAPER:

Each student will write an original, typed, double-spaced research paper of fifteen to twenty pages in length examining some question of interest related to the course or chosen with the approval of the instructor. The paper must assert a thesis and sustain it on the basis of evidence drawn from both primary and secondary sources. The paper must cite its sources in footnotes and list works consulted in a bibliography according to the documentary note style specified in section 5.3 of *The History Student Writer's Manual*. That citation style is based on documentation style one of the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

The project must be an original work undertaken for this course. The paper, like all written work in the course, will be graded on the basis of the rubric set out at the end of the syllabus. Of particular importance are the quality of the research, the analysis, and the writing, including organization, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and conformity with proper citation format.

The paper is due at the beginning of class on **November 24**. Each student must submit **TWO** copies of the final paper.

On dates given in the syllabus, students will turn in to be graded incremental parts of the final paper, as explained below (topic statement, question and bibliography, primary source, introduction and historiography section, final paper). Students will also make presentations to the class on designated days in conjunction with turning in these assignments.

1) On **September 8**, you will submit a topic statement. The topic statement is a typewritten statement of the topic to be addressed by the paper. A clear, workable topic statement submitted on time will receive an "A." One letter grade will be deducted from that topic statement grade if the statement of the question presented diverges from the topic statement. One letter grade will be deducted if the primary source presented does not address the topic selected. One letter grade will be deducted if the final paper does not address the topic selected in the topic statement.

2) On **September 22**, you will submit a written statement of the question to be addressed and a bibliography. The written statement of the question to be addressed should represent a refinement of the paper's topic. The question should be sufficiently interesting and important to merit at least a fifteen-page paper. It should be sufficiently narrow to be answerable adequately within at most a twenty-page paper. The question should be answerable in a statement that will be the paper's thesis. A question that meets those requirements and that is supported by a bibliography will receive an "A." One letter grade will be deducted from the grade awarded for the question presented if the primary source presented does not address the question stated. One letter grade will be deducted if the final paper does not answer the question stated.

3) On either **September 29** or **October 6**, you will select one of your primary sources and discuss it with the class. You should pick one important primary source from among the primary sources used for the paper. The presentation will describe the source to the class and explain how the paper will make use of the source in its argument. **Students should come to class with copies of the source or relevant extracts of the source for everyone in the class.** The presentation should address questions such as: Who wrote the document? Who was the audience of the document? What was the purpose of the document? What does it say? Why is it significant? Each student will also answer questions from the group about the source. Grades will be based primarily on the quality of the analysis.

4) On **October 27**, students will turn in the introduction and historiography section of their papers. That section should be about three pages in length. It should introduce the historical question the paper examines and briefly state the paper's answer to that question. It should also place the paper in its historiographical context and identify the paper's original contribution to the existing historical writing related to the question under examination. Note that the section handed in **should not be a rough draft.** It should be a polished draft, as good as it can be, since it will be graded, and that grade will weigh 10 percent in the final grade for the course.

I will comment on the introduction and historiography section and assign it a grade. Each student should take into account those comments in the final paper and incorporate a rewritten introduction and historiography section in the final paper. The final paper should represent an improvement over the earlier version of the section. **The marked-up draft of the introduction and historiography section must be turned in along with the final paper.**

5) During the last three class periods, each student will make an oral presentation to the class about your paper. In the final presentations, you will describe the paper's argument and supporting evidence to the class in a ten-minute talk. Do not simply read excerpts from your paper. You will then answer questions from the group. Grades will be based on the quality of the oral presentation of the paper's argument and evidence and responses to questions posed.

6) The reflective essay due at the end of the course should be 2-3 pages in length and it should address the following question: What have you learned during your time as a student at West Georgia? The essay will be graded on the basis of the quality of the reflection and the writing. It is due on Tuesday, December 1 by 4:00 pm.

PARTICIPATION:

Thoughtful contributions made in class discussions will be credited in the class participation grade. Behavior (such as tardiness) that impedes other students' learning will be penalized. Also included in this will be classroom quizzes and tests, writing assignments and participation in class activities.

PLEASE NOTE:

No extra credit will be offered.

All submitted written work must be unique to this course and original.

Late assignments will be penalized by deducting one letter grade for each day the assignment is late.

Policies

I expect each student to understand and to comply with the University of West Georgia's policies on Academic Honor and Academic Dishonesty. They may be found in the Student Handbook on the web <http://www.westga.edu/documents/catalogs.php>.

Plagiarism, or claiming someone else's work as your own, will result in failure. This rule is in effect for all assignments. Egregious or repeated academic dishonesty will result in failing the course and could incur additional penalties from the university.

If you have any questions or need help with any part of the course, please come to my office hours or send me an email to set up a time to talk. In addition, I encourage you to consult with the Writing Center.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and university policy, I will make reasonable accommodation for any recognized disability. Students should contact me during the first three weeks of the course and present documentation from the University's Student Development Center.

Make every effort to be in class and on time. You are responsible for all materials and announcements presented in class. You are counted as tardy if you come into class after roll has been taken. If you are tardy, it is your responsibility to inform me of your presence at the end of class. If you must be absent, it is your responsibility to get notes and assignment updates from a classmate.

Please Note: Regular class attendance is important if you want to do well in the course and learn more about history and historical analysis. I will not take off points for absences, but you will receive no credit for participating. You will receive a zero for any tests or quizzes given on missed class days. No makeups for tests, quizzes, or other graded work will be given, except in rare cases of prior approval by the instructor or with a physician's note. Besides helping you to learn more, regular attendance and punctuality can work in your favor in borderline grading situations and conversely, poor records in either can work against you.

Students should regularly check their University of West Georgia email account.

Course Schedule

August 18 Introduction

Writer's Manual, Ch. 1

August 25 Interpreting the Evidence

Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*

Writer's Manual, Ch. 2 and pp. 118-22

September 1 Primary Sources/Using Memoir and Film as Sources

Francaviglia and Rodzinsky, et al, *Lights, Camera, History*

Writer's Manual, ch. 10

September 8 Film Analysis/**Written Topic Statement Due**

September 15 Discussion of Topics and Sources/How Do I Structure my paper?

Coleman reserve reading: Introduction to *Vicious*

Writer's Manual, ch. 6

September 22 **Written statement of question to be addressed and bibliography due**

Writer's Manual, ch. 6

- September 29 Presentations of primary sources
- October 6 Presentations of primary sources
- October 13 Discussion of use of primary sources
Writer's Manual, ch. 7
- October 20 Library work/Individual Meetings
- October 27 **Introduction and historiography section due**
- November 3 Discussion of introductions and historiography sections
- November 10 Final Presentations
- November 17 Final Presentations
- November 24 Final Presentations/**Final Paper due by beginning of class (two copies)**
Final Paper due by beginning of class (two copies)
- December 1 **Reflective Essay Due**/No class

Six Guidelines for a Senior Seminar Paper

1. Be honest. Acknowledge your sources and do not plagiarize. As a general rule, every paragraph in the paper (except the introductory and concluding paragraphs) should have a footnote at the end of it. I have never lowered a student's grade for excessive citation to the sources. I have failed students for the course for failing to cite only a single source from which they drew. A paper that draws extensively from a source such as an internet site and fails to cite it will result in a failing grade for the course.

2. I require that you use no more than three internet secondary sources and that you provide information as to the qualifications of the author of the internet site. Do not use *Wikipedia* for the paper except for background information. I want at least six books, excluding encyclopedias and dictionaries.

3. Have a point. State the historical question and the paper's thesis. Frame your argument within the context of the existing historiography. What's new in your paper that historians did not already know? Note that an argument is not new in the historical discipline merely because it is unknown to an average high school student.

4. Do the work. The paper's grade depends to a considerable degree on the amount of effort that demonstrably went into the paper. Papers seven pages in length are less impressive than papers that meet the minimum standard of fifteen pages. Papers based on twenty primary sources and twenty secondary sources are generally more impressive than those based on one primary source and three secondary sources. Archival research in unpublished sources is particularly impressive.

5. Use evidence persuasively. The paper represents an answer to a historical question based on evidence. Show engagement with the evidence and skillfully support your argument based on evidence from primary sources. Support your points with facts, examples, and citations. The paper should have a logical organization with an introduction, a body that develops your ideas in an orderly sequence, and a conclusion. Factual material should be clearly presented and relative to the theme of the paper. Do not pour out everything you have gathered; select the facts which best explain, illustrate, or substantiate your points.

6. Write with your reader in mind. I am your reader and I especially value clarity and precision in writing. I care deeply about all of the rules of writing history papers:

a. Use standard written English grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Do not use contractions. Avoid sentence fragments and run-on sentences. Do not separate complete sentences with a comma.

b. Write in the past tense when discussing events or documents in the past. The historical actors, their actions, and their writings existed in the past, and so use the past tense to describe them. Use the present tense only to discuss the arguments of historians about what happened in the past.

c. Format citations correctly in accordance with section 5.3 of *The History Student Writer's Manual*.

d. Write in a formal tone appropriate to an undergraduate paper.

e. List primary and secondary sources separately in the bibliography.

f. Number the pages of the paper.

Rubric for Research Papers

1. **Academic Honesty**
Does the paper adhere to the fundamental requirement of academic honesty? Pass/Fail

2. **Analysis**
 - A. Does the paper pose a significant historical question?
 - B. Does the paper offer a clear, persuasive thesis making a claim worth arguing about?
 - C. Does the paper position its thesis within the context of the existing historiography?
 - D. Does the paper effectively use evidence in support of its argument?
 - E. Does the paper demonstrate critical analysis of sources?
 - F. Is the paper free from any failure to document sources, including omissions that appear inadvertent or otherwise not egregious?
 - G. Does the paper demonstrate an ability to think historically?
 - H. Is the analysis marked by particular originality or insight?

3. **Research**
 - A. Does the paper reflect a substantial amount of research?
 - B. Has the paper found and engaged with the most important primary and secondary sources?
 - C. Does the paper reflect in-depth knowledge of the subject?

3. **Organization**
 - A. Is there a logical organization to the paper?
 - B. Are paragraphs within the paper logically organized?
 - C. Does the paper flow smoothly?

4. **Writing**
 - A. Is the writing clear and precise?
 - B. Is the writing persuasive?
 - C. Is the writing free from grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, citation format, or other errors?

5. **Other**
 - A. Does the paper reflect that its author considered comments offered previously by the instructor?
 - B. Does the paper indicate that a good deal of effort went into it?
 - C. Does the paper give an overall impression of high quality?