

Senior Seminar: Working With Evidence

Tues. 5:30 – 8:00 pm

HIST 4484 W

CRN 10723

Pafford 202

Spring 2009

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Course Description

This course provides students with the opportunity to conceive and execute their own original historical study. It thus represents the capstone of the history major's course of study at the University of West Georgia. The work in this course is the apex to which the history program at West Georgia has been building. In the first part of the course we will do some common readings together. Our analysis of each of these readings will focus on examining what evidence the historians found and how they used that evidence to construct an original historical argument. It is hoped that the readings will offer models and guidance for students' own research projects. In the second part of the course, the focus shifts to the research and writing of those student projects. Along the way, there will be several milestones that must be reached.

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. ISBN 0-13-874728-8.

Ginzburg, Carlo. *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992. ISBN 978-0801843877.

Gross, Jan. *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. ISBN 0691086672.

Coleman, Jon T. *Vicious: Wolves and Men in America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004. ISBN 9780300119725.

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
Paper	50 percent
Reflective essay	5 percent

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. 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 documentary note style of the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

The project must be an original work undertaken for this course. The paper will be graded on the basis of the rubric set out at the end of the syllabus. The paper is due at the beginning of class on April 21. Each student must submit **two** copies of the final paper.

On February 3, each student must 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.

On February 17, each student must submit a 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.

In the primary source presentations, each student will 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.

On March 24, 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 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.

In the final presentations, each student will describe the paper's argument and supporting evidence to the class in a ten-minute talk. Students should not simply read excerpts from their paper. Students 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.

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 April 28.

Students must take the assessment examination on April 7. The examination is not graded, but no student will pass the class without writing the examination.

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.

No extra credit will be offered. All submitted written work must be unique to this course and original.

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 at <http://www.westga.edu/documents/catalogs.php>.

Academic honesty prohibits taking credit for someone else's work. Justice requires that punishment fit the infraction. Egregious academic dishonesty will result in failing the course and may also bring additional penalties imposed by the university.

I encourage any student who has questions or needs help with the course to come to my office hours or send me an email to set up a time to talk. In addition, students may wish to consult with the Writing Center (<http://www.westga.edu/~writing>).

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.

I strongly encourage students to attend class. Students who attend class tend to learn more and get better grades than those who do not. Class discussion sometimes affords new insights that cannot be planned or even predicted. In case of absence, it is the responsibility of the student to obtain notes from a classmate covering what was missed. I do not penalize students for absences, but students receive no credit for participating or on any tests or quizzes on missed class days. A student who does not take a quiz or test in class with the rest of the class receives a zero. I do not permit students to take any test, quiz, or other graded work at any time other than in class as administered except in rare cases of prior approval by the instructor or with a physician's note.

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

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

Course Schedule

Jan. 13	Introduction
Jan. 20	How many primary sources do I need? <i>The Cheese and the Worms</i> <i>Writer's Manual</i> , pp. 118-22 and ch. 2
Jan. 27	How do I interpret primary sources? <i>Neighbors</i> <i>Writer's Manual</i> , ch. 10
Feb. 3	How do I structure my paper? <i>Vicious</i> Written topic statement due
Feb. 10	Discussion of topics and sources
Feb. 17	Written statement of question to be addressed and bibliography due
Feb. 24	Presentations of primary sources
Mar. 3	Presentations of primary sources
Mar. 10	Discussion of use of primary sources
Mar. 17	Spring Break
Mar. 24	Introduction and historiography section due
Mar. 31	Discussion of introductions and historiography sections
Apr. 7	Assessment examination (required, but not graded)
Apr. 14	Final presentations
Apr. 21	Final presentations Paper due
Apr. 28	Final presentations Reflective Essay due

Five 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. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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 with evidence from primary sources.
5. 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.
 - 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 Senior Seminar 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?
4. **Organization**
 - A. Is there a logical organization to the paper?
 - B. Are paragraphs within the paper logically organized?
 - C. Does the paper flow smoothly?
5. **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?
6. **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?