

The Historian's Craft: Methodology
HIST 2302 sec. 02
Fall 2008
CRN 80596
T/Th 11:00 to 12:15
TLC 3205

Professor: Dr. Tim Schroer
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Office hours: Tues./Thurs. 1:30 to 3:00 pm or by appointment

Course Description

“History is, strictly speaking, the study of questions.” -- W. H. Auden

This course is intended to introduce students to the practice of history. It is designed to help students succeed as history majors at the University of West Georgia. We will focus on developing the skills necessary to think and work like historians. We will also sample the varieties of sources used in writing history and the varieties of history.

This is a required course for all history majors. In order to graduate, history majors must earn a C or better in this course.

Learning Outcomes

This class is designed to help students learn what historians do and why they do it. In addition, the class is designed to help students to develop the skills necessary to succeed as history majors. Those skills include the ability to:

- pose good historical questions;
- find useful primary and secondary sources;
- read critically primary and secondary sources;
- cite sources properly;
- construct persuasive historical interpretations; and
- write clearly and persuasively.

Required Materials:

The following required books are available in the bookstore:

Mark Hellstern, Gregory Scott, Stephen Garrison, *The History Student Writer's Manual* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998) ISBN 0-13-874728-8.

James West Davidson and Mark Hamilton Lytle, *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection*, 5th ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2005) ISBN 0072818522.

Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997) ISBN 0822319748.

Grading

Participation:	10 percent
Research assignments:	10 percent
Two short papers:	15 percent
Five writing quizzes:	20 percent
Book Review:	20 percent
Rewrite:	5 percent
Paragraph on history major:	5 percent
Final Examination:	15 percent

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.

The research assignments will be graded on the basis of the quality of the research. That is, did the researcher find a reasonable quantity of useful information?

The first short paper assignment calls for a two-page, typed summary of a document from the U.S. National Archives. It is due September 4. The second short paper assignment calls for the student to use a novel as a primary source. Students must select a novel that they have not read before and have their choice approved by the instructor. The novel must have been published more than thirty years ago. It must be set in the same general period in which it was written. The three-page paper should have a thesis that answers the question: what does the novel tell us about the period in which it was written? The paper must make proper use of footnote citation in accordance with the documentary-note system described in section 5.3 of *The History Student Writer's Manual*. It is due September 30.

The book review is a four-page review of a scholarly historical monograph published within the last thirty years by a university press. Students must read a new book. They may not review a book that they have read for another history course. The instructor must approve the book to be reviewed. The review is due November 18.

The short papers and book review will be graded on the basis of the quality of the analysis and the writing, including organization, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and conformity with proper citation format.

The five writing quizzes will test students' ability to write effectively. They will cover important matters of organization, grammar, usage, punctuation, spelling, and conformity with proper citation format. The lowest writing quiz grade will be dropped.

The short paper using a novel as a primary source must be rewritten. The revised short paper must take into account the comments by the instructor and represent an improvement over the first version. (Note that the version submitted initially should *not* be a rough draft; it should be the final draft, as good as it can be, since it will be graded.) The rewrite will be graded on the basis of how far the revised version improves the initial

version. The rewrite should address problems of writing as well as problems of analysis. The purpose of the rewrite is to learn from mistakes and to work on weaknesses. The original graded version must be submitted along with the rewritten version. The rewrite is due one week from the date on which the original graded version is returned.

Each student must write one paragraph addressing the question: why major in history at the University of West Georgia? The audience for the paragraph is students considering majoring in history at West Georgia. My hope is that students would grant permission for their writing to be posted to the history department's website. The paragraph should be written with the same care and formality as a standard undergraduate paper. It will be graded on the basis of the quality of the argument and of the writing, including organization, grammar, punctuation, and spelling. It is due November 25.

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

Students must take the assessment examination on August 21. The examination is not graded, but no student will pass the class without writing the examination.

No extra credit will be offered. It generally takes me one week to grade a set of papers or exams.

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.

All written assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late assignments will be penalized by deducting one letter grade for each day the assignment is late.

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 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 scheduled except in rare cases of prior approval or with a physician's note.

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

Students should preserve an electronic version of all work in their history courses until completion of the degree. Students pursuing secondary education certification will be required as a condition of that certification to collect their papers in an electronic folio at some point in the future.

Course Schedule

Students are expected to have mastered the assigned reading and assignments before each class meeting.

- Aug. 19 Introduction
- Aug. 21 Assessment examination
- Aug. 26 On learning, getting good grades, and history professors
Reading: “What do they know about how we learn?” (Reserve)
 “Deciding on an academic career” (Reserve)
Research assignment: Find information on one professor in the department.
- Aug. 28 Intellectual honesty and plagiarism
Reading: Benjamin, “Avoiding Plagiarism” (Reserve)
 Writer’s Manual, pp. 121-22
 Writer’s Manual, Ch. 3
First writing quiz
- Sep. 2 Finding primary sources (and quoting them)
Reading: Wallace (Reserve)
 Writer’s Manual, 54-56, 119-21
Research Assignment: Bring to class the address of one good website containing useful primary sources.
- Sep. 4 Reading archival sources
Reading: reserve document from U.S. National Archives
One-page paper summarizing source due. Paper should include one block quotation, one shorter quotation, and one paraphrase
- Sep. 9 Using archival sources
Reading: excerpt from Schroer, *Recasting Race* (Reserve)
Second writing quiz

- Sep. 11 Dr. Goodson's presentation on musical primary sources
- Sep. 16 Citing sources
Reading: *Writer's Manual*, Ch. 5
Students must identify the novel that they will read for the second short paper
- Sep. 18 Third writing quiz
- Sep. 23 Historical explanation and its limits
Reading: Ch. 2 Salem in *After the Fact*
- Sep. 25 Theory and history
Reading: Ch. 5 Turner thesis in *After the Fact*
- Sep. 30 Unreliable sources?
Reading: Ch. 8 in *After the Fact*
Short paper using a novel as a primary source due
- Oct. 2 Finding secondary sources
Fourth writing quiz
- Oct. 7 Evaluating secondary sources
Reading: *Writer's Manual*, Ch. 9
Research assignment: Bring a copy of a good scholarly historical book review to class
- Oct. 9 Fall break: No class
- Oct. 14 Military history
Reading: Introduction to John Keegan's *The Face of Battle* (reserve)
Rewritten paper using the novel due
- Oct. 16 *The New History*, 1-77
- Oct. 21 *The New History*, 78-169
- Oct. 23 *The New History*, 170-end
Identify book to be reviewed
- Oct. 28 Public history
- Oct. 30 Advising
- Nov. 4 Class rescheduled to 4:00 pm Monday, November 10

- Nov. 6 History of education
Reading: Woodson reserve reading
Students who cannot attend the talk on November 10 must submit a one-page analysis of the reading and a question for discussion
- Nov. 10 History Department Colloquium by Dr. Stephanie Wright
4:00 pm, location TBA
- Nov. 11 Individual meetings
- Nov. 13 Individual meetings
- Nov. 18 History of women and gender
Reading: *After the Fact*, “From Rosie to Lucy,” ch. 14
Joan Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis” (Reserve)
Book review due
- Nov. 20 History of sexuality
Reading: Victoria Thompson, “Creating Boundaries: Homosexuality and the Changing Social Order in France, 1830-1870” (Reserve)
- Nov. 25 Fifth writing quiz
Paragraph on the history major at West Georgia due
- Nov. 27 No class for Thanksgiving Break
- Dec. 2 Objectivity
Reading: Evans (Reserve)
- Dec. 4 Those who do not learn from history . . .
Reading: Steinweis, “The Auschwitz Analogy: Holocaust Memory and American Debates over Intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 19 (2005): 276-89 (Reserve)

Mandatory Final Examination

Thursday, December 9, 11:00 am to 1:00 pm