

The Historian's Craft: Methodology
Tues./Thurs. 3:30 – 4:45 pm
HIST 2302
CRN 10963
Pafford 202
Spring 2008

Professor: Dr. Tim Schroer
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Office hours: T/Th 9:00 to noon, 1:30 to 2:30, or by appointment

Course Description

This course 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.

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.

There will also be many readings on reserve in both electronic and hardcopy formats.

Grading

Participation: 10 percent

Two emails on readings:	5 percent
Research assignments:	10 percent
Two short papers:	15 percent
Four writing quizzes:	20 percent
Book Review:	20 percent
Rewrite:	5 percent
Final Examination:	15 percent

Students must attend a talk to be delivered by Professor H. A. Drake on April 17. The time and location are to be announced. The talk and following question and answer period will last from 60 to 90 minutes. Students should stay for the entire talk and following question and answer period.

Thoughtful contributions made in class discussions or during the two talks will be credited in the class participation grade. Behavior (such as tardiness) that impedes other students' learning will be penalized.

During the course of the semester, each student must send two email messages to the instructor reacting to readings for the course. The emails must be sent by 7:00 pm the day before the class meeting dedicated to the readings addressed in the email. The email should include a paragraph thoughtfully reacting to some aspect of the reading and a question related to the reading for class discussion. The emails should be written with the same care and formality as a standard undergraduate paper. The emails will be graded on the basis of the quality of the analysis and of the writing, including organization, grammar, punctuation and spelling. I plan to use the emails as a basis of discussion in the readings.

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 1-2 page summary of a document from the U.S. National Archives. 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 2-3 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*.

The book review is a 3-4 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 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.

There will be five writing quizzes during the semester. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped. The 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 short paper on the novel 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.

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

Students must take the assessment examination on January 15. 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.

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.

Course Schedule

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

- Jan. 10 Introduction
- Jan. 15 Assessment examination
- Jan. 17 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.
- Jan. 22 Intellectual honesty, plagiarism, and effective writing
Reading: Benjamin, "Avoiding Plagiarism" (Reserve)
 Writer's Manual, pp. 121-22
 Writer's Manual, Ch. 3
First writing quiz
- Jan. 24 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.
- Jan. 29 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
- Jan. 31 Using archival sources
Reading: excerpt from Schroer, *Recasting Race* (Reserve)
- Feb. 5 Dr. Bohannon's presentation on sources

- Feb. 7 Novels as primary sources
Second writing quiz
- Feb. 12 Citing sources
Reading: *Writer's Manual*, 72-74, 93-111
Students must identify the novel that they will read for the second short paper
- Feb. 14 Third writing quiz
- Feb. 19 Historical explanation and its limits
Reading: "The Visible and Invisible Worlds of Salem" chapter in *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection*, hardcopy on three-hour reserve at the circulation desk
- Feb. 21 Finding secondary sources
Short paper on the novel due
- Feb. 26 Evaluating secondary sources
Reading: *Writer's Manual*, Ch. 9
- Feb. 28 *The New History*, 1-77
Research assignment: Bring a copy of a good scholarly historical book review to class
- Mar. 4 *The New History*, 78-169
Fourth writing quiz
- Mar. 6 *The New History*, 170-end
- Mar. 11 Advising
Book review due
- Mar. 13 No class
- Mar. 18 Spring Break
- Mar. 20 Spring Break
- Mar. 25 Military history
Reading: Introduction to John Keegan's *The Face of Battle* (reserve)
- Mar. 27 Documentary film
- Apr. 1 Documentary film

- Apr. 3 Individual meetings
- Apr. 8 Individual meetings
- Apr. 10 History of women and gender
Reading: Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" (Reserve)
- Apr. 15 History of religion
Reading: Article by H. A. Drake (reserve)
- Apr. 17 students must attend Professor Drake talk
- Apr. 22 Fifth writing quiz
- Apr. 24 Objectivity
Reading: Evans (Reserve)
- Apr. 29 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, May 8, 2:00 – 4:00 pm