
HISTORY 201: WISCONSIN HISTORY & MATERIAL CULTURE

Spring 2017
Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison
Class Meetings: W, 1:20 – 3:15 PM
Classroom: Sterling 2301*

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Office hours: M, 3:30 – 5:00 PM

1. Course description.

Like all sections of “The Historian’s Craft,” this course will introduce you to the essential skills of a historian: defining important historical questions, collecting and analyzing evidence, presenting original conclusions, and contributing to ongoing scholarly discussions. Essential to the discipline of history, these skills are no less useful in other intellectual and professional endeavors. Fundamentally, this course is designed to make you a critical thinker, capable of processing and contextualizing complex information, synthesizing new knowledge, and communicating effectively in writing and other media. It will also introduce you to the study of material culture, allowing you to read historical artifacts as you would documents to uncover the “patterns of mind” of those who fabricated and used these persistent manifestations of the past.

Unlike other sections of “The Historian’s Craft,” which typically culminate in a proposal for future research, “Wisconsin History & Material Culture” will require you to identify, analyze, and research an artifact of Wisconsin history and to present your findings in three media: a ten-page research paper, a twelve-minute oral presentation, and approximately 2,000 words of web content regarding the artifact. Each student will examine *one* Wisconsin artifact in detail and unpack its meaning and importance to the history of the state. Exceptional projects will potentially contribute to *Wisconsin 101: Our History in Objects*, a statewide, collaborative public history project featuring a web site and broadcasts on Wisconsin Public Radio’s *Wisconsin Life*.

2. Course Objectives. Students will:

- a. Learn how to analyze and interpret material culture artifacts.
- b. Develop the critical skills of a historian as defined by the goals for “The Historian’s Craft” and the “Goals of the History Major” (attached).
- c. Improve their literacy in each of its modes: speaking, reading, writing, and listening.
- d. Contribute to our understanding of the history of Wisconsin through its material culture.

* First class meeting in the Curti Lounge of the Humanities Bldg.

3. Graded Requirements.

- a. Journals (5%): Students will maintain a journal specific to this class, recording their thoughts and findings as the semester progresses. Students will submit their journals to Prof. Hall for evaluation at the beginning of our 7th meeting.
- b. Proposals (10%): Students will submit and orally present research proposals during our 7th meeting.
- c. “Rough outs” (20%): At the beginning of our 11th meeting, each student will submit a polished introduction, a full sentence outline for the balance of the paper, an updated bibliography, and an appendix briefly describing potential web-content vignettes.
- d. Oral presentations (10%): Students will orally present their research during weeks 14 and 15.
- e. Final papers (30%): At the beginning of our 14th meeting, students will submit a polished draft of their 10-page research papers.
- f. Web content (20%): At our 16th meeting, students will submit a 100-200-word “label” that introduces their artifacts to public audiences along with 2-4 complementary vignettes of 400-500 words.
- g. Class participation and quality of peer review feedback (5%).

4. Grading standards for written work.

- a. Organization:
 - i. Does the essay begin with an effective introduction that (a) engages the reader, (b) identifies historical problem under consideration, and (c) posits the student’s thesis?
 - ii. Do paragraphs comprise discrete ideas defined by identifiable topic sentences?
 - iii. Does the student make effective use of transitions (especially between paragraphs)?
 - iv. Does the student arrange his or her paragraphs (ideas) in a logical sequence that furthers the argument while maintaining a coherent, chronological narrative?
 - v. Does the student conclude with a summary of the paper’s most salient findings and (if appropriate) an allusion to their broader significance?
- b. Use of sources:
 - i. Is the student’s research adequate?
 - ii. Does the student make significant / sufficient use of primary sources?
 - iii. Does the student over-rely on select secondary sources or non-scholarly sources?
 - iv. Does the student make appropriate use of the *best available* (rather than the most conveniently accessible) sources?
 - v. Does the student effectively use evidence from these sources to further his or her argument?
 - vi. Does the student understand the historiography of his or her topic?

- vii. Does the student make excessive or inappropriate use of direct quotations?
- c. Overall:
 - i. Does the student present an original, compelling argument substantiated by appropriate historical evidence? Would a general, educated reader find the argument compelling?
 - ii. Does the student demonstrate mastery of the subject matter?
 - iii. Is the essay well written? Would a general, educated reader understand it and enjoy reading it?
 - iv. Is the essay (to include a cover sheet and bibliography) properly formatted in accordance with *The Chicago Manual of Style* and otherwise free of errors?[†]
- 5. How to succeed in this course.
 - a. Do the reading.
 - b. Attend all class meetings.
 - c. Contribute to discussions.
 - d. Be a diligent writing partner.
 - e. Take notes—in class and while reading.
 - f. Work ahead on all graded requirements and submit them on time.
 - g. **Do your own work.**
 - h. Seek the professor's assistance if you are struggling or do not understand the expectations.
- 6. Required Texts. Students are responsible for acquiring the texts listed below. All other readings are available on Learn@UW.

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Janik, Erika. *A Short History of Wisconsin*. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2010.

[†] Proper citation of your sources is not a formality; it is an essential (and therefore graded) component of your research project. Students will format footnotes and bibliographies in accordance with *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th ed. A number of software applications make the tasks of organizing and citing your sources relatively easy. Use of these applications is entirely optional but recommended: EndNote Web (free for UW students via the UW Library); RefWorks (free for UW students via the UW Library); Zotero (free).

7. Course Schedule.

Week 1, 18 January: Introductions—Course Expectations and Historical Problems

Reading: Begin Janik; read student papers by Martin and abdl-Haleem.

Objective: Understand the goals and structure of the course and learn how to identify historical problems

Week 2, 25 January: Introduction to Material Culture

Readings: Prown; Booth, Part I .

Objectives: Appreciate the value of studying material culture; learn the principles of the Prownian method for analyzing artifacts.

Week 3, 1 February: Artifacts of Wisconsin

NOTE: Meet at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, 30 West Mifflin St.

Reading: Continue Janik.

Objective: Appreciate what artifacts can reveal about the history of Wisconsin and identify potential subjects for your own project.

Week 4, 8 February: Conducting Research

Note: Meet in the grand entrance foyer of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Reading: Introduction to Archival Research at the University of Wisconsin.

Objective: Learn how to find primary and documentary sources most relevant to your project.

Week 5, 15 February: Prownian Analysis Practical Exercise

NOTE: Meet at the coatroom of the Chazen Museum of Art.

Reading: Continue Janik.

Objective: Apply the principles of the Prownian method to selected artifacts in the Chazen Museum of Art.

Week 6, 22 February: Critical Reading & Historiography

Readings: Booth, Part II.

Objective: Learn how to interrogate documentary sources and refine historical problems.

Week 7, 1 March: Submit and Present Proposals

Assignment: Submit journal at the beginning of class.

Reading: Finish Janik.

Objectives: Practice the oral communication of your research; receive critical feedback on your projects.

Week 8, all week: Individual appointments

Readings: None.

Objectives: Refine your projects and review your progress in the course to date.

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Week 9, 15 March: Arguments and Outlining

Readings: Booth, Part III through Chapter 12.

Objective: Discuss the construction, organization, and evaluation of historical arguments.

Week 10, all week: Spring Break

Week 11, 29 March: Scholarly Writing

Assignment: "Rough Out" due in triplicate at the beginning of class.

Reading: Booth, Chapters 13, 15-16.

Objective: Discuss the standards, conventions, and style of academic writing in the humanities.

Week 12, 5 April: Peer Review, Revision, and Presentation

Reading: Booth, Chapters 14 and 17

Objectives: Learn how to provide constructive editorial criticism and revise your own writing; address the principles of effective oral communication and presentation.

Week 13, 12 April: Oral Presentations I

Assignment: Feedback due to writing partners by noon, Monday, 10 April.

Reading: None.

Objective: Practice the skills of oral presentation and providing constructive, collegial criticism.

Week 14, 19 April: Oral Presentations II

Assignment: Submit final paper at beginning of class.

Reading: None.

Objective: Practice the skills of oral presentation and providing constructive, collegial criticism.

Week 15, 26 April: Writing for the Web

Reading: Borowsky.

Objective: Learn how to effectively convey the truth of an artifact in 100 to 250 words, and how to elaborate upon in in 2-4 vignettes of no more than 500 words.

Week 16, 3 May: Wrap-up and Reflections

Assignment: 100-word label due at the beginning of class.

Reading: None.

Objectives: Review the semester and discuss possibilities for further research and publication.

Goals for HIST 201 - "The Historian's Craft"

Approved by Undergraduate Council, December 8, 2010

The "Historian's Craft" courses offer an opportunity to experience the excitement and rewards of doing original historical research and conveying the results of that work to others. Through engagement with locally available or on-line archival materials, the courses encourage undergraduates to become historical detectives who can define important historical questions, collect and analyze evidence, present original conclusions, and contribute to ongoing discussions—the skills we have defined as central to the history major.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be prepared to undertake substantial historical research and writing in a variety of courses, including the HIST 600 seminar. Specific goals for this course include learning to:

- 1. Ask Questions:** develop the habit of asking questions, including questions that may generate new directions for historical research.
 - Develop historical questions through engagement with primary sources, secondary literature, and/or broader ethical, theoretical, or political questions.
 - Ask historical questions to guide individual research.
 - Pose questions to prompt productive group discussion.
- 2. Find Sources:** learn the logic of footnotes, bibliographies, search engines, libraries, and archives, and consult them to identify and locate source materials.
 - Identify the purposes, limitations, authorities, and parameters of various search engines available both through the library and on the world-wide web.
 - Take advantage of the range of library resources, including personnel.
 - Locate printed materials, digital materials, and other objects.
 - Be aware of, and able to use, interlibrary loan.
- 3. Evaluate Sources:** determine the perspective, credibility, and utility of source materials.
 - Distinguish between primary and secondary material for a particular topic.
 - Determine, to the extent possible, conditions of production and preservation.

- Consider the placement of sources in relation to other kinds of documents and objects.
- Identify the perspective or authorial stance of a source.
- Summarize an argument presented in a text.
- Distinguish between the content of a source and its meaning in relation to a particular question.

4. Develop and Present an Argument: use sources appropriately to create, modify, and support tentative conclusions and new questions.

- Write a strong, clear thesis statement.
- Revise and rewrite a thesis statement based on additional research or analysis.
- Identify the parts of an argument necessary to support a thesis convincingly.
- Cite, paraphrase, and quote evidence appropriately to support each part of an argument.

5. Plan Further Research: draw upon preliminary research to develop a plan for further investigation.

- Write a research proposal, including a tentative argument, plan for research, annotated bibliography, and abstract.
- Identify the contribution of an argument to existing scholarship.

6. Communicate Findings Effectively: make formal and informal, written and oral presentations tailored to specific audiences.

- Write a clearly argued, formal academic paper, using appropriate style and bibliographic apparatus.
- Deliver a concise, effective, formal verbal presentation with appropriate supporting material.
- Contribute constructively to discussion, whether proposing or responding to an idea.

Goals of the History Major

(approved by the department, March 23, 2011; revised by the department, February 27, 2013)

The goal of the history major is to offer students the knowledge and skills they need to gain a critical perspective on the past. Students will learn to define important historical questions, analyze relevant evidence with rigor and creativity, and present convincing arguments and conclusions based on original research in a manner that contributes to academic and public discussions. In History, as in other humanistic disciplines, students will practice resourceful inquiry and careful reading. They will advance their writing and public speaking skills to engage historical and contemporary issues.

To ensure that students gain exposure to some of the great diversity of topics, methodologies, and philosophical concerns that inform the study of history, the department requires a combination of courses that offers breadth, depth, and variety of exposition. Through those courses, students should develop:

1. Broad acquaintance with several geographic areas of the world and with both the pre-modern and modern eras.
2. Familiarity with the range of sources and modes through which historical information can be found and expressed. Sources may include textual, oral, physical, and visual materials. The data within them may be qualitative or quantitative, and they may be available in printed, digital, or other formats. Modes of expression may include textbooks, monographs, scholarly articles, essays, literary works, or digital presentations.
3. In-depth understanding of a topic of their choice through original or creative research.
4. The ability to identify the skills developed in the history major and to articulate the applicability of those skills to a variety of endeavors and career paths beyond the professional practice of history.

Skills Developed in the Major

Define Important Historical Questions

1. Pose a historical question and explain its academic and public implications.
2. Using appropriate research procedures and aids, find the secondary resources in history and other disciplines available to answer a historical question.
3. Evaluate the evidentiary and theoretical bases of pertinent historical conversations in order to highlight opportunities for further investigation.

Collect and Analyze Evidence

1. Identify the range and limitations of primary sources available to engage the historical problem under investigation.
2. Examine the context in which sources were created, search for chronological and other relationships among them, and assess the sources in light of that knowledge.

3. Employ and, if necessary, modify appropriate theoretical frameworks to examine sources and develop arguments.

Present Original Conclusions

1. Present original and coherent findings through clearly written, persuasive arguments and narratives.
2. Orally convey persuasive arguments, whether in formal presentations or informal discussions.
3. Use appropriate presentation formats and platforms to share information with academic and public audiences.

Contribute to Ongoing Discussions

1. Extend insights from research to analysis of other historical problems.
2. Demonstrate the relevance of a historical perspective to contemporary issues.
3. Recognize, challenge, and avoid false analogies, overgeneralizations, anachronisms, and other logical fallacies.