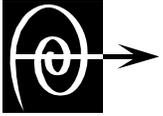


Senior Thesis Colloquium

HISTORY 680/690 – DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, UW-MADISON – SPRING 2009



Goals

This course is designed to *enhance and support* your senior thesis work in three ways. First, it offers a forum in which you and your fellow thesis writers can address collectively the challenges common to writing and research in every historical field: How do I find a good research question? How do I find the right sources? Now that I've found good sources, what do I do with them? What's the best way of organizing my thesis? Does my evidence support my argument? Or do I need to present it differently? In other words, we will address the *generic* dimensions of writing a senior thesis. Throughout the semester, you must also consult closely with your senior thesis advisor about issues specific to your particular topic and about your schedule for the remainder of the semester.

The second goal is professionalization. The colloquium will enhance your skills at: a) presenting your own work in as professional manner as possible, b) critiquing others' work constructively, and c) listening to oral presentations and responding to them intelligently on the fly. These are skills that will stand you in good stead, regardless whether you pursue graduate work in history or some other avenue in life.

The colloquium also has a social dimension that will enhance your thesis. Together, we will function as your support group. At each step in the process of writing a senior thesis—from your initial attempts to put thoughts on paper through final revisions of the thesis—you will share your work with your colleagues in brain-storming sessions. At times you may have specific issues to bring before the colloquium for our collective advice; at other times, you may have valuable suggestions or insights to offer others.

Rhythm and requirements

The rhythm of the semester will be geared to the steps that the writing process entails. You may rest assured that the pace will intensify as the end of the semester draws near! A big part of my job is to keep you on track so that those of you who are first-semester students are well-positioned to begin drafting your thesis by the end of the semester and those who are in their second semester will be able to complete the thesis in a timely fashion.

First-semester students will have a series of assignments as they move through the initial stages of formulating a project and finding appropriate sources. For the second-semester

students, the principal requirements are faithful attendance, engaged participation, and hard work on your own project.

You should be sure to keep a copy at hand of Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007 – be sure to use this edition!). At appropriate moments during the semester, we will discuss some of the chapters in the book.

If you should occasionally feel the need for inspiration, I would recommend Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (New York: Vintage Books, 1953) or later edition. Multiple copies are available in the library.

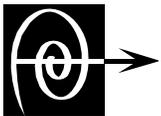
If you need to improve your writing style (and who doesn't!), this old standby is indispensable: William Strunk, Jr., and E. G. White, *The Elements of Style*. 4th ed. New York: Longman, 2000. (The original edition is also available online at <http://www.bartleby.com/141/>.)

Need to hone your analytical skills? Consult M. Neil Browne and Stuart M. Keeley, *Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 200x – any recent edition); or the classic by David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

For a reminder that the meanings of words themselves have changed over time, see Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

All of these books are on reserve at College Library, and Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, is also available at local bookstores. I strongly urge you to buy it.

Warning – do your own work!



Plagiarism will not be tolerated and is grounds for failing the course. If you need a refresher on what exactly constitutes plagiarism, including inadvertent plagiarism, consult *A Manual for Writers*, pp. 77-80, and <http://www.plagiarism.org>.

Grading

Attendance is mandatory. If urgent circumstances require you to miss a meeting, please be sure to let me know.

Your grade will be based 100% on participation (attendance, preparation, discussion, and for first-semester students, submission of assignments).

Semester schedule

Note that the details are subject to change, as circumstance warrant—though always after collective discussion. Since the colloquium includes first- as well as second-semester students, our schedule will be rather complicated. Some weeks, we will all meet together, and in other weeks I'll meet separately with one group or the other. All students are welcome, however, at all colloquium meetings.

Date	First-semester students	Second-semester students
January 22	Joint meeting – intro, updates on projects, deadlines	
January 29	11:00 a.m. to approx. 12:00 p.m.	
	Joint meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of revised syllabus • Roundtable: what is the single most important piece of advice that the second-semester students would give the first-semester students? 	
	Approx. 12:00-1:00 p.m.	
	Attendance for this part is optional (and recommended).	Discussion of drafting issues: Read (or review) Turabian, <i>A Manual for Writers</i> , ch. 4 (Engaging Sources), ch. 5 (Planning Your Argument), ch. 6 (Planning a First Draft), ch. 7 (Drafting Your Report), and ch. 8 (Presenting Evidence in Tables and Figures).
February 5	Discussion of <i>History: A Very Short Introduction</i> and of chapters 1-4 and 14-16 of Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i> . Question: what do historians do, how do they do it, and why?	No meeting.
February 12	Joint meeting, 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.	
	Read all students' section drafts and think about questions that you might want to ask.	Peer review of abstract, outline, and a section of thesis draft: submit section draft (w/outline and brief abstract) to me by email <u>by noon on Mon., February 9</u> , and I will upload them to Learn@UW. 2 nd -Sems will be assigned to present comments (constructive criticism) in colloquium.
February 19	Brief individual presentations of your project and your current thinking about it. Read Turabian, 13.1-13.2 as you prepare for this. Whirlwind tour of Historical Society and Memorial libraries.	No meeting

Date	First-semester students	Second-semester students
February 26	11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	
	No meeting until 12:00 p.m.	Updates and discussion
	12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.	
	Prospectus-writing workshop (read Turabian, chapter 5); finding sources.	No meeting for the second hour.
March 5	First-semester students: prospectus is due (by email). No meeting – Prof. D. will have office hours for one-on-one consultations.	
March 12	11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. only: read each other's prospectuses on Learn@UW for collective discussion.	No meeting
		Prof. D. will be available for individual consultation, 12:00-1:00 p.m. TARGET DATE: Submit completed draft of thesis, with bibliography and footnotes, to your advisor.
March 19	Spring break	
March 26	No meeting today	Updates and discussion – review Part III of <i>A Manual of Style</i>
Joint meeting, 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.		
April 2	Detailed bibliography due – bring copies to colloquium for collective discussion.	Offer 1 st -Sems the benefit of your experience in discussion of bibliographies.
April 9	Bring copies of your best primary source for collective discussion.	No colloquium meeting. TARGET DATE: Thesis advisor returns your thesis draft for revisions. Be sure to have read chs. 11-12 of <i>A Manual for Writers</i> .
April 16	11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	
	No meeting	Discussion of advisor comments and revision issues
	12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.	
	Detailed outline and revised bibliography due.	TBA
April 23	11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	
	No meeting	Optional brain-storming session
	12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.	
	Individual meetings w/Prof. D.	No meeting
April 30	Presentations	No meeting TARGET DATE: submit finished thesis to your advisor
May 7	Second-semester students' presentations – open to the "public"	
May 15	TARGET DATE: approval of thesis	