Senior Thesis Colloquium


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/.)


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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>First-semester students</th>
<th>Second-semester students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 22</td>
<td>Joint meeting – intro, updates on projects, deadlines</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 29</td>
<td>11:00 a.m. to approx. 12:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Discussion of drafting issues: Read (or review)Turabian, <em>A Manual for Writers</em>, 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).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Joint meeting:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Discussion of revised syllabus</td>
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<td>• Roundtable: what is the single most important piece of advice that the second-semester students would give the first-semester students?</td>
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<td>Approx. 12:00-1:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Attendance for this part is optional (and recommended).</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 12</td>
<td>Joint meeting, 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Peer review of abstract, outline, and a section of thesis draft: submit section draft (w/outline and brief abstract) to me by email by noon on Mon., February 9, and I will upload them to Learn@UW. 2nd-Sems will be assigned to present comments (constructive criticism) in colloquium.</td>
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<td>Read all students’ section drafts and think about questions that you might want to ask.</td>
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<td>February 19</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>No meeting.</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>First-semester students</td>
<td>Second-semester students</td>
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<td>February 26</td>
<td>11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Updates and discussion</td>
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<td>No meeting until 12:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>No meeting for the second hour.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Prospectus-writing workshop (read Turabian, chapter 5); finding sources.</td>
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March 5

First-semesters: 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.

March 19

Spring break

March 26

No meeting today

April 2

Detailed bibliography due – bring copies to colloquium for collective discussion.

April 9

Bring copies of your best primary source for collective discussion.

April 16

11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

No meeting

April 23

11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

No meeting

April 30

Presentations

May 7

Second-semester students’ presentations – open to the “public”

May 15

TARGET DATE: approval of thesis

TARGET DATE: Submit completed draft of thesis, with bibliography and footnotes, to your advisor.

TARGET DATE: Thesis advisor returns your thesis draft for revisions. Be sure to have read chs. 11-12 of A Manual for Writers.

TARGET DATE: Offer 1st-Sems the benefit of your experience in discussion of bibliographies.

TARGET DATE: Thesis advisor reviews your thesis draft for the second hour.

TARGET DATE: Submit finished thesis to your advisor.