

University of Wisconsin—Madison

Department of History

Semester II, 2013-14

History 829

**RESEARCH SEMINAR IN
LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN HISTORY**

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Office hours:
Fri. 10:00 a.m. - noon (sign-up)
Fri. noon - 1:00 p.m. (walk-in)

Orientation

This seminar seeks to advance its members' historical research on Latin America and the Caribbean. In order to do this, it will:

1. Acquaint members with Latin American and Caribbean source materials in libraries and archives;
2. Introduce, discuss, and critique methods and techniques that may be useful in the analysis of Latin American and Caribbean sources;
3. Survey recent literature for creative ways in which historians have cleared empirical, methodological, and epistemological hurdles that are common in research, or have come up with original ways of looking at and employing sources; and,
4. Serve as a forum and workshop for initiating or continuing a major individual research project and for resolving specific problems that arise during the conduct of research.

The seminar will consist of four units or kinds of sessions. The first is an introductory forum during which we'll grapple with recent debates about the historian's craft and the nature of historical knowledge claims. We will strive here for a baseline understanding of epistemological and theoretical issues posed by contemporary historical practices. In doing so, we will seek to develop a common vocabulary for talking about these issues and a shared sense of the ways that history and theory have informed each other. Further, we will read selectively about trends and problems in contemporary Latin American and Caribbean historiography. Assessing and critiquing current historiographical practice, we will envisage alternative ways of narrating this history with the sources available and new ones yet to be unearthed or created.

Second, the research practicum/problems unit is designed to accomplish one of two things, depending on the seminar member's stage in the graduate training cycle:

a) Members who are currently writing their Master's theses or Ph.D. dissertations will outline for the seminar an especially difficult problem that they are encountering or have encountered while conceptualizing or drafting their study. In addition to a one- or two-page abstract of the issues involved, they will present samples of the documents that might be (or have been) pertinent to their resolution. Together they will form the basis for in-class discussions.

b) Members who are not writing a thesis or dissertation will present the results of the library practicum, as outlined in a separate sheet (attached). The purpose of the practicum is to construct research questions and identify appropriate sources, both bibliographic and archival, for a (hypothetical or ideal) larger study. It is expected that the practicum will delineate the broader theme of the students' seminar paper (see below).

Third, during the research methods unit, seminar members will have an opportunity to sample analytical approaches, methods, and techniques drawn from a variety of subdisciplines, and to scrutinize primary sources drawn from several countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, and from different time periods. This unit will revolve around the sources themselves, samples of which will be supplied both by me and by members who have recently returned from the field.

Fourth, the concluding conference will consist of several structured paper sessions over the course of the morning on May 7. Papers/chapters will be due Friday, May 2 in digital format, uploaded to our course page on Learn@UW.

Expectations

Members' chief responsibility is to conduct research on and write a paper or thesis chapter or two. Specifically, this means that:

a) Those who are engaged in thesis or dissertation work will present a polished chapter (or a set of two) of their work. This material needs to have been written (or substantially revised) during the course of the semester. In the case of revised chapters, the imprint of critiques and suggestions made by seminar members should be in sharp relief.

b) Those who are not engaged in thesis or dissertation work will present a paper (20-25 pages) on a topic that presages or anticipates work on an upcoming thesis or dissertation. The paper will interrogate as diverse a pool of sources as possible and will employ methodologies outside your comfort zone. The paper is meant to sharpen your ability to find and use diverse sources, subject them to a variety of methods of interpretation and analysis, and arrive at an original, coherent, and empirically robust thesis or argument.

In addition to the chapter or paper, students will be asked to make a classroom presentation during the research practicum/problems unit, as outlined above.

SCHEDULE AND READINGS

I. UNIT I: INTRODUCTORY FORUM

Week 1 (Jan. 22): General Orientation

No assigned readings. Self-presentations and preliminary sketch of research plans. Prepare schedule for Units III and IV. Schedule individual meetings with Franco before the Wednesday, February 12th. session.

Week 2 (Jan. 29): History ¿por qué y para qué?

Readings:

Hayden White, "The Burden of History," in *Tropics of Discourse* (Baltimore, 1978), 27-50.

Luis González, "De la múltiple utilización de la historia," in Carlos Pereyra et. al., *Historia ¿para qué?* (México, 1980), 53-74.

Carolyne Steedman, "La Théorie qui n'en pas une, or, Why Clio Doesn't Care," *History and Theory*, 31,4 (December 1992):33-50.

Florencia E. Mallon, "The Promise and Dilemma of Subaltern Studies: Perspectives from Latin American History," AHA Forum, *American Historical Review* 99, 5 (1994):1491-1515.

Week 3 (Feb. 5): NO CLASS

Week 4 (Feb. 12): Towards a common language

Reading:

Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory*, 2d. ed. (Ithaca, 2005).

Week 5 (Feb. 19) The State of Latin American & Caribbean History

Readings:

John H. Coatsworth, "Structures, Endowments, and Institutions in the Economic History of Latin America," *Latin American Research Review* 40, 3 (2005):126-144.

Steve J. Stern, "Paradigms of Conquest: History, Historiography, and Politics," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24, supplement (1992):1-34.

A.J.R. Russell-Wood, "Brazilian Archives and Recent Historiography on Colonial Brazil," *Latin American Research Review* 36, 1 (2001): 75-105.

Greg Grandin, "Can the Subaltern be Seen? Photography and the Affects of Nationalism," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 84, 1 (Feb 2004):83-111.

Sueann Caulfield, "The History of Gender in the Historiography of Latin America," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 81, 3-4 (Nov 2001): 449-490.

UNIT II: RESEARCH PRACTICUM/PROBLEMS

Weeks 6 & 7 (Feb. 26 & Mar. 5): Challenges of Research Design and Analysis

During these two sessions, members will circulate either their research practica (for those not writing theses) or their "challenge" summaries (with attached documents), and will make short oral presentations to the seminar about them.

Week 8 (March 12): NO CLASS

Week 9 (March 19): SPRING BREAK

Week 10 (March 26) Varieties of Historical Sources and their Uses

Alejandra Dubcovsky, "The Testimony of Thomás de la Torre, a Spanish Slave," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 70, 3 (July 2013):559-580.

Rodney D. Anderson and Tamara Spike, "Archival Report. Making History Count: The Guadalajara Census Project, 1791-1930," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 87, 2 (May 2007):327-52.

Ida Altman, "Marriage, Family, and Ethnicity in the Early Spanish Caribbean," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 70, 2 (April 2013):225-250.

Carrie Hamilton, "On Being a 'Good' Oral History Interviewer: Empathy, Ethics, and the Politics of Oral History," *Oral History* 36, 2 Connections (Autumn 2008):35-43.

UNIT III: RESEARCH METHODS

Weeks 11 & 12 (April 2, & 9): The Sources and the Historian's Imagination

Readings TBA

During these four sessions we will come together in the manner of a workshop to scrutinize different kinds of Latin American and Caribbean source materials, from notarial records to government documents to oral interviews. Some of these records will be drawn from my research, others from students' research, and still others from printed sources. They will be circulated a week ahead.

Weeks 13-15 (Apr. 16, 23 & 30)

No regular meetings scheduled, but I encourage you to submit to me drafts of your ongoing work, or to meet with me about specific problems you are facing in the course of your writing. I will announce special office hours for this purpose.

UNIT IV: STUDENT CONFERENCE

Week 16 (May 7)

Concluding conference as described above.

History 829 - Instructions for Library Research Practicum
(following Steve J. Stern)

Pick a Latin American region (for our purposes, the Caribbean counts as one) and a “long century” of personal interest. This should correspond to your research topic.

Identify the following:

(a) a list of 20-30 published primary sources (or manuscript sources in the library) for the region and time period chosen (ca. 2 typed pages of precise citations);

(b) the three or four more interesting such sources for your purposes, given the kinds of topics and problems you find appealing (provide brief annotated remarks on these sources; ca. 1 page);

(c) the key library resources available to search out the secondary literature relevant to the region and time period (include all key resources: people, published guides, electronic media, etc.; ca. ½ page);

(d) the leading journals of interest published within the country or region under study (ca. ½ page);

(e) the focused research paper topic you settled upon by the conclusion of your practicum exercise (ca. 1 paragraph).

Upload the results of your practica by Feb. 21 for the Week 6 session (Feb. 26) and come prepared to speak about 5-10 minutes on how you got your results. People may ask you questions about your practicum, the sources, etc. Let the class know if your practicum assisted you in the definition of your research topic.