

**History 680/690**  
**Senior Thesis/Honors Thesis Colloquium**  
**Spring 2019**

Professor Kathryn Ciancia

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 4:00-5:00pm, Thursdays, 2:45-3:45pm, or by appointment

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Seminar: Tuesdays, 1:20-3:15pm, 5245 Mosse Humanities Building

### **Learning Outcomes**

Writing an original research paper is both challenging and rewarding. It requires that you master many parts of the so-called Historian's Craft—creating a research question, surveying a field of secondary literature, working out the kinds of conversations that historians are having, finding appropriate primary sources, crafting an argument using those sources, inserting yourself into a conversation, and coming up with an answer to the dreaded “So What?” question (.....phew). This colloquium is designed to help guide you as you plan, write, edit, and submit your senior thesis. The work we'll do in this colloquium is less about *content* and more about *process*. You'll each already be working with a faculty adviser, and our class will supplement this work, rather than replace it. First-semester writers (FSW) and second-semester writers (SSW) will meet jointly, but will work on different assignments (I will discuss the plans for a separate set of assignments with the first-semester writers at the beginning of the semester). By the end of the semester, first semester writers will produce a complete research proposal, while second semester writers will complete the undergraduate thesis.

### **Course Expectations**

This 2-credit course has 2 hours of group meetings per week (each seminar counts as two hours according to UW-Madison's credit hour policy). The course also carries the expectation that you will spend an average of at least 2 hours outside of class for every hour in the classroom. In other words, in addition to class time, plan to allot an average of at least 4 hours per week for reading, writing, and preparing for discussions.

### **My Approach**

There are **four** parts to my approach to research and writing, which are reflected in the syllabus.

#### **Research and writing:**

1. Is a *process*. It does not happen in a linear fashion. This means that while the class is designed to provide a forum for students working through the various stages of research and writing, there will be lots of back-and-forth between questions, sources, and historiography. In particular, I believe that the “research phase” and

the “writing phase” should not be artificially separated out—in fact, they are deeply entwined. The upshot: you should begin writing sooner rather than later.

2. Involves **collaboration**. I am here to provide advice, guidance, and support; you are here to help one another through peer review exercises and by creating a supportive community of scholars.
3. Involves **self-reflection**. As part of the colloquium, we’ll do some in-class journaling. I also recommend that you keep a note of your thoughts as you work through the research process. This is separate from note-taking or formal writing and is instead an opportunity to think about what is going right and what is going less well (and how you can change things). It also allows you to gain some well-needed emotional distance from your project.
4. Involves learning the **rules of the game**. Writing a successful thesis means adhering to professional standards—from footnoting properly to using evidence judiciously. These are issues that we’ll talk about throughout the semester.

### Course Mechanics:

- Please find the weekly schedule below. You should note that the schedule is not set in stone and may change as we work through the semester, based on your needs as a group.
- There is no course reader for the class, but I may post some short readings up on our Canvas site when I think they will be helpful. I’ll let you know more about these occasional readings in class.
- Please review the syllabus carefully to see what you need to submit on Canvas and/or bring to class. Unless otherwise instructed, you should bring hard copies of the assignments to class so that they can be annotated by hand.
- Any assignments that are due on Canvas must be submitted at least 48 hours prior to the class (i.e. by 1:20pm the preceding Sunday). Assignments must be submitted as Word documents. Further particulars for each assignment will be explained in class.
- All assignments should have at least 1-inch side margins, use 12-pt. font (Times New Roman), and be double-spaced.
- Please save your file in the following format: “yourlastname\_the week #” (e.g. “Smith\_week 3”)
- If you need a deadline extension, you must get in touch with me ASAP.
- Attendance to **all** meetings is mandatory. Unaccounted absences will severely impact your final grade. If you repeatedly skip class, you will simply fail the course.
- The grade for second semester thesis writers can only be submitted once an electronic copy of the thesis has been received.
- It is your responsibility to meet with your faculty advisor regularly.

### Grade:

Active participation and attendance (including group activities and peer feedback): 60%  
Satisfactory completion of all written assignments: 40%

## Weekly Schedule

### Week 1 (Jan 22): Introductions

#### **Submit on Canvas:**

- For SSW: your research prospectus, which you submitted at the end of last semester.
- For FSW: a brief paragraph summarizing your plans for the senior thesis.

### Week 2 (Jan 29): Expectations

#### **Bring to class ONLY:**

- The sample senior thesis with your annotations.
- A completed “feedback” worksheet.

### Week 3 (Feb 5): Inserting Yourself into a Historiographical Field (succinctly)

#### **Bring to class ONLY:**

- A physical copy of the most important monograph related to your research. Be prepared to tell the class your true feelings about the book and how they have changed over time. This is a conversation about argument, methodology, and style. As such, the following phrase is banned: “this book includes a lot of useful information.” ☺

#### **Submit on Canvas AND bring to class:**

- One paragraph that summarizes the historiographical conversation in your field, and one paragraph that “pivots” to your thesis (you should use a topic sentence that introduces your argument—e.g. “in contrast to X, this thesis...,” “building on the work of Y, I argue that...,” “while these scholars have tended to ignore Z, this thesis argues that it was, in fact, critical...”). *I would recommend that you do not simply cut-and-paste from your existing paper, but instead write these paragraphs as if they are part of a condensed proposal to a potential publisher.* The whole thing should be no longer than two pages, double-spaced.

### Week 4 (Feb 12): Primary Sources

#### **Bring to class ONLY:**

- Physical copies of one or two of your primary sources. Do not choose the same source(s) that you chose for the equivalent primary source analysis assignment in the Fall semester (or, if you have only one main source, choose a different section

to analyze). Please choose the source or sources that you find to be richest—i.e. a source whose meaning is not obvious on the surface and that requires you to use your highest-order skills as an historian. Think broadly and outside of your comfort zone, if you can! The source does not have to be textual; it could be a photograph, a physical object, or a map.

**Submit on Canvas AND bring to class:**

- A paragraph (or more), either from your draft paper or written anew, in which you analyze the source.
- A separate paragraph (one that is not intended for inclusion in the thesis) in which you reflect honestly on potential problems with using the source.

**Week 5 (Feb 19): FREE WEEK: Students' Choice**

**Submit on Canvas AND bring to class:**

- A part of your thesis that you are currently working on and would like feedback on. This could be one of the assignments from Week 3 or 4 that you are revising, based on previous feedback. Or it could be an altogether new piece of writing.
- A paragraph in which you explain the issues that you are having and what specifically you need feedback on.

**Week 6 (Feb 26): Structuring Your Paper**

**Submit on Canvas AND bring to class:**

- A detailed plan of your paper.
- An explanation of how the plan has changed from the prospectus you submitted in Week 1 and a brief reflection on any particular difficulties you are having—or envisage having—as you structure the argument and begin to write the paper.

**Week 7 (March 5): (Re)drafting an Introduction**

**Submit on Canvas AND bring to class:**

- A draft introduction.

**Week 8 (March 12): FREE WEEK: Students' Choice**

**Submit on Canvas AND bring to class:**

- A part of your thesis that you are currently working on and would like feedback on. This could be one of the assignments from Week 6 or 7 that you are revising, based on previous feedback. Or it could be an altogether new piece of writing.
- A paragraph in which you explain the issues that you are having and what specifically you need feedback on.

**\*\*\*SPRING BREAK\*\*\***

**Week 9 (March 26): Rough Draft of Paper**

**Submit on Canvas AND bring to class:**

- A first full draft of your paper.
- A paragraph describing the problems that you are having with the drafting process.

**Week 10 (April 2): (Re)writing the Conclusion**

**Submit on Canvas AND bring to class:**

- Your introduction and your conclusion (each clearly labeled).

**Week 11 (April 9): Final Drafts Workshop**

**Submit on Canvas AND bring to class:**

- The latest draft of your paper.
- A paragraph on what you have changed and what you still need feedback on.

**Week 12 (April 16): NO CLASS MEETING**

*Individual consultations with Prof. Ciancia during class time (if needed)*

**Week 13 (April 23): Presenting Your Research Orally**

**Bring to class ONLY:**

- a draft plan for presenting your research.

**Week 14 (April 30): NO CLASS MEETING**

*We'll do final presentations this week (date, time, and location: TBA).* This is a fantastic opportunity for you to present your findings to a broader audience of students, faculty, and friends.

## **Class Policies and Further Resources**

### **Office Hours**

My office hours are posted at the top of the syllabus. Please come by! These hours are set-aside specifically for students. If you are unable to make these times, please send me an email so that we can set up a mutually convenient appointment time.

### **Class Etiquette**

There is no laptop use in class (unless otherwise directed) and you must make sure that all devices with a screen are switched off or put on silent for the duration. Come and speak with me if you are concerned about this policy.

We will begin class on time, so please make sure that you arrive a few minutes early. Persistent tardiness (as well as going AWOL!) leads to a lower participation grade.

### **Academic Honesty**

There is information about what constitutes plagiarism here ([http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA\\_plagiarism.html](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html)), but please come and speak with Professor Ciancia during office hours if you have questions or concerns.

### **Disabilities**

Disability guidelines for course accommodations may be found at the UW McBurney Disability Resource Center site: <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/> Please come and see Professor Ciancia if you would like to talk further.

### **Religious Observance Policy**

Students must notify Professor Ciancia within the first two weeks of class of the specific days or dates on which they request relief.