

History 680/690
Senior Thesis/Honors Thesis Colloquium
Spring 2017

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Office hours: Mondays, 1:20-3:20pm, or by appointment
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The Basics

Writing an original research paper is a challenging, yet rewarding, task. 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. 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 and second-semester writers will meet jointly, but will work on different assignments (I will distribute a separate set of assignments for first-semester writers). By the end of the semester, first semester writers will produce a complete research proposal, while second semester writers will complete the undergraduate thesis.

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. So 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. This means that 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) and to gain a little 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 Learn@UW 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 Dropbox at Learn@UW 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 Learn@UW must be submitted at least 48 hours prior to the class (i.e. by 1:20pm on the preceding Tuesday). 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.
- 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 the 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.
- Toward the end of the semester (probably in Week 14), we will schedule a Senior Thesis presentation. This is a fantastic opportunity for you to present your findings to a broader audience of students, faculty, and friends and to showcase all of the hard work that you have done.

Grade:

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

Weekly Schedule

Week 1 (Jan 19): Introductions

Submit on Learn@UW AND bring to class:

- your revised research prospectus, which you submitted at the end of last semester

Week 2 (Jan 26): Expectations/How to Read Efficiently

Bring to class ONLY:

- the sample senior theses that you have annotated
- a completed “feedback” worksheet for each thesis

Week 3 (Feb 2): Historiography I: Reviewing the Field

Submit on Learn@UW AND bring to class:

- an annotated bibliography of secondary works
- a literature review of at least 2-3 paragraphs in which you put the historians into conversation with one another (rather than simply summarizing them). Use phrases like, “While X says this, Y says this....” You should be sure to include properly formatted footnotes.

Bring to class ONLY:

- a physical copy of the most important monograph related to your research

Week 4 (Feb 9): Historiography II: Inserting Yourself in the Conversation

Submit on Learn@UW AND bring to class:

- a revised version of the “literature paragraphs” assignment from last week with an added paragraph in which you insert yourself into the historiography. Make it clear HOW you aim to do this. For instance, are you using different sources/methodologies? Are you changing the fundamental questions themselves? Craft a thesis statement based on the following: “In this thesis, I argue that....”

Week 5 (Feb 16): Connecting Primary Sources to *Your* Question I

Bring to class:

- a physical copy of one of your primary sources

Submit on Learn@UW AND bring to class:

- a paragraph explaining how you plan to use the source to make the argument that you laid out in last week's thesis statement (or a revised version of that thesis statement). Provide details of any potential problems that you might have with using the source. If you feel that people might criticize you for using this source to make your argument, explain how you might respond to such criticism.

Week 6 (Feb 23): Connecting Primary Sources to *Your* Question II

Submit on Learn@UW AND bring to class:

- two paragraphs in which you use at least TWO sources to make the argument that you laid out in last week's thesis statement
- a paragraph in which you reflect on any problems that you had with this assignment

Week 7 (March 2): Planning and Drafting

Submit on Learn@UW AND bring to class:

- a revised plan of your paper, with a short description and explanation of how the plan has changed from the prospectus you submitted in Week 1
- a short paragraph in which you reflect on any particular difficulties you are having—or envisage having—as you structure the argument and begin to write the paper

Week 8 (March 9): Drafting an Introduction

Submit on Learn@UW AND bring to class:

- a draft introduction

Week 9 (March 16): Drafting the Body of the Paper

Submit on Learn@UW AND bring to class:

- a draft of around 5-10 pages of your paper (or more if you are further along in the process!)

SPRING BREAK

Week 10 (March 30): Draft of Paper

Submit on Learn@UW AND bring to class:

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

Week 11 (April 6): Revising Your Paper

Submit on Learn@UW AND bring to class:

- a paragraph describing the overall areas that you are revising, what you are prioritizing, and what you are particularly concerned about as you begin the process of revisions

Week 12 (April 13): Final Drafts Workshop/Presenting Your Research Orally

Submit on Learn@UW AND bring to class:

- the latest draft of your paper
- a paragraph on what you have changed and what you still need to work on

Week 13 (April 20): Presenting Your Research Orally

Bring to class ONLY:

- a draft plan for presenting your research

Week 14 (April 27): Meetings with Prof. Ciancia during class time (if needed)

****We'll do final presentations this week****

Week 15 (May 4): Meetings with Prof. Ciancia during class time (if needed)