

## Senior Thesis/Honors Thesis Colloquium

History 680/690 – Fall 2013

Professor Pernille Ipsen

Sterling 3307

pipsen@wisc.edu

Office hours: Tuesdays 1-3, or by appointment (email me).

Meetings: Thursdays 1:20 - 3:20, HUMANITIES 5245

Required reading: Please read the guidelines and advise for writing an honors thesis on the history departments website before we meet:

<http://history.wisc.edu/undergraduate/researchinhistory.htm>

Copies of other required readings will be posted on learn@UW or passed out in seminar.

### Goals

This course is designed to enhance and support your senior/honors 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 thesis. Throughout the semester, you must also consult closely with your thesis advisor about issues specific to your particular topic and about your schedule for finalizing the thesis.

The second goal is professionalization. The colloquium will enhance your skills at: a) presenting your own work in a professional manner, 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: 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 peers in brain-storming sessions. At times you may have specific issues to bring to the colloquium; at other times, you may have valuable suggestions or insights to offer others.

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.

### Semester schedule

Since the colloquium includes first- as well as second-semester students, our schedule will be rather complex. Some weeks we will meet jointly, and in other weeks I'll meet separately with one group or the other or in individual consultations. Note that the details

are subject to change, and that I would be happy to meet you individually as well as at the times listed here.

Some assignments and exercises are the same for first- and second-semester students, others are not.

### Meeting schedules

September 5 Orientation, introductions

September 12 Roundtable by second-semester students:

- What is your most important advice for the first-semester students, based on your experience last semester?
- Bibliographies and note-taking: How do you keep track of all that information?

September 19 Primary sources

- Bring a photo-copy of a page of your most interesting primary source to circulate and share how you will work with this source and how it fits in your larger project.

Exercise: footnote trail (explanation to follow).

September 26 Primary sources

- Bring a photo-copy of a page of your most interesting primary source to circulate and share how you will work with this source and how it fits in your larger project.

Deadline: Bibliographies due - separate primary and secondary sources.

- Second-semesters annotated.
- First-semesters students just a simple list of books this time around.

October 3 Arguments and introductions

- Deadline first semesters: now annotated bibliographies

October 10 No meeting: individual meetings as needed

Deadline: Thesis / introductions

- First-semesters: draft argument / thesis done.
- Second-semesters: full draft of introductions done!

October 17 Workshop on thesis / introductions

October 24 Workshop on thesis / proposal drafts

October 31 No meeting: individual meetings as needed

Deadline: Proposals / drafts done

- First-semesters: proposal done.
- Second-semesters: drafts done! At least 20 pages including drafts of an introduction and a conclusion and a full outline of the rest of the paper.

November 7 Revisions workshop

- Sharing comments on each others' drafts of papers and of proposals.

November 14 Individual meetings

November 21 Individual meetings

November 28 Thanksgiving break

December 5 Presentations and discussions of arguments

December 12 Second Semester Presentations

- The presentations are open to the “public” – please invite fellow history students and friends. Both first- and second semester students should prepare to ask questions and participate in conversations about the presentations.

### **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! Whenever possible you should aim to “frontload” your work and get a lot done early in the semester – to avoid running out of time to do all that you hoped for in the last weeks.

Attendance is mandatory. If urgent circumstances require you to miss a meeting, please be sure to let me know. The principal requirements for all participants are faithful attendance and engaged participation when we do meet plus hard work on your own project at all other times.

Please note that the History Department now requires thesis writers to submit an electronic copy of their thesis. Your grade for History 680/690 will be submitted only after this has been received. Your grade will be based 100% on participation (attendance, preparation, discussion, and submission of assignments).

### **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 <http://www.plagiarism.org>.