

Department of History  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

**HONORS THESIS COLLOQUIUM /  
SENIOR THESIS COLLOQUIUM**  
History 680/690  
Spring 2020

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 3:20-5:20  
Class Meeting Time: Wednesdays 1:20-3:15  
Room: Humanities 5245

**Second-Semester Writers' Syllabus**

Course Description

This course is designed to supplement your work with your advisor, thereby helping you write the best senior thesis possible in the short time available to you. The course will:

- 1) give you opportunities to present to your peers, thereby helping you work on organizational and argument issues in your thesis ("Outline Presentations");
- 2) offer hands-on training and reviews to help you improve your writing and
- 3) set deadlines to help ensure that the paper actually gets written.

You will be paired with a peer to read and give constructive feedback on paper drafts ("Peer Paper Swap"). We end the course with a class conference, where you will present your paper in a public forum modeled on a professional history conference.

Peer Paper Swap

At certain points in the semester you will be paired with another student from the class to swap papers and give your partner critical and constructive feedback. We will be discussing strategies for peer review in our first Writing Workshop and will come up with a set of guidelines together as a class. Together with those guidelines, constructive feedback involves: reading the draft through; writing up a set of brief comments; and meeting to explain and elaborate your comments. ***Because good feedback is crucial to any writer, your diligent attention to your peers' work is of the highest importance. Even if you let yourself down (by missing a deadline), don't let down your peers. It is also important to give your readers/peers enough time to comment on your paper.***

Presentation Sessions

Initially, presentations will be about your peer's paper and how it can be improved using the guidelines that we discuss in class. Towards the end of the course, students will present their own work both in class and at the end of the year conference.

### Rough draft deadlines

Let us assume your paper will be between 30 and 50 pages in length (though this is a matter between you and your primary advisor). Rough drafts of the first 10-15 pages (or the first third of your paper) are due **February 8**, and the entire 30-50 pages (the entire draft) are due **March 11. This will give your peers some time to prepare their comments on your work.**

### Student Conference

The Student Conference will be held during the exam period. All thesis writers will circulate to the class a one-page abstract of their paper and an outline. Each student will give a brief presentation of his or her paper. As a class, we will work to group papers into meaningful "panels." Each thesis writer will also be assigned to provide comments on a panel. Students will have the opportunity to respond to discussants' comments and field questions from the floor. **Abstracts and outlines should be submitted to the class list several days before the conference** (specific date to be determined).

### Evaluation

Since the goals of this course are to 1) provide a forum for working issues out with your peers, 2) help you improve the ease with which you write large research papers, and 3) facilitate the timely completion of an excellent senior thesis, the bulk of the grade for this course will be based on attendance, participation, and the timely meeting of deadlines. The quality of your presentations, drafts, and especially feedback to your peers, will of course also influence the grade.

Attendance, Weekly Assignments and Participation	30%
2 Presentations	10%
Draft Deadlines	15%
Timely and High-Quality Feedback to Peers	15%
Conference (circulation of written materials, presentation, and comment on peer's paper)	<u>30%</u>
	100%

There are two guaranteed ways to receive a poor or failing grade in this course: 1) failure to provide timely, high-quality feedback to your peers; and 2) plagiarism. Ultimately, the completion of your thesis is up to you. In the end, the quality of your thesis will be judged by your advisor; this course focuses on the process of writing it.

**NOTE:** You will not receive a grade for this course until you have submitted an electronic copy of your final thesis for storage in the department files and consultation by later students. (We are required to collect senior theses for use in periodic evaluations of our undergraduate program.)

Required Text: Writing Manual: Selected Chapters of The Little Red School House (online at Learn@UW)

Course Schedule

1/22 Advice for First Year Students from more experienced students  
Discussion of some of the fundamentals of writing

1/29 Subgroup 1, Reading on “Problem” and the Introduction

10 minute presentation of your work, write a one to two page introduction to your work. Stating the problem and its significance  
Peers responsible for giving written comments of about one paragraph.  
In all cases, make sure that you give your peers two days to read and comment on your paper.

2/5 Presentations I (Sub-Group II)

Reading on Argument 1

Same assignment as above

**Rough draft deadline I**

**E-mail your draft of the first third of your thesis (10-15 pages) to your designated peer on Feb 8**

2/12 Reading on Argument 2

**Comments on drafts by peers.** In their comments, peers will be responsible for both locating the problem and analyzing the argument with relation to evidence.

2/19 Writing on the Sentence Level

Reading: Co-Core and Information Flow

2/26 Presentations II (Sub-Group II)

Peers responsible for overall comments

3/4 Presentations II (Sub-Group I)

Peers responsible for overall comments

3/11 No meeting

**Rough draft deadline II/peer paper swap.**

E-mail your draft of the first two-thirds of your thesis  
your designated peer

Touching Base

Bring problems or issues for discussion.

3/18 SPRING BREAK

**Peer comments/presentations due** (submit a copy to the Learn@UW dropbox)

3/25 No meeting: Individual Meetings as necessary

4/1 Writing Workshop II: Effective Revisions  
**Peer comments due and presented in class**

4/8 **Planning the Final Conference**  
 Revision Issues & Strategies for an Effective Oral Presentation

Come to class prepared to discuss issues that arise as you deal with your advisor's and peer's comments.

Bring ideas about what makes a good oral presentation. Start thinking about how you might present your own research in a short (10-minute) oral presentation.

\*\* Bring your exam schedule so you can confirm availability!

4/15 No meeting.  
 Work on paper

4/22 No meeting: Individual Meetings as necessary  
**Full rough draft deadline III/ peer paper swap after revising**  
 E-mail your draft of your complete thesis to your assigned peer

4/29 Draft oral presentations

Come prepared to give a short oral presentation, with slides, if you plan to use them (printed out or on your computer). You will present your (draft) presentation to a peer for constructive comments.

**Target date: Final thesis to advisor and to me**

Week of May 3rd (Date TBD) : **Final thesis presentations/conference.**

Abstracts and outlines must be submitted to fellow panel members several days before the conference (specific date to be determined).

**NOTE:** You *must* submit (on Canvas) an electronic copy of your completed thesis. We will not be able to submit your final grade for this course until we receive the electronic copy of your thesis.