



History 680 | Honors Thesis Colloquium

Instructor details

Professor Kathryn Ciania

Email: ciania@wisc.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12:45pm-2:45pm, and by appointment (see the Canvas site for the link, password, etc.)

Semester: Spring 2021

Credits

2 credits

COURSE DETAILS**Course Designations and Attributes**

Colloquium for Honors thesis writers. This is an Honors class.

Requisites

Declared in Honors program.

How credit hours are met:

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.

Meeting Time

Wednesdays, 11am-12:55pm

Instructional Modality

This is an online, synchronous course. We will meet in Zoom (see the Canvas site for the link, password, etc.). For each week, there is a module on Canvas. You will be able to access everything you need—instructions, links to the assignment, reading materials, etc.—via the relevant module.

Canvas Course URL:

<https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/233823>

Course Description

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 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 the first-semester writers will work on modified versions of the assignments (I will meet with these students individually to discuss these modifications). By the end of the semester, first semester writers will produce a complete research proposal, while second semester writers will complete their undergraduate thesis.

HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE**1. Understand the Class's Core Approach****Research and writing:**

- 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 from one another—in fact, they are deeply entwined. The upshot: you should begin writing sooner rather than later.
- 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.
- Should be accompanied by *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.
- Means learning the *rules of the game*. To write a successful thesis you'll need to adhere to professional standards—from footnoting properly to using evidence judiciously. These are issues that we'll talk about throughout the semester.

2. Keep Learning Outcomes in Mind**By the end of the class, everyone should have improved the following skills:**

- Refining your research question and developing a thesis (central argument) that is arguable and can be supported with evidence;

- Identifying, summarizing, and situating your argument within a historiographical or broader scholarly field;
- Identifying and analyzing primary sources that help you to build your argument;
- Communicating your work in an accessible way that conforms to professional standards in the field of history, through both writing and oral presentations;
- Constructively providing feedback for your peers;
- Receiving, and implementing feedback from your advisor, Prof. Ciancia, and your peers;
- Reflecting on your own learning and self-consciously tracking which skills you are working on at any one time

3. Understand How the Class is Organized

The Arc of the class:

- Each week, we will take a component part of the research and writing process and try to figure it out together (of course, everything is connected but we need to break it down to keep things manageable).
- We'll start big, then narrow down to work on individual writing skills. As you complete the thesis and prepare to present your work, we'll zoom out again.

Class sessions will follow a familiar pattern:

- **Check-in:** This is your opportunity to set the agenda for the first part of discussion. Come prepared with questions, challenges, and successes. This part of class might also involve some journaling or free writing so please have a pen and paper at the ready.
- **Main discussion:** The main part of discussion will focus on the topic of the day and the work that you have prepared for class. It may often involve breakout rooms, brainstorming on a white board, and other types of interaction.
- **Preparing for the next week:** We'll end each session by setting up what is coming next week. This might involve talking about an upcoming reading or assignment.

4. Understand How the Class is Graded

The overall grade will be broken down in the following ways:

- 45%: Active participation and attendance, including group activities and peer feedback.
Before the class begins, please read the participation grading rubric at the end of this syllabus. *You are welcome to check in with me at any point during the semester to ask about your participation grade.*
- 40%: Satisfactory completion of all written assignments
- 5%: "What I've learned from writing a senior thesis" video
- 10%: Final presentation

5. Be Present

- We will meet using Zoom. If you can, please plan to use video—I want to be able to see everyone's faces and for you to be able to see one another. The class will work best if you use a laptop or desktop monitor, rather than a phone (although in exceptional circumstances, a phone is better than nothing!).

- You must make sure that all devices with a screen—other than your laptop or the device on which you are connected for the class—are turned off or are on “Do Not Disturb” for the duration of the class. I know it is hard not to check phones etc., but try and be fully present.
- We will begin class on time, so please make sure that you arrive in our Zoom room a few minutes early. Persistent tardiness (as well as going AWOL!) will lead to a lower participation grade.

6. **Acquaint yourself with class’s schedule and policies**

- You can 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.
- Please review the syllabus carefully to see what you need to submit on Canvas and/or bring to class.
- Please note that the instructions below are included (along with relevant links, readings, etc.) under the weekly module function on Canvas.
- Any assignments that are due on Canvas must be submitted at least 48 hours prior to the class (i.e. by 11am on Monday) so that I have time to read them.
- Assignments must be submitted as Word documents so that I can annotate them using “Track Changes” (pdfs etc. will not be accepted). 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”)
- 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.

7. **Keep Prof. Ciancia in the loop**

- The extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic have upended all of our lives in ways that are both visible and invisible to others, and we are all trying to cope in our own ways. Please be kind to yourself and to one another. Please let me know if you are struggling and need extra time or help.
- Attendance to **all** meetings is mandatory. Unaccounted absences will severely impact your final grade so let me know via email if you can’t make a class. If you repeatedly skip class, you will simply fail the course.
- Come to office hours or email me to make an appointment if those times don’t work. All students should come by during office hours to meet with Professor Ciancia by the end of Week 4 of the semester.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1 (Jan 27): Introductions

Preparation:

No need to submit anything (I will get your prospectuses from Prof. Hennessey), but please read the syllabus and come with any questions you may have.

Plan for this session:

Today, we'll introduce ourselves and our work. We'll also discuss expectations for the semester.

Week 2 (Feb 3): Writing a Thesis

Preparation:

1. Read, annotate, and reflect upon the following short pieces on writing:
 - Lynn Hunt, "The Art of History: How Writing Leads to Thinking," *Perspectives on History*, Feb 1, 2010
 - Liena Vayzman, "Issues in Graduate Education: Practical Advice for Writing Your Dissertation, Book, or Article," *Perspectives on History*, Dec 1, 2006
2. Read and annotate the sample senior thesis and fill out the feedback quiz on Canvas by the deadline of Monday, Feb 1 at 11am.

Plan for this session:

Today, we'll discuss what elements a senior thesis contains, discuss our reactions to the sample thesis, and have a broader discussion about how writing and thinking are linked.

Week 3 (Feb 10): Inserting Yourself into a Historiographical Field

Preparation:

1. Read excerpts from Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, 19-29, 55-77.
2. Using Graff and Birkenstein's recommendations, write two paragraphs, which you should upload onto Canvas and bring to class:
 - a) **PARAGRAPH ONE ("They Say")** should summarize (in 2-3 sentences) the argument of an important book in your field, with which you engage.
 - b) **PARAGRAPH TWO ("I say")** should pivot 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....").

3. Come to class ready to speak about your RELATIONSHIP to the book and join in with a conversation about how you have engaged with the book over time. We'll talk about argument, methodology, and style. As such, the following phrase is banned: "this book contains a lot of useful information." ☺

Plan for this session:

Today, we'll talk about how to accurately and effectively summarize someone else's argument, make our own academic "moves" in response, and conceptualize the web of relationships between scholarly texts.

Week 4 (Feb 17): Making an Argument with Primary Sources

Preparation:

Upload onto Canvas and bring to class:

1. A picture of one of your most interesting and/or challenging primary sources. 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. 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).
2. A separate paragraph (one that is not intended for inclusion in the thesis) in which you briefly summarize the source, state how it helps you to advance your argument, and reflect honestly on potential problems with using it. What are its limitations? Are you able to acknowledge and/or offset any potential criticism somehow in the paper?

Plan for this session:

Today, we'll discuss how we use our primary sources—and the potential challenges of doing so. We'll also chat about what we want to do for the "free week" next week.

Week 5 (Feb 24): FREE WEEK: Students' Choice

Preparation:

Upload to Canvas and bring to class:

1. Any part of your thesis that you are currently working on and would like feedback on. This could be either: one of the assignments from Week 3 or 4 that you are revising, based on previous feedback OR an altogether new piece of writing (limited to about 2 pages of text).
2. A paragraph (2-3 pages) in which you explain the issues that you are having and what specifically you need feedback on.

Plan for this session:

Today, you'll have an opportunity to gain peer feedback on a selected part of your thesis and to help another student with their work by engaging in peer review. We'll also discuss potential strategies for planning a paper outline and draw up a collective rubric for successfully structuring and organizing a paper by looking at example of a paper plan.

Week 6 (March 3): Structuring Your Paper**Preparation:**

Upload onto Canvas and bring to class:

1. A detailed plan of your paper
2. A short reflection about one dilemma you have.

Plan for this session:

Today, we'll discuss how each of you implemented the practices and techniques we discussed last week and how best to resolve dilemmas about what you put where. We'll also talk about what makes a good introduction to a paper by looking at a couple of samples.

Week 7 (March 10): Drafting an Introduction**Preparation:**

Upload onto Canvas and bring to class:

1. A draft introduction
2. A short reflective piece in which you discuss how you tried to ensure that the introduction met the criteria that we came up with together last week.

Plan for this session:

Today, we'll engage in peer review for introductions, discuss collective problems and dilemmas in regard to how best to open your paper, and decide what kinds of things we might want to prioritize for next week's "free week."

Week 8 (March 17): FREE WEEK: Students' Choice**Preparation:**

1. Read, annotate, and reflect upon Anne Lamott, "Shitty First Drafts," *Language Awareness: Readings for College Writers*, edited by Paul Eschholz, Alfred Rosa, and Virginia Clark (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005), 93-96.

2. Submit on Canvas and bring to class any part of your thesis that you are currently working on and would like feedback on. This could be either: one of the assignments from Week 6 or 7 that you are revising, based on previous feedback OR an altogether new piece of writing (limited to about 2 pages of text). A paragraph in which you explain the issues that you are having and what specifically you need feedback on.

Plan for this session:

Today, we'll take a snapshot of where everybody is and what they are working on. You'll also have an opportunity to engage in peer review and to discuss the art of drafting a full paper.

Week 9 (March 24): Draft of Paper

Preparation:

Submit on Canvas and bring to class:

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

Plan for this session:

Today, you will spend the first part of class engaged in peer review. The second part of class will involve a full-group discussion about overall issues with drafts and some tips for writing a conclusion in anticipation of next week's discussion.

Week 10 (March 31): (Re)writing Introductions and Conclusions

Preparation:

Submit on Canvas and bring to class:

1. A current version of your introduction and your conclusion (redrafted based on the feedback that you received about the original version). Each of these should be clearly labeled.

Plan for this session:

Today, we'll focus intensively on polishing introductions and conclusions through peer review and engage in a more general conversation about strategies for editing and re-editing work.

Week 11 (April 7): Final Drafts Workshop

Preparation:

Submit on Canvas and bring to class:

1. Your final draft. You should also write a paragraph detailing two areas that you would like particular feedback on (e.g. introduction, transitions, etc. so that your peer review partner doesn't have to read everything in the same level of detail).

Plan for this session:

Today, we'll discuss trouble-shooting areas for the final drafts and talk about how we work toward the end of the process of writing and presenting.

Week 12 (April 14): Reflections and What makes a good oral presentation?**Preparation:**

1. Create a short "What I've learned from writing a senior thesis" video and upload it onto Canvas. This assignment can be submitted at any point before class (i.e. by 11am on April 14; unlike the other Canvas assignments, it does not have to be submitted on the Monday prior to class). I will use these videos for the next group of students.

Your videos should be around two minutes long and answer the following questions:

1. What have you enjoyed most about the process?
2. What have you found most challenging and how did you overcome that challenge?
3. If you could provide one piece of advice, what would it be?

Please include a short gap between your answers to the questions as I will split them up and put all answers to one question together. 😊

Plan for this session:

Today, we'll discuss best practices for oral presentations and watch some videos of presentations to assess how well the speakers get their ideas across. We'll also come up with a rubric for presentations.

Week 13 (April 21): Practicing for Presenting your Research Orally**Preparation:**

Students should come ready to give a draft presentation of their research.

Plan for this session:

Today, students will practice their presentations and gain feedback from their peers.

Week 14 (April 28): Final Presentations**Preparation:**

Come ready to give a final presentation (more details once we get to this point in this semester).

Plan for this session:

Today, we'll do final presentations and celebrate your achievements via Zoom.

ONCE YOU HAVE SENT THE FINAL VERSION OF THE THESIS TO YOUR ADVISOR, PLEASE ALSO UPLOAD IT ON OUR CANVAS SITE!

APPENDIX A: Participation Grading Scale

A: You participate enthusiastically and regularly in classroom discussions and small group-work, including peer review, listening to your peers and articulating your own ideas as clearly as possible. You do not appear distracted, but are instead fully engaged in the discussion. Your comments are thoughtful and demonstrate that you have prepared carefully.

B: Your contributions show that you have done some preparation but, in general, you are less well prepared than a student with an “A” grade. You participate in classroom discussions and small group-work, listening to your peers and articulating your own ideas, although not with the regularity or depth of a student achieving an “A.”

C: Your comments in class do not show that you have not done sufficient preparation and/or are poorly or vaguely articulated. You provide some feedback for your peers, but do not fully engage with their work (and are more likely to say that it is “fine”). You contribute only rarely to class discussions and/or make comments that do not demonstrate that you have prepared for discussion.

D: Your comments are very irregular and you show no evidence that you have prepared for class.

F: You do not attend class regularly.

APPENDIX B: Further Resources and Policies

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. (See: [McBurney Disability Resource Center](#))

Diversity and Inclusion Statement

[Diversity](#) is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.

An Anti-Racist Class

As a class community, we should work together in order to create a supportive space for everyone. None of us should tolerate racism, and we should be ready to call it out when we see it. I also ask that we all commit to listening to feedback and to reflecting on our own attitudes and actions.

Pronouns

Pronouns matter — they say a lot about who we are and how we want others to treat us. Using gendered language conscientiously is one small way we can show respect to each other as individuals and make UW a warm, welcoming, and inclusive environment for all members of the campus community. As of January 11, a [new feature is available in Canvas](#) that enables all students, faculty and staff (with Canvas accounts) to indicate their gender pronouns in use. Those who opt to use the feature will see their pronouns appear anywhere their names appear in Canvas - e.g., *Jane Doe (she/her)*. Users will be able to choose from a drop-down menu of the most common binary and nonbinary pronouns in use on campus.

Writing Resources and Guidelines

The **University's Writing Center** is a wonderful resource that allows you to work with a consultant to improve your written work. Take a look at their website (<http://www.writing.wisc.edu/index.html>) for more information.

The **History Lab** is a resource where expert PhD students work with you and your history/history of science projects 1-on-1. No matter your stage in the writing process—choosing a topic, conducting research, composing a thesis, outlining your argument, or revising your drafts—the History Lab staff will help you sharpen your skills and become a more successful writer. Visit the website <http://go.wisc.edu/HLAB> early and often to schedule an appointment with a Lab TA or to find writing tips, guides, and resources. You can watch an introductory video about the History Lab on our Canvas site.

Privacy of Student Information & Digital Tools: Teaching & Learning Analytics & Proctoring Statement

The privacy and security of faculty, staff and students' personal information is a top priority for UW-Madison. The university carefully reviews and vets all campus-supported digital tools used to support teaching and learning, to help support success through [learning analytics](#), and to enable proctoring capabilities. UW-Madison takes necessary steps to ensure that the providers of such tools prioritize proper handling of sensitive data in alignment with FERPA, industry standards and best practices.

Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA which protects the privacy of student education records), student consent is not required for the university to share with school officials those student education records necessary for carrying out those university functions in which they have legitimate educational interest. 34 CFR 99.31(a)(1)(i)(B). FERPA specifically allows universities to designate vendors such as digital tool providers as school officials, and accordingly to share with

them personally identifiable information from student education records if they perform appropriate services for the university and are subject to all applicable requirements governing the use, disclosure and protection of student data.

Students' Rules, Rights, and Responsibilities

During the global COVID-19 pandemic, we must prioritize our collective health and safety to keep ourselves, our campus, and our community safe. As a university community, we must work together to prevent the spread of the virus and to promote the collective health and welfare of our campus and surrounding community. See here for a useful guide for undergraduates:

<https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/#rulesrightsandresponsibilitiestext>

UW-Madison BADGER PLEDGE

Campus Guidance on the Use of Face Coverings

Face coverings must be [correctly worn](#) on campus at all times and in all places (both outside and inside), except by students in their assigned residence hall rooms; by employees when alone in a private, unshared lab or office; when traveling alone in a private vehicle; and when exercising outside in a way that maintains 6 feet of distance from other people.

Quarantine or Isolation due to Covid-19

Monitor symptoms daily, and follow the new [COVID-19 testing guidelines](#). Find more [information on testing](#) including on-campus testing locations, getting test results and what to do if you test positive for COVID-19. Students should reach out to instructors as soon as possible if they become ill or need to isolate or quarantine, in order to make alternate plans for how to proceed with the course. Students are strongly encouraged to communicate with their instructor concerning their illness and the anticipated extent of their absence from the course (either in-person or remote). The instructor will work with the student to provide alternative ways to complete the course work.

Academic Calendar and Religious Observances

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

Academic Integrity Statement

By virtue of enrollment, each student agrees to uphold the high academic standards of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; academic misconduct is behavior that negatively impacts the integrity of the institution. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these previously listed acts are examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Examples of disciplinary action include, but is not limited to, failure on the assignment/course, written reprimand, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion.

Course Evaluations

You will be provided with an opportunity to evaluate this course and your learning experience. I really value your feedback—it helps me to reflect on what is working and what might need to change. As such, it also benefits future groups of students. Note that UW-Madison now uses an online course

evaluation survey tool, [AEFIS](#). In most instances, you will receive an official email two weeks prior to the end of the semester when your course evaluation is available. You will receive a link to log into the course evaluation with your NetID where you can complete the evaluation and submit it, anonymously.