

History of Science 555, Spring 2012
Undergraduate Seminar
Automobiles and Automobility in Postwar America, 1945-1990:
Critiques and Controversies

1:20-3:15 Tuesday, 332 Bradley Memorial (History of Science Library)

Professor:	Eric Schatzberg	Office Hrs:	2:00-3:00 Wed. or by appt.
Office:	224 Bradley Memorial	Telephone:	262-3973
		Email:	eschatzb@wisc.edu

Description

This capstone seminar for History of Science majors introduces students to the process of doing history, not just reading about it. The course will guide students through the steps involved in writing an original research paper using primary sources. These steps include selecting a topic, finding and interpreting sources, constructing an argument, and writing and revising the paper.

In order to make it easier to guide your research, I have selected a narrower topic this year than I have done in the past. The spring 2012 seminar topic is "Automobiles and Automobility in Postwar America: Critiques and Controversies." This topic is not narrowly focused on the technology of the automobile. Rather, it provides opportunities for papers on a variety of topics in science, technology and medicine that are connected with automobility as a vast sociotechnical system. There are many medical issues related to the automobile, especially topics related to accident prevention and the treatment of accident injuries. One topic might be drunken driving as a public health problem, or the health effects of automobile pollution, including the dangers of leaded gasoline. There are numerous topics in scientific understanding of the automobile, such as the chemistry of photochemical smog or the physics of antilock brakes. Suitable topics also encompass issues in the social sciences, such as the causes and consequences of urban sprawl and the growth of suburbs. Numerous topics in environmental history are possible, many connected to disputes over road building in cities and wilderness areas. And last but not least, there are dozens of good topics in history of technology, such as the rise of automation in automobile production or the development of more fuel-efficient vehicles in response to the oil crises of the 1970s. Many of these specific topics will include a political component, typically over questions of government regulation or funding. In order to insure adequate historical distance, no topics can focus on events occurring after 1990.

The subtitle of the topic, "Critiques and Controversies," is intended to steer your research towards issues involving public disputes. The automobile industry had tremendous power in postwar America. Nevertheless, many people, including scientists, engineers, physicians, and social critics, questioned aspects of postwar automobility. These critiques often generated considerable controversy, leading to Congressional hearings, dueling experts, and polemical publications. Focusing on a critique or controversy will give you a natural way to structure your research and writing.

We will begin by reading a few examples of historical research on this theme, along with a selection of primary sources. Then students will focus on a specific topic, conducting in-depth research in primary sources. Students will be guided step-by-step through the process of finding sources, formulating an argument, and drafting the research paper. The bulk of the material in the papers must deal with the period of the course

Requirements

This is a tough course; expect it to be your most intense course this semester. There are two main requirements and a series of smaller assignments, plus participation in discussion.

- 1) *A major research paper*, 15 to 20 pages long, based mainly on primary sources. This paper is due on April 17, a mere 12 weeks from the first class. You will revise this paper in response to my comments and comments from a classmate; the revised version is due May 16 during exam week. Each version of the paper will be graded separately.
- 2) *A formal talk* summarizing the results of your paper. This talk will be about 12 minutes long, with 3 minutes for questions. Talks will be scheduled for the last two weeks of the course.
- 3) Other short *weekly assignments* designed to guide you through the research and writing process, teaching you the advanced skills needed for the research paper.
- 4) *Participation in discussion*. Much of the class time will be devoted to discussion. Please come to class prepared to discuss the readings or your research. Much of the learning in this class will come from your classmates.
- 5) Contributions to our online *collective bibliography* of secondary sources using RefWorks.
- 6) Weekly posts to a *research blog* on the course website listing what you've done in terms of research and writing.

Format of the paper

Your paper will require footnotes and a bibliography, and you will need to provide citations for the smaller assignments as well. You are required to use the Chicago/Turabian citation style for footnotes and bibliography. The basics of this style are available here:

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocChicago.html>.

Getting Help with Writing and Research

Some of you have never written a research paper. Others will have very little experience with the UW libraries. Some of you may have trouble writing clearly. Some of you are certainly terrified of public speaking. Please let me know if you need help in any of these areas, because help is available. Don't try to muddle through; this class is too small and too intense for that.

The UW Writing Center is a great resource for a course like this. Everyone can benefit from its services; even my Ph.D. students use it. The Center's consultants will help you with clarity of prose, organization, and argument. The Center is especially helpful for shorter writing assignments, but the staff can help you with the longer paper too. The Center has been increasingly popular recently, so it can be difficult to get appointments, especially late in the semester. Please consult the syllabus and schedule appointments well in advance. Learn more about the center here: <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/>.

Reference librarians are also a great help for a paper like this.

Class Etiquette

Most of this class will be discussion. During discussion, address your remarks to the class, not to me. Try to respond to your classmates by name. Always respond respectfully to your classmates, even if you disagree strongly with them.

Attendance is mandatory. If you need to miss a class, please discuss it with me well in advance.

Feel free to let me know of any problems you have with the course; I'll fix them if I can.

Grades

Roughly, here are the weights I will give to the various requirements; I reserve the right to fiddle with these to insure fairness, given the fact that some topics are more difficult than others.

- The paper (both versions): 50%; presentation: 10%; discussion and weekly assignments: 40%.

Course Books and Readings

There are two required books for this course. They are available at Rainbow Bookstore Cooperative, 426 West Gilman Street (off State St.), 257-6050, open 10-8 Mon-Thu, 10-6 Fri-Sat, 12-5 Sun. (Please support your local independent bookstores.)

Stanley Chodorow, *Writing a Successful Research Paper: A Simple Approach* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2011).

Joseph M Williams and Gregory G. Colomb, *Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace*, 4th ed. (Boston: Longman, 2012).

Other required readings will be posted on the course web site or distributed in class.

Most of your reading for this course will be from sources you find yourself. You should expect to do more reading in this course than in any other this semester.

Email, Course Website, and Online Bibliography

I will use the email list to communicate with the class, including sending assignments for reading responses and essays. The address of the list is "histsci555-1-s12@lists.wisc.edu". **In email correspondence about the course, please begin the subject line with "HS555".**

The course website is here: <https://chatter.lss.wisc.edu/moodle/course/view.php?id=195>. I'll create a link to this site through Learn@UW. The website will go live soon.

Because this course meets only once a week, I will require some assignments to be submitted through the course website before the class meeting to make my response more timely. Please use the following naming convention: "HS555-yourname-week#"; for example, "HS555-Johnson-week3.pdf". I prefer PDF's, but MS-Word files are OK.

We will be creating a collective bibliography of secondary sources using the library's RefWorks online software: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.web/refworks>. Login name: HS555-S2012; password: automobile.

Religious Holidays and ADA Notice

You can take off any religious holidays you want, as long as you make up the work. If necessary, I'll give observant students an alternative but equivalent assignment. Please let me know in advance which days you will miss. For more detail see:

<http://www.secfac.wisc.edu/governance/ReligiousObservancesMemo.htm>.

If you have a disability that might affect your performance in this course, do not hesitate to let me know; I'll do my best to accommodate you. For more information, contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center, 263-2741.

Freaking Out

College life often involves a lot of stress, and this course is likely to be especially stressful. If you feel like things are getting out of hand, either for personal or academic reasons, please contact the Counseling and Consultation Services, part of the University Health Services, 333 East Campus Mall, 7th floor, 265-5600. For more information, see <http://www.uhs.wisc.edu/services/counseling/>.

Course Outline

Week 1 (1/24) - Introduction to Historical Research Methods

What it means to produce original, scholarly historical writing. Background on the period and topics that will be the focus of the seminar. Distinction between primary and secondary sources. Research methods: finding books and journals through MadCat. Finding articles.

Week 2 (1/31) - Finding Magazine Articles (Meet in Memorial Library, 179a)

For this class, we will meet in Memorial Library to discuss the readings and do a research exercise for finding primary sources in the popular press. The reading provides an overview of automotive history for the postwar era.

Reading: James J. Flink, *The Automobile Age* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 277-403 (chaps. 15-20).

Assignment: 1) Complete the UW-Library Campus Library User Education (CLUE) online training program, <http://clue.library.wisc.edu/index.html>.

2) Read the Flink excerpt with an eye toward finding a topic that interests you.

3) Locate two secondary sources on a possible topic of interest, one book and one article, and post them on the RefWorks collective bibliography with a short description of each source.

In-class activity: library research exercise; see handout for details.

Week 3 (2/7) – Locating Good Secondary Sources; How to Find a Topic

Methods for finding a topic. Distinction between scholarly and popular sources. Methods for locating secondary sources. Reading critically.

Reading: Chodorow, x-xvii, 1-42;

Robert Buergler, "Motive Powers: Transportation and Culture in the United States," *American Quarterly* 60 (2008): 1113-24;

Bernhard Rieger, "From People's Car to New Beetle: The Transatlantic Journeys of the Volkswagen Beetle," *Journal of American History* 97 (2010): 91-115.

Fletcher Woodward, "Medical Criticism of Modern Automotive Engineering," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 138 (1948): 627-31;

Ralph Nader, "Preface," in *Unsafe at Any Speed: The Designed-In Dangers of the American Automobile* (New York: Grossman, 1965), vii-x.

Assignment: 1) Write up one-page summary of the article you found last week.

2) Using the techniques we discussed in class and the advice in the Chodorow reading, start mucking about online and in libraries to identify a broad research topic. Write up a paragraph of your ideas; they will most likely be rough at this stage.

3) Remember to discuss the steps you took in your research on your research blog; be sure to mention the resources you used.

4) Come prepared to discuss the readings, based on questions in my email.

In-class activity: identifying types of secondary-source books.

Week 4 (2/14) – Writing Narratives from Primary Sources; Basics of Writing Style

Principles of good prose applied to writing using newspapers as a source.

Readings: Williams, preface and 1-44.

Assignment:

- 2) Using Proquest Historical Newspapers, examine the *New York Times* for articles related to your topic. Using at least three articles, construct a narrative (that is, tell a story) summarizing what happened in no more than two pages. Apply the techniques in the Williams reading to your prose.
- 3) Continue research and reading on your topic; post what you've done on your blog.

In-class activity: peer review of your writing.

Week 5 (2/21) – Deepening Research; Formulating Your Research Question

Focusing your topic and defining problems that will drive your research.

Reading: Chodorow, 43-46.

Assignment: 1) plunge back into research to find and read more sources. Be sure you have identified the best tools for finding primary sources for your topic. Now is a good time to talk with a reference librarian, particularly the reference librarians at specialized libraries (e.g., Ebling, Wendt).

- 2) Review chapter 3 in Chodorow. Write a one-page analysis explaining your research question and discussing how to intend to find an answer to it.
- 3) Hand in an annotated bibliography with the sources you've examined so far that are relevant to your research question. Be sure that secondary sources are included in the collective bibliography.

Week 6 (2/28) - Constructing Your Argument

How to formulate a good argument.

Reading: Chodorow, 47-59.

Assignment: write up a summary of your argument, clearly stating the proposition you hope to prove, the type of evidence you will use to support it, and the reason the reader should care (the answer to the "so what" question). Submit the assignment through the course website by **noon Monday**.

Week 7 (3/6) – Writing with Style; Tricks of the Historian's Trade

Modes of historical writing; proper use of historical evidence.

Reading: Chodorow, 60-81;
Williams, 45-89.

Assignment: using both primary and secondary sources, write up a small piece of your research addressing a specific question, about three pages long. Apply the principles in Chodorow and Williams to your writing.

In-class activity: peer review of writing.

Week 8 (3/13) – Deepening Research; Refining Your Argument

Devote yourself fully to your research; work on refining your argument. Research is not linear, but rather an iterative process that requires you to return repeatedly to earlier steps in response to what you find.

Reading: none, aside from your own research.

Assignment: 1) revise your argument from week 6.

2) Hand in your revised annotated bibliography. At this point you should have quite a few sources.

Week 9 (3/20) – Structuring Your Paper to Support the Argument

Organizing the paper; writing a prospectus. Writing for coherence. Sign up for individual meeting next week.

Reading: Chodorow, 83-88;
Williams, 90-143.

Assignment: using Chodorow as a guide, write a prospectus summarizing the argument and structure of your paper.

In-class activity: discuss your structure with a classmate.

Week 10 (3/27) - Individual Meetings; No Class

With papers due in three weeks, this is a crucial time to make sure that you have a solid argument and a good structure for your paper. Meetings will be Monday afternoon and Tuesday.

Assignment: by **midnight Sunday**, submit your updated prospectus and your annotated bibliography.

Spring Break (4/3)

Use spring break to work on your reading and writing.

Week 11(4/10) - Mechanics of the Research Paper

A discussion of technical details of the research paper, including use of quotations, footnotes and bibliography (boring but important). Bring specific questions to class related to your papers.

Reading: <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocChicago.html>. Review the material in the pages linked by the first three bullet points.

Assignment: Practice producing correct footnotes for a section of your draft, at least five pages. Bring the draft with footnotes to class for peer editing.

Week 12 (4/17) - PAPERS DUE; Strategies for Revision

I will discuss strategies for revising your papers and explain my expectations for peer review.

Reading: Chodorow, 89-97.

Assignment: Hand in your completed, polished paper; bring a second copy to exchange with a classmate. Remember this version is not a draft, but rather a finished paper, and it will receive its own grade.

Week 13 (4/22) - How to Give an Oral Presentation; Discussion of Revisions

You will share your peer-review comments with your classmate, and I will give advice on oral presentations.

Assignment: carefully read and comment on your classmate's paper following the instructions in the handout; remember to bring in two copies of your comments, one for me and one for the author of the paper.

In-class activity: sharing peer review comments.

Weeks 14 and 15 (5/1 and 5/8) - Final Presentations

Participants will present formal summaries of their research results and respond to questions.

Assignment: 1) Present a polished, 15-minute summary of your research paper.

2) If you are not presenting, keep working on your revisions.

Final Paper, due Wednesday, May 16, 2:00 pm

