

History of Science 280 - Fall 1998
Honors Seminar: Studies in Science, Technology and Medicine

6304 Social Science, 1:20-3:15 Wed

Topic for Fall 1998

Postwar Critiques of Science, Technology and Medicine,
or, Science and the Counterculture

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Description:

This honors seminar is designed to fulfill the Communication Part B requirement by taking students through the steps involved in writing a major research paper, from finding a topic to final revisions. This semester's theme is "Postwar Critiques of Science, Technology and Medicine." Students in the seminar will choose topics that involve some aspect of opposition to mainstream science, technology or medicine between 1945 and 1980. Possible topics include concern over nuclear fallout in the 1950s, Ralph Nader's critique of auto safety in the early 1960s, the movement for natural childbirth in the 1970s, and the early use of psychedelic drugs in the counterculture. I will provide a longer list of suggested topics, and students may develop their own topics as well.

This seminar does not provide a general introduction to the history of science, but rather is designed to help students acquire research and writing skills. The initial lectures will provide some general background on postwar science, but most of what you learn will come from readings that you find on your own. In any case, the history of this period is only just beginning to be written; you will be doing considerable original historical scholarship using sources from the time you are studying (that is, "primary" sources). During the first part of the semester, I will spend a lot of time on research techniques, especially methods for finding primary sources. Because this seminar satisfies a writing requirement, we will also spend significant class time on the mechanics of writing. By the end of the semester, I hope that every student will have acquired the skills needed to produce a first-rate history paper based on primary sources.

Requirements:

The paper. The major requirement for this course is a 12 to 15-page paper with a major revision.

The presentation. During the last three weeks of the semester, each student will present a 15-minute oral summary of his or her research.

Weekly research and writing assignments. There are smaller weekly assignments designed to teach research and writing skills, all leading to the final paper. Students should be prepared to spend considerable time in campus libraries doing research until the ninth or tenth week of the course; some weeks might require eight to ten hours of library research, depending on the topic.

Discussion. A seminar is a collective learning experience, in which the professor operates as a facilitator rather than the source of all knowledge. Please come to class prepared to share what you have learned.

Requirements (cont.):

Use of email. I will use email often during the semester. Each week, I will email a description of the weekly assignment. Because the seminar meets only once a week, I will sometimes ask you to submit the assignment by email so that I can give you my comments by the next class. At other times I will ask you to send email to the class email list, which automatically sends the message to every student registered for the class. The class email list is histsci-280@lists.students.edu.

Attendance. Class attendance is mandatory, especially for a small seminar like this one. If you must be absent, please have the courtesy to call my office or email me before the seminar.

Additional Sources for Help

The Writing Center. The University offers individual tutoring to help students at all levels improve their writing. This service is available through the Writing Center, 6171 H.C. White (263-1992).

Reference Librarians. The professional reference-desk librarians are also a great resource. Each library has its own reference librarians, and they are often only available on weekdays. For more difficult and specialized problems, you may want to contact the history of science bibliographer John Neu in Memorial Library (262-0621), who can help you use the History of Science online bibliography for finding secondary sources. For students working on medical topics, please contact the history of medicine reference librarian, Micaela Sullivan-Fowler, in the Middleton Health Sciences Library (262-2402). If you need government documents like Congressional hearings, see the government document librarians in the Historical Society Library.

Your professor. Don't be shy about asking me for help. I keep this class small so that I can give each student personal attention. I especially encourage you to ask for help early in the semester when you are just starting your research and formulating your topic. Twenty minutes of advice early in the semester might spare your twenty hours of fruitless work later.

Grading:

Both versions of the paper: 50%; presentation: 10%; class participation and weekly assignments: 40%.

Course Readings:

The following books will be available at Canterbury Booksellers, 315 W. Gorham Street, 258-9911. (I ordered the Hacker and Marius books late, so they probably won't be available until the second week of classes.)

- Richard Marius, *A Short Guide to Writing About History*, 2nd ed. (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley-Longman, 1995);
- Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Bedford Books, 1993);
- Paul Boyer, *Promises to Keep: The United States Since World War II* (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1975).

A course packet will be available for sale in the History of Science Department office, 7143 Social Science, 262-1406, by the second week of class. I will send out an email when the packet is ready; do not attempt to buy a packet before then.

Course Outline

Week 1 (9/2) - Science and Technology in the Postwar Era

Overview of course; lecture on postwar enthusiasm for science and technology. Secondary versus primary sources in history; how to skim.

Week 2 (9/9) The Affluent Society and Its Discontents

Lecture: reformist movements, radical critiques, and practical alternatives; writing from primary sources. Discussion: ideas for topics gleaned from the reading.

Readings:

Skim Boyer, 4-275 (esp. 25-33, 59-66, 124-36, 158-59, 162-65, 229-35). (Plan to spend about three hours total on the reading.)

Assignment:

- 1) Make a list of two or three topics that might seem suitable for a research paper in this course, based on your skimming of Boyer.
- 2) Complete the CLUE library education program (see handout), even if you have done it already; hand in a printout of the quizzes.

Week 3 (9/16) - From Postwar Critiques to Practical Alternatives

Lecture: the legacy of the 1960s; using the *Reader's Guide* to find primary sources in popular magazines. Discussion: reformers, radical critics, and builders of alternatives.

Readings:

Marius, chap. 7, sections 4, 5, 8-12 (how to write good sentences);

Ralph Nader, "Disaster Deferred: Studies in Automotive Time Bombs," chapter 2 in *Unsafe at Any Speed: The Designed-In Dangers of the American Automobile* (New York: Grossman, 1972 [1965]), 42-80;

Lewis Mumford, "The New Megamachine," chapter 10 in *The Pentagon of Power*, volume 2 of *The Myth of the Machine* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), 263-99;

Ellen Frankfort, *Vaginal Politics* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1972), ix-xviii.

Assignment:

- 1) Using the questions I will email to you, be prepared to discuss the primary-sources readings assigned for this week.
- 2) Write a one-paragraph summary of one of the readings, following Marius's suggestions for writing sentences.

Week 4 (9/23) - Selecting a Topic

Lecture: selecting a good topic; finding books. Discussion: your ideas for topics.

Readings:

Skim Boyer, 280-443 (esp. 290-300, 356-57, 373-88, 415-18);
Marius, 72-101.

Assignment: spend time in library working with the *Reader's Guide* (or other indexes if approved by me). Email me by 5:00 pm Tuesday with a provisional idea for a topic; list at least three relevant sources that you have examined. Expect to spend at least three hours in the library.

Week 5 (9/30) - Thinking Like a Historian

Lecture: how to think historically; types of historical writing; writing from primary sources; what makes a good paragraph. Discussion: tales from the library.

Reading: Marius, 1-12 ("Introduction"), 29-48 ("Thinking About History").

Assignment:

- 1) Revise the summary from week 2 using my comments.
- 2) By email (due 5:00 pm Tuesday): Continue refining your topic and finding relevant books and articles. Email me a description of your refined topic, along with a list of at least ten books and articles that you have actually verified are relevant, with a one or two-sentence description of each work on your list.
- 3) Start thinking about possible subjects for oral history interviews.

Week 6 (10/7) - How to Write Historically; How to Use Oral History

Lecture: Marius on modes of historical writing; how to conduct and use oral histories. Discussion: writing issues.

Reading: Marius, 48-71 ("Modes of Historical Writing"), 146-153 (chapter 7, sections 1, 2), 136-45 ("Documenting Your Sources").

Assignment: write no more than three pages, double-spaced, drawing on at least three of your primary sources to deal with some part of your topic. Identify at the beginning of each paragraph whether you are using description, narrative, exposition, argument, or a hybrid. Make each paragraph tightly coherent, and be sure to provide smooth transitions from one paragraph to the next. An introduction and conclusion are not necessary.

Week 7 (10/14) - From Topic to Argument

Lecture: organizing the paper, constructing an argument. Discussion: oral interview experiences.

Reading: John A. Neuenschwander, *Oral History as a Teaching Approach* (Washington: National Education Association, 1976), 11-35.

Assignment:

- 1) Conduct an oral history interview with someone who directly experienced some of the events involved in your topic; write a one-page summary describing what you learned.
- 2) Alternative assignment: if an oral history interview is not appropriate, do research at the Historical Society in government documents or newspapers on microfilm; see email for instructions.

Week 8 (10/21) - Finishing the Research and Starting to Write

Lecture: finding specific information; tricks for starting to write. Discussion: organizing the paper; research problems. Sign up for individual meetings next week.

Reading: Marius, 13-28 ("The Essay in History"), 101-135 (end of chap. 4 and all of chap. 5).

Wayne C. Booth, Gregory C. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 88-106.

Assignment: email me with a statement of your argument and a preliminary outline, along with your current bibliography.

Week 9 (10/28) - Class Canceled for Individual Meetings

With papers due in two weeks, this is a crucial time to make sure that you have a solid argument and a good structure for your paper.

Assignment: bring to the meeting a revised outline and current bibliography.

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

Lecture: technical details of the research paper, including use of quotations, footnotes and bibliography. Discussion: writing experiences.

Reading: Marius, 109-35, 161-74 (chaps. 5, 8); review Marius, 136-60 (chaps. 6-7).

Note: do the reading first.

Assignment: WRITE! Write at least eight pages, preferably more. Be sure to get enough done this week to allow time next week for revising and for preparing the footnotes and bibliography, which can take an entire day. Hand in a copy of whatever you have written, no matter how sloppy.

Week 11 (11/11) - Strategies for revision (PAPERS DUE)

Lecture: strategies for revision; techniques for peer review.

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 12 (11/18) - Techniques for Oral Presentations

Lecture: Preparing for an oral presentation. Discussion: share your peer-review comments with your classmate.

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.

Weeks 13 (11/25), 14 (12/2), and 15 (12/9) - Oral Presentations

One-third of the class will summarize the results of their research during each of the next three weeks.

Assignment:

- 1) Present a polished, 15-minute summary of your research paper.
- 2) If you are not presenting, keep working on your revisions.

12/17 - Final Papers Due at 5:00 pm in my office

Hand in your thoroughly revised final paper. Provide two copies if you want your paper returned with comments.