

History XXXX: Introduction to Historical Research



Sample Syllabus
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Course Statement and Objectives:

This course will develop skills necessary for historical research and production. These include:

- Conducting historical research
- Carrying out critical analysis of primary and secondary sources, including your peers.
- Writing short and long essays in a professional manner.
- Learning to use and recognize the research tools available to the historian, such as:
 - * library catalogues
 - * on-line references such as J-Stor, WorldCat, etc.
 - * search engines and list serves

Required Materials:

- Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 7th Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- Wiener, Jon. *Historians in Trouble: Plagiarism, Fraud, and Politics in the Ivory Tower*. New York: The New Press, 2005.
- A **large three-ring binder** that you will use to create your portfolio.

Course Requirements (Summary):

1. Participation—20 points
2. Peer Evaluations—10 points (two at five points each)
3. Your Portfolio—35 points
4. Rough Draft—20 points
5. Presentation—20 points
6. Research Paper—35 points

Detailed Course/Grade Requirements:

1. Participation and Peer Evaluations

You are expected to participate fully in all class activities. Much of the work of this course will be done in class, so attendance is mandatory and essential. Your contribution and participation is vital for your own and your classmates' success, and will be evaluated for a grade. Absence will affect your **participation** grade, as will lack of effort in evaluating your peers' work. **Missing more than three class periods will result in a failing grade.** Class discussions will provide an opportunity for ALL to share ideas and suggestions for improvement and to learn better what is required to satisfactorily complete each assignment. The **peer evaluation** portion of your grade is dependent upon how satisfactorily you review the draft research papers of two of your peers (your own draft will also be reviewed by two of your peers). Not only are external opinions key in developing your own paper, but they are also important in helping you to understand how to interact with others in a critical but professional manner. Failure to complete work in a timely fashion or to make a legitimate effort to improve your peers' work will affect this grade.

2. Your Portfolio

Your final grade will rest largely on your portfolio, which includes all the work you do for this course. This will be a class where assignments are “completed,” discussed, critiqued, and the recompleted until satisfactory. The goal is to improve your skills, which only happens through practice and diligence. **Every one of your assignments should be typed or printed (not handwritten) and placed within your portfolio (WITHIN THE RINGS OF THE BINDER!) after being dated and labeled.** If you are unhappy with a grade on any portfolio assignment **out of the first fourteen assignments**, you may revise that assignment and resubmit it within **one week** after receiving your graded portfolio in class. These revised versions must be labeled by assignment number and placed in your portfolio accordingly. Your portfolio grade will be based on all the work in it, but the quality of your final drafts of each assignment will be an important determinant of your portfolio grade. **NOTE: Each assignment must be completed and in the portfolio to receive a passing grade for the course, period.**

- Portfolio Order

Put the assignments in order from “one” onwards. The order for each assignment should be:

* Final Revision: labeled by assignment number and dated

* Previous revisions/original work on that assignment, so labeled.

3. Presentation

The ten-to-fifteen minute, in-class presentation is intended not only as a vehicle for presenting your research in a professional, clear, and accessible manner, but will also help you to further clarify and perhaps rethink certain aspects of your paper. I expect you to come to class well-prepared for this presentation, ideally with some sort of visual aid to help us follow your argument. I must stress *argument* here—this is your chance to convince the whole class that what you’re doing is indeed important. This needs to be your main goal of this presentation. You also need to stay within your time limit, which is a very important aspect of any presentation. Ultimately, you need to tell us:

- a) your thesis in a clear, definitive manner
- b) how you came to this thesis and why
- c) what kind of sources you're using and how (concentrate on some of your best sources)
- d) what conclusions you've come to and what you're still working on
- e) what kind of successes you've had
- f) what challenges you’re still dealing with

4. Research Paper

Your final research paper will be a **twelve-page paper** based on significant primary sources and a variety of secondary sources, which have been the basis of previous assignments. These pages **do not include: cover pages, end-note pages, or works cited pages**. Earning an “A” on your paper is highly contingent upon selecting a topic that will allow you to use primary sources as the basis and driving source for your argument. This is key. An “A” paper also needs to be stylistically clear, grammatically correct, concise and argument-driven, and near-perfect in terms of citations. You will submit three copies of your rough draft by the assigned due-date. Two of these copies will be reviewed by your peers and the third will be reviewed by me. These will be returned to you and you should use the comments to improve upon your draft for the final version. Your final draft must show substantial improvement, by heeding the advice and criticism that your fellow students and I have made. *Late work will be marked down by one letter grade for each day late.*

General Course Rules:

In order to meet the expectations noted above, students are expected to attend class regularly, engage in classroom discussions, complete all portfolio readings on time, research carefully, and perform well on graded assignments. Please be advised that you are expected to meet all the deadlines on the scheduled date. **Also note that there are no “extra credit” or “make-up” assignments in this course—barring documented medical emergencies. Planned surgeries are not emergencies.**

Proper decorum and good behavior are critical towards developing a successful learning environment. Classroom misconduct is not allowed. Do not come to class late, eat in class, listen to music, carry on side conversations, pass notes or do anything in general that could be considered inappropriate and disruptive. Likewise please turn off all cell phones, pagers, and any other such devices. Violations may result in your removal from the course. Be aware of all offenses that can lead to disciplinary actions as outlined in your *Student Handbook*.

Academic Integrity:

Do not plagiarize. This means, simply, don't cheat. I'm not going to go through all the possible ways you could cheat here, but you know right from wrong. You will find the standards for academic honesty below. Failure to follow these rules will result in a failing grade for the course and appropriate recourse through the Dean's Office—this recourse may include censure, suspension and/or expulsion. Incidents of plagiarism are subject to severe sanctions and you should therefore avoid jeopardizing your future. A copy of the University policy on plagiarism, including definitions and methods of avoidance, is available at the following website:

Remember that I am here to help *you* be as successful as you possibly can. If you are having challenges meeting course requirements, please do not hesitate to discuss these concerns with me, preferably *earlier* in the course schedule than later. Also, don't forget that UCA offers a number of fantastic support services. You should especially consider visiting the UCA Writing Center if you struggle with writing prose, grammar, etc.

Assignments

1. **Learning about Footnotes:** Examine the footnotes in the article provided in class. Answer the following questions.
 - a. How many footnotes are in the selection?
 - b. What are the different uses to which footnotes are put?
 - c. What are the various purposes of these particular footnotes?
 - d. How are footnote citations different in format from bibliographic citations?
 - e. What do you think is the reason for these differences?
 - f. How are subsequent references different from the first time a work is cited?
 - g. Why are footnotes and citations ultimately so important?

2. **Choose a Topic** for your research project. It's time to begin the project! What interests you about the past? What do you want to know more about? Choose three topics and we'll talk about them in class—it will be a bit of a round table.

3. **Reference Work Summary:** Write a brief description of one reference work that contains material relevant to your topic. Include the following information:
 - a. Name of work and author (if any).
 - b. Call number and location (on the shelves? In reference section? On reserve? On disk?)
 - c. The kind of information it contains on what topics—specifically, what material you will use? (bibliographic sources).
 - d. Purposes it would be useful for

4. **Secondary Source Evaluation:** Read and evaluate the secondary source document provided in class. Answer the following questions.
 - a. State its author, title, place of publication, publisher, and date of publication in proper bibliographic form (according to *Turabian*).
 - b. What is its topic and audience? (i.e. is it for a general audience, students in a course, or historians?)
 - c. What kind of sources does it use? (archival documents or printed and edited documents—be specific)
 - d. Is it a review of recent published research, a new argument based on familiar sources, a monograph on the author's own research, a synthesis of secondary sources, a biography, or something else?
 - e. What is its thesis? (Look in the preface, introduction, or conclusion).
 - f. What conclusions does it draw, if any?

5. **Find Two Secondary Source Books** with some level of different or contrasting views in the Library relating to your research topic. These books should supply footnotes (endnotes) or at least a good bibliography. Without knowing what sources the author used, you cannot rely on their information. If you cannot find two books relating in a

general way to your research topic, you will need to choose another topic, end of story. These two books should have differing viewpoints. Answer the following questions.

- a. A description of how you found each book (detailed enough for someone to retrace your steps, including subjects searched, etc.)
 - b. Why these books would be good and reliable sources for your paper.
 - c. Include proper bibliographic citation.
 - d. What are the author's credentials?
 - e. What is their content?
 - f. What are their sources?
 - g. An assessment of its reliability and credibility based on this information.
6. **Using references and footnotes** in the books from the previous assignment, find **TWO additional** secondary source books, which are relevant to your research topic. Answer the following questions.
- a. A description of how you found the source, citing the original book (correctly) in which you found the reference, including page and footnote.
 - b. Why these books would be good and reliable sources for your paper.
 - c. Include proper bibliographic citation.
 - d. What are the author's credentials?
 - e. What are their content? Sources?
7. **Constructing a Research Question** for your research project. Are there any lingering questions you have? You're the author—here's your chance to produce your own work. Use proper grammar. Outline your secondary questions that need to be addressed in order to successfully answer your primary question. Identify a preliminary list of possible sources. Your answer should consist of several lines and should be a pointed question rather than your topic.

8. **Primary Document Summary:** Read and evaluate the primary source document distributed in class. Interpret the document by answering the following questions.
- a. What exactly is the document?
 - b. Who wrote it and when did they write it?
 - c. What motivated the author to write it?
 - d. What is the perspective of the author?
 - e. What are the limitations of the document?
 - f. What does the document tell us about the subject? What does it tell us about that particular society?
9. **Primary Document Application.** Write a brief description (about 100 words per source) for two primary sources that contain material relevant to your topic. Use the format for Assignment Number Three.
10. **Find and evaluate a Webpage** related to your topic, and write a report that includes:
- a. The URL address

- b. The process you used to find it, (detailed enough so that I can trace your steps)
- c. Its author and his/her credentials
- d. A brief summary of its content and audience
- e. An assessment of its credibility and reliability (where did this information come from?)
- f. Will it be useful in your research paper?
- g. Include this webpage in your annotated bibliography

11. **Evaluate a Primary Source Document Found on the Internet:** Select a primary document related to your research paper from the internet, describe the process you followed to find it, and write an analysis on it, answering the following questions.

- a. What is this document?
- b. What is the URL address?
- c. How should you cite this source according to Turabian rules?
- d. What process did you follow to find it?
- e. Who wrote it? When? Why? Its context?
- f. What, briefly, is its content?
- g. What is the perspective of the author?
- h. How might it be useful?

12. **Using Interlibrary Loan,** find two books not available at Library relating to your primary document and research topic (these two books can be either secondary or primary sources). Write a summary on your books, including:

- a. A description of how you found each book detailed enough for someone to retrace your steps, including subjects searched, etc.
- b. Why these books would be good and reliable sources for your paper.
- c. Include proper bibliographic citation.
- d. What are the author's credentials?
- e. What is its content? Sources?
- f. Besides your summary, also include a copy of the Interlibrary Loan form for each book in your portfolio. Include these books in your Annotated Bibliography.

13. **Find three book reviews** in scholarly/academic journals on one of the books you have found for your research paper (whether an interlibrary loan book or one available in the Library). Use JStor. It is crucial to find book reviews. If you cannot find any, you may need to find additional secondary sources or even a new research question (this is unfortunately one of the frustrating aspects of doing research). These book reviews must meet these criteria: a) have a signed author; b) be from the point of view of an historian; c) be from an scholarly/academic journal.

- a. Describe the method of finding the book reviews.
- b. List the three book reviews (in correct and complete bibliographic style).

14. **Microform Source Analysis:** Go to the Microforms section in the Library. Find a primary source. Evaluate and write an analysis of the source, answering the following questions:

- a. What is the name and date of the source?
- b. How did you find it?
- c. Is it a primary or secondary source? How can you tell?
- d. What kind of document/source is it? What is its origin?
- e. For what purpose was it written?
- f. For what purposes would it be useful for the study of history?

15. **Write a Thesis Statement** for your research paper.

16. **Introduction Section of your Research Paper.** Provide the introduction of your research paper—this should be multiple pages and should include your:

- a. Hook or introductory paragraph(s)
- b. Thesis/Argument
- c. Historiography

17. **Outline for Research Paper:** Write a working outline for your paper that contains the following elements.

- a. A descriptive title
- b. Introduction to your topic
- c. Thesis Statement
- d. At least three arguments supporting the thesis
- e. Conclusion

18. **Annotated Bibliography:** Start compiling an annotated bibliography of all sources found so far pertaining to your research topic and paper. Each entry begins with the Bibliographic citation, followed by a paragraph about it. Specifically, use Turabian style bibliographical citations of primary sources, books, articles, internet sites, etc. Include the following.

- a. Include call number, website, and URL location (as appropriate)
- b. Who is the author? (Not just his/her name, but credentials also)
- c. What type of source is it? (Specify whether it is primary or secondary as well as the sort of document it is: journal article, monograph, government report, etc.). Does it provide footnotes?
- d. What is its content? Sources?
- e. Why will it be useful to you in your research paper?

New entries should be added to the Bibliography as they are found while you continue to work on your research paper.

19. **Draft Research Paper DUE XXXX:** Based upon your choice of primary source documents and secondary sources (books, articles, etc.) that you have collected, you will write a ten-to-twelve page research paper. You will:
- Clearly present and support your thesis statement
 - Use correct footnotes
 - Append a complete bibliography
 - Have an appropriate title page
 - Pages must be stapled
20. **Student Response and Critique of Presentations and Draft:** Each student is expected to provide constructive criticism and evaluate classmates' presentation, thesis, and draft. Be helpful.
- You* (as the evaluator) will be graded on this assignment based on the insight and helpfulness of the comments made to your peers.
 - Provide **two copies of your review** with your name and the title and author of the paper you critiqued. One should be given to the instructor, and the other should be stapled to the actual copy of the research paper your peer gave you earlier. Return this copy and the rough draft directly to the appropriate student.
 - After your rough draft and presentation evaluation forms are returned to you, put these in your binder.
 - SPECIAL NOTE**
 - If you do not get peer evaluations back from one or more students, please include a special note indicating this in your portfolio. Be sure to include the name/s of the pertinent peer/s.
21. **Final Draft of the Research Paper DUE ON DATE OF FINAL EXAM**