HISTORY 665: Seminar in History
Fall Semester 2015
Tuesday, 4-6:40 pm, AL 524

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For Students with Disabilities:
If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that I cannot provide accommodations based upon disability until I have received an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Goals and Format of the Course:
This course is a guided research seminar in which advanced graduate students are required to design, research, and write a 30- to 40-page paper. This paper may serve as a thesis chapter or a stand-alone research paper. Whatever its purpose, it MUST be based upon primary source research. Although you will be asked to situate your paper’s argument within the secondary literature (i.e., its place in the historiography), the majority of the paper will be based upon primary source materials. In that way, the paper will be an original contribution to the field of history. In this course, you are literally “writing history” and gaining experience and insight into what it is that professional historians do.

Good writing is important here. This is a writing seminar. You will be reading drafts of everyone else's papers and doing a formal critique of one of them (as someone will do a formal critique of yours). If you are not already in the habit of writing short, clear sentences, then get in the habit quickly. Take your long sentences, chop them apart, and keep only what is most important.

In order to carry out this project, you will complete a number of steps along the way that will facilitate the process. They fall into three main categories – preparation for research project, research itself, and write-up and presentation of research – that drive the organization and format of the course.

Research Preparation
The first part of the course is devoted to helping you prepare for your project. During this time, we first meet as a group to discuss what it means to write history and how historians use primary source evidence to construct arguments. Second, you will
meet with your advisor and with me to develop a research plan, which will then be written up as a research prospectus for the paper. You will locate the primary and secondary sources necessary to carry out the project and present some of them to your peers in class. This part of the course ends with the writing of a short historiography paper in which you place your argument and approach within the secondary literature and show how and why your project is unique and important. This paper will not only help you to understand the larger significance of your work, but should also help you to design research questions to ask of the primary sources you consult.

Research
Weeks 6 through 10 are dedicated to research. In order to allow you to devote yourselves fully to research during this time, we meet for class only sporadically, so you need to be very disciplined and keep up a rigorous, regular research schedule. During this period you will be asked to write two other components of the paper – a primary-source paper and an introduction to the paper. I will be in my office during class time for consultation on the days we do not meet. I expect to see each of you in my office regularly.

Write-Up, Presentation and Critique of Research
The final third of the semester is dedicated to preparing a draft of your paper, presenting it to the class, and preparing comments and critiques for your colleagues’ papers as well. During this time we will meet to discuss each student’s paper following the format of a typical panel presentation at a history conference, in which four people present their work followed by a formally prepared comment and questions from the audience. Students are expected to take these comments into account in revising the final draft of the paper.

Course Requirements and Grading:
Your final grade is based on the criteria enumerated below. Additional instructions for writing assignments will be handed out in class.
1. Attendance: Attendance is required. You need to come to every class and stay the entire time we meet.
2. Participation (15%): Participation does not simply mean showing up. It will be measured on the basis of the value of the contributions you make to discussions.
3. Research Prospectus and Bibliography – due Tuesday, September 15: Before you start your research project, you will turn in a 2-3-page proposal and preliminary bibliography. The bibliography needs to list at least 10 secondary and 10 primary sources (be sure to separate them into two separate lists).
4. Secondary Source/Historiography Paper (10%) – due Tuesday, September 22: In this 3-4-page paper, you will present the most important secondary works pertinent to your argument and explain how and why your argument builds upon these works and/or revises them. In other words, how and why is your paper unique and innovative? Where does it fit into the field?
5. Primary Source Paper (10%) – due Tuesday, October 13: In this 3-4-page paper, you will write one small section of your paper based upon a primary source or sources in
order to get practice and gain expertise in using primary source evidence to build arguments.

6. **Introduction to paper (10%) – due Tuesday, November 3:** Before the first draft is due, you will write a 2-3-page introduction that includes all the elements necessary in an introduction and thus provides a “map” of your paper for your readers.

7. **First Draft (20%) – due dates variable (see course schedule):** The week before your panel is assigned to present, you will turn in a complete draft of your paper to me and to the group assigned to comment on your panel. On the day that you present, I will hand back written comments to you on your draft.

8. **Research Presentation – dates variable (see course schedule):** The day that your panel is assigned, you will be asked to give a 15-minute presentation of your paper following the format and guidelines common at professional history conferences. The presentation will be followed by a 5-minute critique from the commentators and a 10-minute question-answer session with the audience.

9. **Critiques of Drafts – dates variable (see course schedule):** This is a group-determined grade. You will be assigned to a group of commentators to critique the papers of one panel. Critiques must be a collective effort and be written out and handed in the day of the panel. Each member of the group will give a 5-minute oral critique of one paper during the panel.

10. **Final Draft (35%) – due Tuesday, December 16:** In revising your paper and completing the final draft, you are to implement my written comments on the first draft as well as the comments and critiques suggested to you by your peers in the formal comment and in the question-answer session. Final drafts that do not incorporate any substantive changes based will receive a 0.

**Note:** Assignments are normally to be turned in during class time. If we are not meeting that week, however, you are to bring them in to me in my office. **I will not accept late assignments.** If you have extenuating circumstances, you must notify me ahead of time.

**Books, Readings, and Resources:**

The following book is required reading and is available electronically at Love Library, SDSU.


For citations – bibliography and footnotes – you will need to follow the guidelines set forth in Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). This book is available in the reference section of Love Library, though it is probably more convenient to look at the SDSU History Department website, which give examples of how to do citations in the Turabian style.
Course Schedule:

Week 1, August 25
- Introduction to the course

Week 2, September 1: Where do papers come from?
- Discussion of readings
- Discussion of how research projects are created and carried out
- Discussion of what is required to write effectively
- Discussion of the use of evidence in the construction of historical arguments


SDSU Master’s Thesis in History – Go to the library, check out a history thesis and skim it, paying particular attention to its overall argument, its placement within the historiography, and the primary sources used. Ask yourself the following questions about it: Does it make a clear argument that has clear historical significance? Is this original research? Is it well-written? Does it make effective use of the sources? What could be done to improve this thesis?

Week 3, September 8: Planning your Thesis and Making a Research Plan
- No class meeting this week - Individual meetings with me during class time to discuss your meeting with your advisor and your research plan
- By this week, meet with your advisor (or the person who specializes in the field in which you will be conducting research this semester) either in person or through a substantive email exchange in order to determine the viability of your proposed topic, the feasibility of locating appropriate and plentiful primary sources, and the way you intend to frame the argument and its significance.

Week 4, September 15: Presentation of Research Plan
- Prospectus and Bibliography due
- 5-7-minute presentation of research plan in which you:
  - present your topic and proposed hypothesis
  - describe the primary sources you will use to complete the paper
  - bring one primary and one secondary source to show the class and explain how you will use it in the paper
Week 5, September 22: Secondary-Source/Historiography Paper
- Secondary-Source/Historiography Paper due
- 2-3-minute presentations of the historical significance of your topic – i.e., how it fits in with the main historiographical debates in the secondary literature of your field and what questions you will be asking of your primary sources

Week 6, September 29: Research
- No class meeting – pursue individual research
- Meet with me for individual consultation during class time

Week 7, October 6: Research
- No class meeting – pursue individual research
- Meet with me for individual consultation during class time

Week 8, October 13: Primary Source Papers
- Primary Source Paper due
- 2-3-minute presentations of primary source papers
- Discussion of how to use primary sources as evidence in building arguments
- Discussion of how to write introductions

Week 9, October 20: Research
- No class meeting – pursue individual research
- Meet with me for individual consultation during class time

Week 10, October 27: Research
- No class meeting – pursue individual research
- Meet with me for individual consultation during class time

Week 11, November 3: Introductions
- Introductions due
- Class meeting to update research
- Members of Panel #1 must meet with me individually to go over introductions immediately

Reading: Reread Craft of Research on how to write introductions

Week 12, November 10: Research
- No class meeting – pursue individual research
- Meet with me for individual consultation during class time
- Panel #1 – First Drafts Due
**Week 13, November 17: Panel and Comment #1**
- Panelists in Panel #1 give 15-minute presentations of paper
- Commentators in Comment Group #1 give 5-minute formal comment for each paper
- Panel #2 – First Drafts due

**Week 14, November 24: Panel and Comment #2**
- Panelists in Panel #2 give 15-minute presentations of paper
- Commentators in Comment Group #2 give 5-minute formal comment for each paper

**Week 15, December 1: Revisions**
- No class meeting - work on revisions of drafts based on my comments and those of your colleagues in preparation of the final draft.
- Meet with me for individual consultation during class time

**Week 15, December 8: Revisions**
- No class meeting - work on revisions of drafts based on my comments and those of your colleagues in preparation of the final draft.
- Meet with me for individual consultation during class time

**FINAL PAPERS DUE WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16**
PLAGIARISM
What is plagiarism? Here is an explanation (and a warning):

**Definition**: Plagiarism means presenting the ideas and words of others as if they were your own. Building an argument of your own using the (acknowledged) ideas and research of others is not plagiarism. This is a creative activity and is the normal activity of working historians.

**How to avoid the charge of plagiarism:**
1. If you take a fact or idea directly from someone else, you **must** give a footnote reference. (Use your common sense about this. You do not need to footnote everything. The basic rule is to give a footnote for any information which is not easily available, or is controversial, or is particularly important for your argument. The purpose of the footnote is to allow the reader to assess the strength of the materials from which your argument is constructed.)
2. If you also use the exact words of your source (if you quote) then you must enclose the whole quotation in quotation marks (unless it has been indented and single-spaced; see above).
3. Take information from your sources, but **use your own words**.

**Why not plagiarize?**
1. Plagiarism of facts: If you do not explain where your information comes from, your reader cannot assess the reliability of your argument and will rightly distrust your conclusions. Plagiarism is a sign that you did not bother to check the evidence on which your argument is based.
2. Plagiarism of words. This is dishonest. It also stunts your intellectual development by encouraging habits of mechanical, imitative thinking. It encourages you to write without engaging your own mind, thoughts, and ideas. Finding the right language is an essential stage in building a historical argument, while using the language of others prevents you from developing an independent approach to intellectual problems. If you rely on the ideas and arguments of others, you will never develop the capacity to think through problems independently. Nor will you learn to express the results of your own thinking in the only proper language: your own.

**The Penalty**
For these reasons, any work that contains **any plagiarism at all** will be regarded as valueless. I reserve the right to give **zero credit** to plagiarized work. There will be no right of resubmission for work that contains any plagiarism (in line with University policy; see the University Catalog), and I will take the disciplinary action that is appropriate according to University policy.
Formal Paper Writing Guidelines

Your paper grade is based on how well you fulfill the following aspects of what constitutes a well-written paper. The general guidelines listed below will give you basic information on format, language, and use of quotes in papers. There are also a series of questions to ask yourself while you write the paper. These questions fall under three categories: organization, content (context, argument and evidence), and style and grammar. These are the questions I ask of your papers as I read them. I recommend that you do the same.

General Guidelines

Quotes:
- Quotes need to be introduced. Do not insert a quote into your writing without first informing the reader where it comes from or who said it. Quotes are also supposed to illustrate points, not make points for you.
- Do not use extensive quotes in short papers (under 10 pages). Quotes for short papers should not exceed 4 or 5 lines and you should not have more than 1 indented quote per page. Papers longer than 10 pages can support more quotations, but do not overuse them.
- Indent and single-space quotes that are longer than 3 lines. When you do this, you do not need to use quotation marks.

Language:
- Do not use contractions (don’t, won’t, etc) in your paper. They are not appropriate in formal written work.
- Do not use colloquialisms (informal phrases or “sayings”) or swear words of any sort, even if they seem harmless. Any written work that you turn in must use more formal language. If the paper is written in language that is too familiar or that includes swear words, I will turn it back to you without grading it.
- As a general rule, use the past tense in writing your paper. At certain points in the paper, use of the present tense may be appropriate, but for the most part, stay with the past tense, and be consistent about it.
- If there are too many grammatical mistakes or unclear sentences (see “Writing Handout” in syllabus), I will turn the paper back to you without grading it.

Format:
- Your paper must have a title on a separate title page.
- Your paper must have page numbers.
- Your paper must have a bibliography and citations. I will let you know the proper format to use for those citations.

Organization
- Is the paper well organized? Does the reader know at all times exactly what he or she is reading about and why he or she is reading it?
- Does the paper have each of the necessary components? How well has the author done in writing each of these components
  - Introduction:
  - Does the paper start broadly and narrow to the specific topic of the paper?
Does it provide sufficient background for an intelligent non-expert to understand the topic that is addressed? (This is necessary throughout the paper).

**Argument:**
- Does the introduction end with a clear statement of the argument?
- Does the argument take a stand that the author will prove throughout the paper?

**Support paragraphs or sections:**
- Does the number of support sections correspond to the number of main points identified in the argument? Do they go in the same order as they were written in the argument?
- Do the paragraphs specifically relate to the argument stated in the paper? Do they adequately and logically prove what they are supposed to?
- Do the paragraphs begin with a topic sentence that relates directly to the particular point it supports?
- Do the paragraphs include specific evidence that supports the point being made?
- Do the paragraphs have a concluding sentence (or sentences) that sum up what that section has proven?

**Conclusion:**
- Does the conclusion restate the argument?
- Does it then go on to make broader, more sweeping statements about the larger meaning of the thesis?

**Content: Context, Argument, and Evidence**
- How well does this paper fulfill the general spirit of the assignment?
- Does the author tie in historical context learned in class? How well does the author demonstrate his or her understanding of the historical context?
- Is the argument sound? Is it original, creative, and thoughtful?
- How well did the author make use of materials used? How well does evidence fit the argument? Are quotations used appropriately?
- Are works cited in an appropriate and uniform manner? Does the bibliography fulfill the requirements of the assignment?

**Style and Grammar**
- Are there grammatical errors? Spelling mistakes? Typographical errors? Has the author proofread his or her work carefully?
- Is the language appropriate to a formal paper?
- Does the writing flow well? Is there too much passive voice or too many unnecessary words?
- Are sentences clear and complete? Does one sentence flow from the next in a logical, smooth manner?
- Does the author make use of transitions statements (however, although, therefore, nevertheless, etc.) at appropriate places in the paper?

**Some final notes:**
Always type and double-space your papers, using standard margins and font size.

- Keep a copy of your paper as well.
- I strongly recommend that you obtain, read and refer regularly to one or more of the following books:
  - Strunk, and White. *Elements of Style.* (highly recommended)
  - Williams, Joseph M. *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace.*