

**Senior Seminar
HIST 4484 W
CRN 11390
Thurs. 5:30 – 8:00 pm
TLC 1203
Spring 2015**

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Office hours: T 8:00-9:00, 11:00-noon, 1:30-4:00
R 8:00-9:00, 11:00-noon, 1:30-5:00
or by appointment

Course Description

This course provides students with the opportunity to conceive and execute their own original historical study. It thus represents the capstone of the history major's course of study at the University of West Georgia. The work in this course is the apex to which the history program at West Georgia has been building. In the first part of the course we will do some common readings together. Our analysis of each of these readings will focus on examining what evidence the historians found and how they used that evidence to construct an original historical argument. I hope that the readings will offer models and guidance for students' own research projects. In the second part of the course, the focus shifts to the research and writing of those student projects. Along the way, there will be several milestones that must be reached.

This course is writing-intensive. Effective writing is essential to the historical discipline and to a liberal education. The "W" designation for this course indicates that it is a Discipline-Specific Writing course.

Prerequisites

Each student must have already completed HIST 2302 and have senior standing. Any student registered for the course who has not completed the prerequisites must see the instructor.

Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to provide students with the opportunity to conceive and execute their own original research project. As part of that work this course is designed to permit students actively engaged in the learning process with the opportunity to develop further the following skills:

- to recognize and to pose significant historical questions;
- to find useful primary and secondary sources;
- to analyze sources critically;
- to cite sources properly;
- to write in standard English;
- to construct a persuasive historical argument based on evidence;
- to make an effective ten-minute oral presentation; and
- to think historically.

Thinking historically requires one:

- to seek to understand the people of the past;
- to seek to understand the perspective of historical actors and to view those historical actors from a critical, scholarly perspective;
- to recognize that people, events, ideas, and cultures have influenced later people, events, ideas, and cultures;
- to recognize that history involves both change and continuity over time; and
- to draw and to explain connections between particular people, events, ideas, or texts and their historical contexts.

Required Materials:

Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) ISBN 978-0226816388.

Grading

Participation	10 percent
Topic statement	5 percent
Question and bibliography	5 percent
Primary source presentation	5 percent
Introduction and historiography section	10 percent
Final presentation	10 percent
Paper	50 percent
Reflective essay	5 percent

Each student will write an original, typed, double-spaced research paper 20-25 pages in length examining some question of interest related to the course. The paper must assert a thesis and sustain it on the basis of evidence drawn from both primary and secondary sources. The paper must cite its sources in footnotes and list works consulted in a bibliography according to the style specified in Turabian.

The project must be an original work undertaken for this course. Students building on prior related work must submit any previously submitted paper by the second week of the course. In writing your paper, you should consult the History Department's guidance on writing. It includes a rubric for grading the paper:

http://www.westga.edu/dsw/index_10083.php

The paper is due at the beginning of class on April 16. Each student must submit **two** paper copies of the final paper and submit an electronic version to the Dropbox in CourseDen.

We will start the semester with some common readings. The readings are intended to help us to consider how best to understand the past and to write about it. Students should consider the readings as potential models for their own work. Students should bring all of the completed readings with them each week, because we will compare and contrast approaches among them.

Each student is encouraged to consult with a professor who specializes in the field that the student is researching. Students should submit a written draft bibliography to an expert professor for advice and heed that advice in researching their questions.

On January 22 each student must submit a topic statement. The topic statement is a typewritten statement of the topic to be addressed by the paper. A clear, workable topic statement submitted on time will receive an "A." One letter grade will be deducted from that topic statement grade if the statement of the question presented diverges from the topic statement. One letter grade will be deducted if the primary source presented does not address the topic selected. One letter grade will be deducted if the final paper does not address the topic selected in the topic statement.

On February 5 each student must submit a statement of the question to be addressed and a bibliography. The written statement of the question to be addressed should represent a refinement of the paper's topic. The question should be sufficiently interesting and important to merit at least a twenty-page paper. It should be sufficiently narrow to be answerable adequately within at most a twenty-five-page paper. The question should be answerable in a statement that will be the paper's thesis. A question that meets those requirements and that is supported by a bibliography will receive an "A." One letter grade will be deducted from the grade awarded for the question presented if the primary source presented does not address the question stated. One letter grade will be deducted if the final paper does not answer the question stated.

In the primary source presentations, each student will pick one important primary source from among the primary sources used for the paper. The presentation will describe the source to the class and explain how the paper will make use of the source in its argument. Students should come to class with copies of the source or relevant extracts of the source for everyone in the class. The presentation should address questions such as: Who wrote the document? Who was the audience of the document? What was the purpose of the document? What does it say?

Why is it significant? Each student will also answer questions from the group about the source. Grades will be based primarily on the quality of the analysis.

On March 12 students will turn in the introduction and historiography section of their papers. That section should be about three pages in length. It should introduce the historical question the paper examines and briefly state the paper's answer to that question. That is, *be sure to state the paper's thesis*. It should also place the paper in its historiographical context and identify the paper's original contribution to the existing historical writing related to the question under examination. Note that the section handed in **should not be a rough draft**. It should be a polished draft, as good as it can be, since it will be graded, and that grade will weigh 10 percent the final grade for the course.

I will comment on the introduction and historiography section and assign it a grade. Each student should take into account those comments in the final paper and incorporate a rewritten introduction and historiography section in the final paper. The final paper should represent an improvement over the earlier version of the section. The marked-up draft of the introduction and historiography section must be turned in along with the final paper.

In the final presentations, each student will describe the paper's argument and supporting evidence to the class in a ten-minute talk. Students should not simply read excerpts from their paper. Students will then answer questions from the group. Grades will be based on the quality of the oral presentation of the paper's argument and evidence and responses to questions posed.

The reflective essay due at the end of the course should be 2-3 pages in length and it should address the following question: What have you learned during your time as a student at West Georgia? The essay will be graded on the basis of the quality of the reflection and the writing. It is due on April 23.

Thoughtful contributions made in class discussions will be credited in the class participation grade. Behavior (such as tardiness) that impedes other students' learning will be penalized.

No extra credit will be offered.

Policies

I expect each student to understand and to comply with the University of West Georgia's policies on Academic Honor and Academic Dishonesty. They may be found in the Student Handbook, on the web at <http://www.westga.edu/documents/catalogs.php>.

Academic honesty prohibits taking credit for someone else's work. Justice requires that punishment fit the infraction. Egregious academic dishonesty will result in failing the course and may also bring additional penalties imposed by the university.

I encourage any student who has questions or needs help with the course to come to my office hours or send me an email to set up a time to talk.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and university policy, I will make reasonable accommodation for any recognized disability. Students should contact me during the first three weeks of the course and present documentation from the University's Student Development Center.

I strongly encourage students to attend class. Students who attend class tend to learn more and get better grades than those who do not. Class discussion sometimes affords new insights that cannot be planned or even predicted. In case of absence, it is the responsibility of the student to obtain notes from a classmate covering what was missed. I do not penalize students for absences, but students receive no credit for participating or on any tests or quizzes on missed class days. A student who does not take a quiz or test in class with the rest of the class receives a zero. I do not permit students to take any test, quiz, or other graded work at any time other than in class as administered except in rare cases of prior approval by the instructor or with a physician's note.

Late assignments will be penalized by deducting one letter grade for each day the assignment is late.

For university-wide policies, please see:

http://www.westga.edu/assets/Dept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf

Course Schedule

Jan. 8 Introduction

Jan. 15 How do I make an original argument?

Reading: J. Harrison Powell, "'Seven Year Locusts': The Deforestation of Spotsylvania County during the American Civil War," *Essays in History* ___<http://www.essaysinhistory.com/articles/2011/4>

Jan. 22 How do I structure my paper?

Reading: Alon Confino, "Why Did the Nazis Burn the Hebrew Bible? Nazi Germany, Representations of the Past, and the Holocaust," *The Journal of Modern History* 84, no. 2 (June 2012): 369-400 (access through library database).
Written topic statement due

Jan. 29 Strengths and weaknesses

Lauren MacIvor Thompson, "'I wish I could forget myself...': Mary Todd Lincoln and the Pursuit of True Womanhood, 1818-1882," *Essays in History* (2011) online:

<http://www.essaysinhistory.com/articles/2011/31/>

Tyler Green, "George B. McClellan: Political Forces and Generalship," *The University of Arizona Undergraduate Historical Review* 1 (2009) (online)

Kirk McFarland, "A Split Decision: How Republican Division Ensured Democratic Victory" *The University of Arizona Undergraduate Historical Review* 1 (2009) (online)

<http://clubs.asua.arizona.edu/~pat/Journal/Summer%202009%20UA%20Undergrad%20Historical%20Review.pdf>

Feb. 5 Written statement of question to be addressed and bibliography due

Feb. 12 Individual meetings

Feb. 19 Presentations of primary sources

Feb. 26 Presentations of primary sources

Mar. 5 Discussion of use of primary sources

Mar. 12 Introduction and historiography section due

Spring Break

Mar. 26 Discussion of introduction and historiography sections

Apr. 2 Final presentations

Apr. 9 Final presentations

Apr. 16 Final presentations

Paper due

Apr. 23 **Reflective Essay due**