

HIST 4484-01W

Senior Seminar

Fall 2015

Instructor: Dr. Dan Williams

Office Hours: TLC 3207

MWF, 12-1pm

Wed., 3:30-4:30pm

Thurs., 10am-5pm

(Additional office hours available by appointment)

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Phone: 678-839-6034

Class Location:

Pafford 208

Mon., 5:30-8:00pm

Description:

HIST 4484-01W has one principal goal: to equip you to write a 20-25 page research paper that will serve as the capstone of your undergraduate career as a history major at the University of West Georgia. All of the class sessions and assignments are designed to help you research and write this paper.

Prerequisites:

All students taking this course are required to have successfully completed HIST 2302 (the history course commonly known as “Methodology”) and to have senior standing. If you do not meet these requirements, please see me as soon as possible.

Learning Outcomes:

All sections of HIST 4484-01W, regardless of the instructor, have the following learning outcomes, as stated on syllabi for previous sections of this course:

“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 and to speak clearly;
- to construct a persuasive historical argument based on evidence; 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.”

The assignments in this course – and, in particular, the primary assignment in this class, which is the 20-25 page research paper – will assess these learning outcomes.

Assessment:

Students’ final grades will be determined as follows:

Class participation & instructor meetings	10%
Research question and bibliography	5%
Citation quiz	5%
Primary source presentation	5%
Introduction and historiography section	5%
Final presentation	5%
First draft	10%
Research Paper	50%
Reflective essay	5%

There will be no opportunity for extra-credit assignments in this course.

Grading Methodology: This university does not use a plus / minus grading system, but during the course of the semester, I will use plus / minus grades, as well as split-letter grades (e.g., an A- / B+), in order to evaluate students’ written work with precision. In computing final course grades, I convert all grades into numeric scores according to the following system:

A = 95

A/A- = 94

A- = 92

A-/B+ = 90

B+ = 88

B+/B = 87

B = 85

B/B- = 84

B- = 82

B-/C+ = 80

(A similar pattern is used for grades in the C-range and D-range).

In computing final course grades, a grade average of 89.5 or higher converts to a course grade of A, a grade average between 79.5 and 89.49 converts to a course grade of B, and a grade average between 69.5 and 79.49 converts to a course grade of C. A grade average of 59.5, which converts to a D, is the lowest possible passing grade in the course.

A-range grades, including the grade of A-/B+, are reserved for work that is of exceptional quality. In order to receive an A-range grade for the Senior Seminar research paper, a student's work must show evidence of original thinking and the ability to synthesize information from a wide variety of sources, as well as an accurate understanding of the material and good writing technique. Papers that receive a grade of 90 or above must be cogent and persuasive in their argumentation, and they must be well written and tightly organized around a strong thesis. In short, a paper that receives an A-range grade not only meets the basic requirements for the assignment, but also demonstrates that a student has mastered the interpretative, analytical, and writing skills expected for a course at this level.

B-range grades are given to essays that demonstrate a student's accurate understanding of the material, adequate use of relevant sources, and competence in writing. They rarely contain the sophisticated analysis required for an A-range essay, but they meet the requirements and expectations for the assignment.

C-range grades are given to essays that contain factual inaccuracies, errors in interpretation, inadequate use of relevant sources, or poor writing technique, even though they usually meet most of the basic requirements for the assignment.

D-range and failing grades are assigned to work that fails to meet the requirements and expectations for the assignment.

Research Paper Assignment: The main assignment of this course is a 20-25 page research paper, written on a historical topic of your choice. The final version of this paper will count for 50% of your class grade. Nearly all of the other assignments in this course are designed to assist you in completing this primary assignment.

The paper will be graded according to the standards created by the history department for use in HIST 4484 and other upper-level undergraduate courses. You can find those standards posted here: http://www.westga.edu/dsw/index_10083.php.

Other Assignments in This Course:

Class participation: Because this is a seminar-style class, participation throughout the semester in class discussions of other students' work is very important. Your class participation grade will be based not only on your record of class attendance, but also on your level of engagement with the assigned material throughout the semester. It is especially important for you to participate actively in the sessions devoted to critiquing other students' papers. Giving thoughtful, helpful feedback on the work of your fellow students and asking perceptive questions during their class presentations will have a positive effect on your class participation grade.

Meetings with instructor: At several points in the semester, you will be required to meet with me to give me an update on your research and discuss your paper with me. I hope that these meetings will give me an opportunity to offer you helpful suggestions and useful feedback.

Question and bibliography: On August 31, you will be asked to submit a typed research question and comprehensive bibliography for your research paper topic. The question should state the precise focus of your research paper. For example, if you chose as your research paper topic the subject of John Wilkes Booth and the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, your research question might be, “What did John Wilkes Booth hope to accomplish by killing President Abraham Lincoln?” Or, if your research paper topic were the Scopes Trial, your stated research question might be, “What effect did the Scopes Trial have on the teaching of evolution in public schools in Tennessee after 1925?” A research question, in other words, should be narrow and precise, and it should give you a clear framework for writing a thesis statement after you complete your research. The question you choose should be appropriate for this assignment – that is, it should be a historical question, and it should be sufficiently narrow in scope for you to thoroughly examine it in a 20-25 page research paper.

Your comprehensive bibliography should be divided into two sections – primary and secondary sources. The bibliography should list all major secondary sources on your topic (that is, all relevant monographs [books] and, if applicable, any important academic journal articles on the subject), and should designate at least six of these books as sources that you intend to examine. Your list of primary sources may not be as comprehensive, but your bibliography should list the major primary sources that you think you will be able to access. After completing your bibliography and turning it into me on August 31, you should show it to the faculty member in the department whose own research specialty most closely aligns with your paper topic. That faculty member must approve the bibliography before you will receive credit for this assignment. You should get the final version of your bibliography signed by the appropriate faculty member by September 14.

Citation quiz: The citation quiz will require you to write Turabian-style (also known as Chicago style) footnotes for the following works:

- 1) A monograph with a single author (book).
- 2) A subsequent reference to the same monograph.
- 3) A monograph with two authors.
- 4) An article in an edited volume.
- 5) A journal article.
- 6) An article from the *New York Times*.
- 7) A website.

The quiz will be based on information presented in pages 144-215 of the 8th edition of Kate L. Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, so you are strongly encouraged to read the relevant sections of Turabian carefully in preparation for the quiz.

Primary source presentation: Your primary source presentation, which should be approximately 5-10 minutes in length, should focus on one of the primary sources that you plan

to use in your research paper. You should show the primary source to the instructor and the class. You can do this through a PowerPoint presentation or by bringing a physical copy of the primary source to share with the class. Your presentation should briefly summarize the content of the primary source and should discuss its author, point of view, and historical significance, and, most importantly, it should also explain how you plan to use the primary source to advance your main argument in your paper. You will also be expected to answer questions from other class members as part of your presentation.

Introduction and historiography section: Your research paper should begin with an introductory section outlining your main argument, followed by a historiography section that situates your work in the context of previous scholarship in the field. On October 12, you will be expected to submit this introductory and historiographical section of your paper for assessment and critique. You should submit this assignment to me electronically via email, so that I can distribute copies of these sections to the other members of the class. We will discuss them in class the following week (on October 19).

The introductory and historiography section of your paper should be approximately three pages long. It should be a polished piece of work, not a rough draft. (Remember, it will be graded for writing style and content).

Please submit your introductory and historiography sections via Dropbox in CourseDen.

First draft of the research paper: The first draft of your paper will count for 10 percent of your total course grade, and it will also be critiqued, both by me and by the other members of the class. Your first draft should be as complete as you are able to make it, since the feedback that you receive from me and from your fellow classmates will be more valuable if it based on a complete (or nearly complete) draft of your paper rather than on a version that is only partially finished. The first draft must be at least 10 pages long to be accepted. First drafts that are less than 20 pages cannot receive a grade of A. To receive a grade of A, a first draft must be well written, well organized, and well researched, and it must show promise of being able to become an exceptionally strong paper with some minor revision. However, nearly all first drafts – including those that receive a grade of A – will require additional revision; the receipt of a particular grade for a first draft (whether A, B, C, etc.) is no guarantee of receiving an equivalent grade for the final version of the paper. Please submit your first draft via Dropbox in CourseDen.

Final Presentation: During the final month and a half of the semester, you will be required to give a 10-minute presentation of your research. The presentation should be a formal, academic presentation that is similar in nature to a paper presentation at an academic conference. You will not have time to read your entire paper in only ten minutes. Instead, you should prepare a conference presentation that presents the main argument and highlights of your paper in a clear and engaging manner. You will also be expected to answer questions from your classmates at the conclusion of your presentation.

Reflective Essay: The reflective essay should be 2-3 pages long, and should be a response to the question, “What have you learned during your time as a student at the University of West Georgia?”

Plagiarism policy: Plagiarism, which is the presentation of someone else’s words or ideas as your own, is a serious offense that will not be tolerated. It should go without saying that all papers that you write in this course must be your own work. Any students who are caught copying words or ideas from another student’s work, a website, a textbook, or any other source, and presenting these words or ideas as their own work without proper attribution, will be charged with plagiarism. Students who have engaged in academic dishonesty will automatically fail this course and will be reported to the university administration for possible further disciplinary action.

If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or how to properly cite sources, please ask, because I will be happy to provide explanations. Ignorance is not an excuse for plagiarism; it is your responsibility to read the materials on plagiarism that are posted on the websites listed in this syllabus and presented in other materials assigned in this course, and to take all necessary steps to avoid plagiarizing someone else’s work.

The UWG history department’s policy on plagiarism can be found here:

http://www.westga.edu/~histgrad/academic_honesty.html. As this document states, “Any use of the ideas, information, or words of anyone else, including paraphrasing of the words and ideas, without crediting them is plagiarism and is a crime. A direct quote of the words (even only a few words) of someone else must be in quotation marks as well as have a note indicating its source.”

More information about the university’s honor code and the consequences for violating it can be found here:

http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf.

All of your written work for this class must be original; you are not allowed to submit essays that you have written for other courses or that you have completed prior to this semester. You are also not allowed to reuse material from previous research papers that you have written prior to this semester unless you have discussed this with me in advance and have obtained approval from me to do so.

Assigned Reading:

Because this class is focused on the completion of an independent research project, there is less assigned reading in this class than in most other upper-level history courses at this university. However, you should purchase a copy of the one assigned book for this course, because you will need information from this book for the citation quiz and for the citations in your Senior Seminar research paper. This book, which is available for purchase in the university bookstore, is:

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

Class Schedule:

- 8/24 Introduction: What is a senior seminar research paper?
Formulating a research question and compiling a bibliography
Suggested work for the week of 8/24: Finalize topic and compile bibliography. Figure out which books are the most important works on the topic you have selected. Begin doing secondary source reading on your topic. Meet with a professor in your field to discuss your research topic.
Due on 8/25: Email instructor a preliminary version of your research question for approval.
- 8/31 Discussion of research questions (5:30-6:30pm)
Library tour
Assigned reading: Turabian, pp. 5-23.
Research question and bibliography due.
Suggested work for the weeks of 8/31 and 9/7: Read some of the major secondary sources on your topic. Try to read at least one book per week for the next month. Begin thinking about the primary sources that you will need to consult. Meet with a professor in your field to discuss your bibliography.
- 9/7 No class (Labor Day)
- 9/14 Thinking like a historian when doing historical research
Career preparation: Guest presentations on MAT, Public History, and M.A. programs
7-8:30pm: Meetings with individual students in TLC 3207. (50% of the students required to meet with instructor for approximately 10 minutes each – the other 50% will meet with instructor on September 21).
Final, signed copy of bibliography due.
Suggested work for the week of 9/14: Begin doing primary source research on your topic if you have not already done so. Compile notes on the material that will be useful for your paper.
- 9/21 Making a historical argument, writing a historiographical section, and organizing a research paper
6:30-8pm: Meetings with individual students in TLC 3207.
Suggested work for the week of 9/21: Continue with both primary and secondary source research. Try to continue reading at least one book per week on your topic or make it a point to spend 6-9 hours looking at primary source material.
- 9/28 Research papers: comparing models
Assigned reading and class discussion: Undergraduate research papers in the *University of Arizona Undergraduate Historical Review*
(<http://clubs.asua.arizona.edu/~pat/Journal/Summer%202009%20UA%20Undergrad%20Historical%20Review.pdf>)

Suggested work for the week of 9/28: Begin writing your paper if possible. If you are not ready to start writing, identify the areas of additional research that you need to do before you can write, and make a plan to complete this research within the next two weeks.

10/5 Presentations of primary sources (part 1)

Assigned reading: Turabian, pp. 144-215.

Citation quiz (based on Turabian, pp. 144-215)

10/12 Presentations of primary sources (part 2)

Introduction and historiographical section due (submit via CourseDen Dropbox by 11:59pm)

Suggested work for week of 10/12: Continue writing your paper. After you turn in the introductory section, keep writing and researching.

10/19 Discussion of introductions and historiographical sections

(Students required to read assigned papers from other students and come to class prepared to offer constructive feedback).

Suggested work for week of 10/19: Continue writing your paper. Prepare your class research presentation.

10/26 Class presentations (part 1)

11/2 Class presentations (part 2)

Week of 11/2: Required meeting with instructor to discuss paper either in person or via Skype.

11/9 Class presentations (part 3)

First draft of research paper due (submit via CourseDen Dropbox by 11:59pm)

11/16 Discussion of first drafts of research papers

11/23 No class (Thanksgiving break)

11/30 Final class: Discussion of research papers

12/4 Final version of research paper due (submit via CourseDen Dropbox by 11:59pm)

12/7 Reflective essay due (submit via CourseDen Dropbox by 11:59pm) (No class meeting)