

HIST 6694: Historical Methods and Writing

Dr. Charles Lipp Office: TLC 3217 E-Mail clipp@westga.edu Phone: 678-839-6039	Mon. 5:30-8PM, TLC 3205 Office Hours: Tues, 10-12; 2-5; Weds, 4-5; and by appointment
--	--

Class Description:

This class has a rather straight-forward aim: to have you further development your historical writing skills through the crafting of a 30 to 35 page piece of professional historical writing. This class is designed for all students in the M.A. program: Public History students working on their projects and thesis essays, those working on traditional M.A. theses, and those on the generalist track. Your 30 to 35 page piece of writing will reflect where you are in our diverse M.A. program. The ultimate goal is to have you much further along with your writing at the end of the semester than at the beginning and, thus, closer to degree completion.

Learning Outcomes:

Students who complete successfully all course assignments will demonstrate the following:

- a. Completion of polished 30 to 35 page piece of professional historical writing.
- b. Improved skills at professional historical writing and communicating, including:
 - Increased abilities at crafting arguments, in both written and oral form.
 - Improved abilities in use of proper citation format.
 - Improved abilities at presenting oral and written arguments clearly, succinctly, and professionally.

Required Readings:

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

William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, 4th ed. (Pearson, 1999); ISBN 978-0205309023.

Charles Lipp, "Meanings of Exile Revisions Process" (available as a PDF on Course Den).

Grading Policies:

The majority of your course grade will be connected to your 30 to 35 pages of historical writing. However, several short related assignments and participation will also be assessed as part of your final grade.

Your final grade will thus be factored as follows:

- Participation: 10%
- Thesis Evaluation: 05%

- Symposium Engagement: 05%
- Semester Project (30 to 35 page piece): 80%; broken down as follows:
 - Project Proposal: 05%
 - Revised Proposal + Bibliography: 05%
 - Brief Source Presentation (2 minutes maximum): 05%
 - Project Presentation (10 minutes maximum): 05%
 - First Draft (minimum of 10 pages): 05%
 - Peer Comments on First Drafts: 05%
 - Brief Final Presentation (2 minutes maximum): 05%
 - Final Draft: 45%

• *General University Policies:*

Information regarding university-wide policies can be found at:

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

• *Factoring Grades:*

I will not factor your grade until the end of term when all assignments are completed. If you are interested in your current standing in the class, please keep assignments and use the percentages above.

• *General Points:*

All assignments are on the date indicated in the Course Outline below. Only a serious and unavoidable cause, such as a documented medical condition or family emergency, will be accepted as an excuse for failing to completing an assignment on time. Official documentation must be provided for all causes.

Assignments must be submitted electronically, via the CourseDen (Desire2Learn) Dropbox before the beginning of class on the days marked on the Course Outline below.

All assignments must be typed, double-spaced, in 12-pt Times New Roman font, with regular margins (1.25 left and right, 1.0 top and bottom). You must write the full page-length of the assignment—that means, any space devoted to your name, the date, the class, etc. at the top of the first page does not count towards fulfilling the page length.

• *Grading Criteria*

Assignment and final grades reflect your mastery of assigned materials, particularly lectures and readings.

In general, “A” grades reflect totally excellent work—work that is well written, well organized, and well argued; work that avoids summarizing and instead integrates lecture and reading material into a deep analysis. “A” work contains no factual errors, excellent writing with no mistakes in spelling, grammar, or organization, and displays complete mastery of the main issues of our class.

“B” grades indicate good work—work that mixes analysis with summary. “B” work contains few factual errors, good writing with few mistakes in spelling, grammar, or organization, and displays a good command of the main issues of our class.

“C” grades indicate average work that offers only summary and lacks analysis and organization. “C” work contains some factual errors, average writing with some mistakes in spelling, grammar, or organization, and displays an average command of the main issues of our class.

Something to think about: a “C” reflects summarizing of the material (the questions of who, what, and when)—“B” and “A” indicate you have gone beyond mere summary to address the crucial questions of why and how.

“D” grades reflect poor work that fails to demonstrate a mastery of assigned material. “D” work contains many factual errors, poor writing with many mistakes in spelling, grammar, or organization, and displays a less-than-average mastery of the main issues of our class.

“F” grades reflect work that fails to achieve any of the above criteria and display no mastery of assigned materials whatsoever.

Numerical Equivalents of Letter Grades:

	B+ = 88	C+ = 78	D+ = 68	F = 50
A = 95	B = 85	C = 75	D = 65	
A- = 92	B- = 82	C- = 72	D- = 62	
A-/B+ = 90	B-/C+ = 80	C-/D+ = 70		

Note: Failure to complete/turn in an assignment will result in a grade of zero, not F.

• *Plagiarism*

ANY ACT of plagiarism (the use of someone else’s words or ideas without citation) from ANY SOURCE (class materials and/or outside, including from the internet) will be dealt with severely, so remember to always cite all words and ideas that are not your own. Please recall that when you entered UWG, you consented to uphold our Honor Code, in which all students “pledge to refrain from engaging in acts that do not maintain academic and personal integrity. These include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrications, aid of academic dishonesty, lying, bribery or threats, and stealing.” Moreover, you agreed to the following: “[a]s a West Georgia student, I will represent myself truthfully and complete all academic assignments honestly. I understand that if I violate this code, I will accept the penalties imposed, should I be found guilty of violations through processes due me as a university community member.” You can review the Honor Code at: <http://www.westga.edu/~handbook/index.php?page=honorcode>.

For any instance of plagiarism discovered, the same policy applies: failure for the course and the reporting of the incident to relevant authorities, including the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Chair.

General Class Policies:

It should go without saying that in a graduate class, I expect professionalism at all times. That includes: attendance at all class sessions; being prepared and engaged in class at all times; participating actively in all discussions; and, avoiding all instances of plagiarism, as noted above.

Description of Assignments:

I. Participation (10%):

- Your active participation is absolutely critical for the success of our class. Discussions and presentations are an important component of this course and I expect you to be ready to converse in a professional manner and, moreover, to be willing and able to lead debates about the issues under question. Beyond speaking, participation means being actively engaged in the process of learning at all times.
- In addition, there are a number of readings I am asking you to complete during this semester. I do expect you to complete them and be prepared for in-class discussions. Failure to do this will have a severe negative impact on your participation grade.

II. Thesis Evaluation (05%):

- This assignment aims to help give you a bit of familiarity with the overall task of this semester, particularly if you have never written a 30 to 35 page piece of graduate-level historical writing. For this assignment, you will first select and read a UWG History M.A. thesis/project produced since 2008. After reading the thesis/project, prepare a brief 2-3 page reaction outlining:
 - 1. Areas of strength
 - 2. Areas of potential improvement
 - 3. How these strengths and areas of potential improvement shape your understanding of your own project.
- Your evaluation will be due via Course Den by 12PM on Monday, February 6, 2017.

III. Symposium Engagement (05%):

- On Monday, February 13, 2017, we will be attending the Sixth Annual UWG History Department Graduate Student Symposium to listen to your fellow M.A. colleagues present on their work. Their presentations offer you models for how to craft and present professional historical research. I expect you to be active and engage listeners. Any instance of non-engagement and unprofessionalism (such as not attending the symposium or checking your phone while someone is presenting) will have a severe negative effect on your grade. Also, to earn full credit for this part of your course grade, you must ask 1 professional question of the presenters.

IV. Semester Project (30 to 35 pages of professional historical writing) (80% total):

• Some Basics:

- Because this class is designed for every student in the graduate program, there are three potential projects, reflective of the different paths to the M.A.:
 - 1. For those intending to craft a Public History project and essay, you will work on the thesis essay (30 to 35 pages). If you are close to completion of your M.A. degree, I strongly urge you to also write an accompanying abstract for the essay and project.
 - 2. For those intending to write a traditional 80 to 120 page thesis, you will craft 30 to 35 solid pages in total of that larger work. If you have not yet defended your thesis prospectus, this will mean crafting a 10 to 12 page polished prospectus to be defended by the end of the semester as well as about 20 to 25 pages of material from the thesis itself.
 - 3. For those planning to complete the Generalist Track, you will craft a 30 to 35 page historical research paper.
- Not only will you need to select one of these types of projects, you will also need to identify a faculty member outside of this course who you plan on working with as either a project or thesis director.

A. Project Proposal (5%):

- Due on Course Den by 12PM, Monday, January 9, 2017.

- As stated in pre-class e-mails, before we meet for the first day of class, you must craft a project proposal that details the following points:

- a. The type of project you will work on through the semester (from the three detailed above – public history thesis project essay, traditional thesis piece, historical research paper for the generalist M.A. track).
- b. Who you intend to work with on this project outside of class – your director, in other words.
- c. What exactly you will focusing upon in the project, including the following:
 - Your basic overall research topic.
 - Your particular research question.
 - (Depending on where you are) – Major arguments/questions you are making.
 - The sources you are using – including all primary and secondary sources you are considering.

B. Revised Proposal + Detailed Bibliography (5%):

• Due on Course Den by 12 PM, Monday, January 23, 2017.

• On the basis of the first day’s discussions, revise your proposal, paying close attention to sharpening your particular research question. In addition, prepare a full list of sources (primary and secondary) for your semester project. If using both primary and secondary sources, make sure to divide the bibliography into two sections, one for primary sources and one for secondary sources.

C. Brief Source Presentation (2 minutes maximum) (5%):

• In-Class on February 2, 2017.

• Learning how to present your analyses orally is a crucial skill. Also crucial is learning how to accomplish this task in a concise manner. Thus, after several weeks immersed in your sources, I will ask you to select the one you feel most useful for your project and to offer a brief 2 minute presentation on the source. Several points:

- a. You must limit yourself to 2 minutes. This is the equivalent of 1 double-spaced type-written page (12-pt font). I strongly urge (repeat – strongly urge) that you type out your presentation. I also recommend (repeat – I recommend) you practice before class.
- b. Going over 2 minutes will have a negative impact on your grade.
- c. To keep yourself within that narrow time limit, focus on the following:
 - In 1, maximum 2 sentences, describe and summarize the source. Do keep in mind, your colleagues don’t know what it is at all.
 - Then, focus most of your attention laying out what this source offers you as regards answering your research question – you might also need to lay out what your research question is as well (keeping in mind, your colleagues might not remember what it is).

D. Project Presentation (10 minutes maximum) (5%):

In-Class on either Monday, February 27, 2017, or Monday, March 6, 2017.

- As in the previous presentation, you have a time limit that you must (repeat – must) adhere to and not doing so will have a negative impact on your grade. 10 minutes is the equivalent of 5 double-spaced typed pages (12-pt font). Again, I recommend writing out your presentation and practicing it in advance.
- Your presentation must offer an overview of your project – its arguments, its approaches, its sources, where it fits into the larger historiography, and perhaps one example from the body to show all of this in action. In other words, what you are doing and how are doing it?
- I recommend paying very close attention to your colleagues during the UWG History Department Graduate Symposium on February 13. They, too, are laying out projects – you will see how arguments get discussed, how historiography is dealt with, and how historical examples are made.
- Finally, do expect to receive questions following your presentations.

E. First Draft (10 polished pages minimum) (5%):

Due on Course Den and via E-Mail by 12PM on Monday, March 27, 2017.

- For this part of the project, I am asking you to write a minimum of 10 polished pages. That means that you have already worked on typos, grammar, style, and argumentation. There should be no typos, including in your footnotes (which should be in 100% proper citation format). There should be no issues of grammar, for example, tense agreement. You should be writing in a professional style and avoiding such issues as an overuse of the passive voice. Your argument should be clear, developed, and backed up with source evidence.
- I want you to focus on the 1st 10 pages of your larger project – or the opening sections in other words. I want you to put time and thought into stating your argument and how you intend to prove it. Therefore, you will be putting energy here into your intro, your historiography section, and into the beginnings of your proofs. Again, think back to how arguments were developed during the Graduate Symposium. Also, think about how to use historiography effectively – using it to explain your approach and where you fit into larger scholarly conversations.
- Some of you will be working on your prospectus. For you, I want you to craft a polished draft of your prospectus (10 – 12 pages). Attached to the draft, please include a paragraph in which you detail the section of your thesis that you are also working on.
- For public history students in the final stages of working on your thesis essay and project, please also include a polished draft of your project abstract (discussing both essay and project).
- For this part of the project, I want you to submit in two ways – first, electronically via Course Den, and then, second, electronically via e-mail to your peer commentators.

F. Peer Comments on First Draft (5%):

Due on Course Den and via E-Mail by 12PM, Monday, April 3, 2017.

- Giving and receiving useful criticism is a critical writing skill for historians. Much of our professional writing undergoes peer review and criticism. The process helps writers identify their areas of strengths and areas for further improvement.

- However, notice I mentioned the word useful. 100% positive criticism fails to identify areas of improvement – which we all have in our first drafts. 100% negative criticism can lead us to become defensive and unwilling to listen further. Thus, the most useful approach remains a balanced one, one that identifies both the positive and the things potentially to work further on.

- After receiving your peers' first drafts, read through them and prepare comments in written form that identify strengths and places for potential improvement. Pay close attention to any and all typos, issues of grammar like tense non-agreement, and issues of style like over-reliance on the passive voice. Also, pay attention to how your colleagues build their arguments – their thesis statements, their introductions as whole, their historiography sections. Ask yourself, is the paper's thesis clear and is the thesis developed in an organized manner?

- Type up your comments (double-spaced, 12-pt font) and post them to Course Den and send them to your peers by the date listed above (and again below in the Course Outline).

- Upon receiving criticism from your peers, take a quick look and then take some time away to process the comments. Then, after a day or two, read through again and consider your first draft in light of the comments.

- Bring in your drafts and comments to class on April 3, as you will be discussing them with your peer commentators.

G. 2-Minute Presentation on Final Argument (5%):

- In-Class on Monday, April 24, 2017.

- As before, 2 minutes spoken equals around 1 typed, double-spaced, 12-pt font page.

- In this final presentation, I want you to briefly state your argument (and how you prove it) as it now stands after the process of drafting and of receiving comments and criticism from me and from your peers.

- At this point, you should have a clear idea of what you are arguing and trying to accomplish in your project.

H. Final Draft (45%):

- Due via Course Den by 12PM on Monday, May 1, 2017.

- Your final drafts will be graded using the following rubric:

Final Project Grading Rubric:

Students will receive a score from 1 to 5 (1=lowest; 5=highest) for the four areas below:

1. Argument.

- Is there a clear thesis?
- Is the thesis supported with evidence drawn from sources (primary and/or secondary)?
- Is the argument developed throughout in a clear and organized manner?

2. Historiography.

- How are primary and secondary sources used to advance the argument?

- Does the student relate their argument to the field?
- Is there a clear contribution made?

3. Writing (including grammar, style and citations).

- Does the student conform to the rules of standard written English?
- Does the student employ a professional style throughout, including avoiding overuse of the passive voice?
- Does the student use proper citation format?

4. Revisions.

- Did the student listen to critiques?
- Were critiques employed in the revision process?

Based on the above scores, project grades will be factored as follows:

17-20 = A range

13-16 = B range

09-12 = C range

05-08 = D range

01-04 = F

Course Schedule:

01/09: First Day of Class

Discussion Topics Include:

- Class Introduction

Written Assignments – due before class

- **Proposals Due via Course Den by 12PM**

In-Class Assignments:

- Presentation of Project Proposals

01/16: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – No Class Meeting

- Begin reading and writing for your project

01/23: Important Genres of Historical Writing

Discussion Topics Include:

- Public History Thesis Essays
 - Guest: Dr. Ann McCleary (7-8PM)
- Traditional Theses

Written Assignments – due before class:

- **Revised Proposals + Bibliographies Due via Course Den by 12PM**

01/30: Writing – In Theory

Meet at Ingram Library – Main Floor Classroom

- Guest: Ms. Jessica Critten, Ingram Library (on research and library resources)

Readings for Class Discussion:

- Read Turabian Part I and Struck & White

02/06: Writing – In Practice

Discussion Topics Include

- Drafts and Criticism
- Citing Sources
- Abstracts

Written Assignments – due before class:

- **Thesis Evaluations Due via Course Den by 12PM**

02/13: Meet at UWG History Department Graduate Symposium

In Class Assignments:

- **Everyone must ask at least 1 question of the presenters**

02/20: Using Sources – Secondary and Primary

In Class Assignments:

- **Brief Source Presentation (2 min max – 1 page written)**

02/27: Presentations and Comments (first 8)

03/06: Presentations and Comments (last 8)

03/13: Writing Week – No Class Meeting

- Work on your draft

03/20: Spring Break – No Class Meeting

- Work on your draft

03/27: Status Updates on Drafts

Written Assignments – due before class

- **First Drafts Due by 12PM via Course Den and E-mail (minimum of 10 pages)**

04/03: Workshops on Drafts

Written Assignments – due before class

- **Peer Comments Due by 12PM via Course Den and E-Mail**

In-Class Assignments:

- **Peer Criticism on Drafts**

Reading to Open Discussion With:

- Lipp, “Meanings of Exile Revisions Process” (PDF on Course Den)

04/10: Writing Week – No Class Meeting

- Work on revisions

04/17: Writing Week – No Class Meeting

- Work on Revisions

04/24: Status Updates on Revisions

In-Class Assignments:

- **2 Min Presentation on Final Arguments (1 written page)**

05/01: No Class Meeting

Written Assignments

- **Final Drafts due via Course Den by 12PM**