

Kenyon College
Department of History
History 397: Honors Practice and Theory
Spring 2009 –Thursday, 7:00-10:00 p.m.
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Office Hours: MWF, 11-12
Th, 3-5
And by appointment

Description

This honors seminar introduces the student to some of the methodology and theory of historical scholarship, as well as providing a guided opportunity to undertake several exercises in writing history. In the course of the semester, students will write a short paper analyzing a document closely, a somewhat longer one reviewing historiography, and a research paper. At the same time, we shall discuss during our seminar meetings a number of works that address the nature of historical scholarship, theoretical problems associated with history, and related methodological issues. Each of the written exercises should thus be informed by some of the theoretical, methodological or practical questions that will be posed throughout the semester. Although the required reading in this course is moderate for a seminar, some of it is fairly abstract or difficult.

Requirements

Class attendance and thoughtful participation are essential aspects of the course. Any unexcused absence will affect negatively the final semester grade; students are required to notify the instructor in advance of any inability to attend a seminar session. As mentioned, and as indicated below, there are a number of writing assignments scheduled throughout the semester (see the weekly schedule further below); the assignments are organized so as to culminate in the completion of a research paper. A historiographical essay, which reviews several journal articles by historians on a theme related to the student's research paper topic, is due on February 12. This essay should be about six pages in length, double-spaced, with footnotes. A short paper (about four pages, double-spaced) analyzing a historical document is due on February 26. A proposal of the research paper's topic and annotated bibliography are due on March 19. A draft of the research paper, at least 10 pages in length (double spaced) is due on April 16. The final version of the research paper is due on the last day of the semester, May 8, at 4:30 p.m., in the instructor's office, Seitz 2. It needs to be about 12-15 pages in length, double spaced, and include a bibliography. All papers have to be submitted in hard copy form, and must conform to the U. of Chicago style set out in Turabian's *A Manual for Writers*. In addition, and as an element of class participation, students may need to write short (one half page) exercises as indicated by the instructor; these will be due, when assigned, at the beginning of the designated class session. Lastly, students will need to present their

research work in progress toward the end of the semester; presentations should be about 10-15 minutes in length and may include the posting of discussion questions and an outline before the presentation. As students present their research, others in the seminar will need to comment constructively both orally and with brief, written comments. Each assignment will be explained further in class. The grading formula is outlined below.

Grading

Seminar Participation (Including presentations and exercises)	20%
Document Analysis Paper	10%
Proposal and Bibliography	10%
Historiographical Essay	20%
Draft Paper	10%
Research Paper	30%
Total	100%

Grading will be in accord with the following scale:

97-100%	A+	87-89%	B+	77-79%	C+	65-69%	D
93-96%	A	83-86%	B	73-76%	C	< 65%	F
90-92%	A-	80-82%	B-	70-72%	C-		

All assignments will be graded pursuant to the above numerical scale, except for any exercise and presentation, which will be graded as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Although grades will not be apportioned pursuant to a curve, grading will be meaningful: e.g., in order to achieve an 85 or 90, you will need to submit good or excellent work. Late papers will be subject to a penalty. If a student needs an extension, for a valid reason, the student must request it no later than one week in advance of the due date of the paper; granting such an extension is at the discretion of the instructor (and no extensions can be given beyond the due date of the research paper, as that date is the last day of the semester). Plagiarism will be sanctioned in accord with applicable college policy.

Any student with a disability requiring a special accommodation should contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester, as well as the appropriate college officer (Erin Salva, salvae@kenyon.edu), so that accommodations can be made.

Books

The following books are required, and have been ordered through the bookstore:

1. Kate Turabian, revised by Wayne Booth et al., *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

2. Jules Benjamin, *The United States and the Origins of the Cuban Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).
3. Beverley Southgate, *History: What and Why?* 2d ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 2001).

A number of other readings listed below have been placed on reserve at the library, including on e-reserve, or are available from the instructor. Such readings will be identified throughout the semester.

Weekly Themes and Reading Assignments

Week 1, Thursday, January 15 – Introduction

Reading Assignment: There is no reading assignment for this week. We shall review the syllabus carefully and consider the main interests of seminar participants, as well as the principal themes of the course. Nina Clements, librarian and liaison with the history department will introduce herself and describe the range of library and bibliographical services.

Week 2, Thursday, January 22 – Reading History

Reading Assignment: Benjamin, *The United States and the Origins of the Cuban Revolution*

Week 3, Thursday, January 29 – Library Workshop: Secondary Sources

The seminar will meet in Olin Library, where we will review systematic approaches to identifying secondary sources.

Reading Assignment: Turabian, Chapters 1 and 2; and Chapters 15-17

Week 4, Thursday, February 5 – Learning from History?

Reading Assignment: Ernest May, "*Lessons*" of the Past: *The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy*, Preface and Chapters 4 and 5; and excerpts from Southgate's *Why Bother with History* (all on e-reserve).

Students will briefly inform the seminar group about the topics of their historiographical essays in progress.

Week 5, Thursday, February 12 – Library Workshop: Primary Sources

The seminar will meet in Olin Library, where we will review systematic approaches to identifying primary sources.

Reading Assignment: Turabian, Chapters 3-4

Historiographical essay is due at the beginning of the class meeting.

Week 6, Thursday, February 19 – Document Analysis

In-class analysis of primary sources; also, students will briefly discuss their research projects

Reading Assignment: Turabian, Chapters 1-2

Week 7, Thursday, February 26 – The Documentary

Reading Assignment: None

Document analysis is due at the beginning of the class meeting.

[Spring Break]

Week 8, Thursday, March 19 –Approaches to History

Reading Assignment: Southgate, *History: What and Why?*

Proposal and annotated bibliography are due at the beginning of class. Students will present their proposal to the seminar.

Week 9, Thursday, March 26 – Social and Economic History

Reading Assignment: “Economics and the Historian,” “Issues in the Study of Economic Trends,” and “Issues in the Study of Economic Trends,” from Thomas G. Rawski, *Economics and the Historian*; and introduction from Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: Europe, China and the Making of the Modern World Economy*. All selections are on e-reserve

Week 10, Thursday, April 2 – Cultural History

Reading Assignment: Clifford Geertz, “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight,” “Thick Description: toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture”; Lynn Hunt, “Introduction: History, Culture, Text,” in *The New Cultural History* and Robert Darnton,

“Workers Revolt: The Great Cat Massacre of the Rue Saint-Séverin,” in *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (all on e-reserve).

Week 11, Thursday, April 9 – Specific Issues Related to Writing History

Reading Assignment: Louis Mink, “On the Writing and Rewriting of History,” “Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument”; and Marc Bloch, from *The Historian’s Craft*: “Historical Causation,” all on e-reserve.

Week 12, Thursday, April 16 – The Historical Film

Reading Assignment: None

Draft papers are due at the beginning of class.

Week 13, Thursday, April 23 – Student Presentations, Comments

Reading Assignment: Student outlines and questions; students not presenting will prepare brief comments.

Week 14, Thursday, April 30 – Student Presentations, Comments – and Conclusion

Reading Assignment: Student outlines and questions; student not presenting will prepare brief comments.

Research paper is due May 8 at 4:30 p.m. in Seitz 2.