

HIST 4309
The Historian's Craft
Spring 2019
10:00-10:50 MW, Stabler Hall 408

Instructor: Brian Mitchell
Office: Stabler Hall 604K (442-4601)
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesday 1:40-2:50

Course Description

This course offers an introduction both to historical methods (how historians go about doing history) and to historiography (the study of the many ways in which historians have written about the past). We will look at primary and secondary sources throughout the course in order to gain skills in chronological thinking, historical comprehension (including comparison and contextualization), historical analysis and interpretation, historical research (including crafting historical arguments from evidence), and historical issues-analysis and decision-making.

History Department Objectives

Following are the student learning objectives of the BA History Program; your upper-level courses should, as a whole, help you meet these objectives:

- Demonstrate a significant degree of knowledge about both United States and World history through completion of a broad selection of courses in history.
- Ask appropriate historical questions that demonstrate an understanding of the discipline of history and distinguish it from those of other disciplines.
- Distinguish between primary sources and secondary sources used in the writing of history and know how to use and analyze each appropriately. Students will thus be able to: analyze a primary source as a product of a particular historical context; respond critically to a secondary source, taking into account the primary sources used by the historian, the historian's methodology, the logic of the argument, and other major interpretations in the field.
- Present historical analysis and arguments in a clear written form, including the ability to construct an argument by marshalling evidence in an appropriate and logical fashion.
- Write a research paper that asks a significant historical question, answers it with a clear thesis and a logical argument, supports it with both primary and secondary sources documented according to the standards of the Chicago Manual of Style, and is written in clear and artful prose with the grammar and spelling associated with formal composition.

Goals and Expectations for the course

The course is designed to introduce you to methods of researching and writing history, as well as to the major historiographical debates and genres. By the end of the semester you should:

- 1) Understand and engage in the various kinds of historical writing;
- 2) Understand and interpret various kinds of historical sources;
- 3) Be aware of the major historiographical debates and trends in the field.
- 4) Have a firm grasp of historical research methods;

Students with Disabilities

Your success in this class is important to me, and it is the policy and practice of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to create inclusive learning environments consistent

with federal and state law. If you have a documented disability (or need to have a disability documented), and need an accommodation, please contact me privately as soon as possible, so that we can discuss with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) how to meet your specific needs and the requirements of the course. The DRC offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process among you, your instructor(s) and the DRC. Thus, if you have a disability, please contact me and/or the DRC, at 501-569-3143 (V/TTY) or 501-683-7629 (VP). For more information, please visit the DRC website at www.ualr.edu/disability.

Academic Integrity

All of your work must reflect your own thoughts, words, opinions, and efforts. Cheating and plagiarism and serious offenses and reflect on your personal character and professionalism. All sources, including information gathered on the Internet, must be correctly cited in weekly assignments, papers, and essay exams. You should include footnotes and a bibliography in Chicago Manual of Style-Humanities format in all History Department papers unless instructed otherwise. It is your responsibility to ensure that you understand the definition of plagiarism, and that you avoid it. Not knowing the definition of plagiarism is not an acceptable excuse for plagiarizing. Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this class, and you will receive a zero for a plagiarized assignment. If you are unclear about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please ask me, and look at section VI of the UALR Student Handbook.

Blackboard: Blackboard will be used to post readings, important messages, to update reading and assignment schedules, and to facilitate discussion between and among me and your classmates outside of class. All assignments will be handed in via the assignments tool in Blackboard. Please be sure to check Blackboard regularly (i.e. several times per week). If class is cancelled due to inclement weather, we will hold a virtual class on Blackboard.

Attendance Policy: Attendance will be taken at each class. Please contact me in advance if you must be absent. If you experience an illness or other crisis that prevents you from coming to class you must notify me, within 48 hours of the first missed class, of the reason for your absence. Attendance in class is essential to doing well in the course, and you will not be able to earn participation points each week unless you are in class. Arrive on time, turn cell phones to silent and place them out of sight, so that our class time is not distracted by personal matters.

Assignments and Requirements

Your grade in this class will be based on the following criteria:

Class participation: 5 points each week, 75 points total

Parallel Timelines: 25 points

Primary source assignment: 50 points

Book review & presentation: 50 points

Research proposal/ annotated bibliography: 50 points

Comparative Media assignment: 50 points

Total Points Possible: 300

A = 270-300 points

B = 240-270 points

C = 210-240 points

D = 180-210 points

F = below 180 points

Class participation: The participation grade is based on attendance, reading before coming to class (or bringing in required materials), and active participation in group and class-wide discussion. You are expected to attend class regularly, do assigned readings *before coming to class*, and participate actively in small group and large class discussions. Unexcused absences, not participating in class discussion, and not reading before coming to class will be reflected in your final participation grade.

Parallel Historical Timelines: For this assignment you will choose an historical event or subject and prepare parallel historical timelines, which place the subject/ even in historical context in U.S. and world history, and which identify between 10-20 key dates, figures, or terms that are important to understanding the historical even or subject.

Primary source assignment: For this assignment you will find two primary sources that examine the same event or issue from conflicting or contradictory viewpoints. First you will analyze the documents, considering APPARTS (author, place and time, prior knowledge of context, audience, reason, the main idea, significance). Then, you should compare and contrast the documents: how do their interpretations differ? How might the different interpretations be explained? Which interpretation is the more credible and why? This assignment should be analytical, not narrative, so you must go beyond summarizing what your primary source documents say. This assignment, which must be a minimum of 500 words and no more than 1000 words, is intended to improve critical and analytical thinking and writing skills.

Book review: For this assignment you will choose a scholarly book by an historian on any subject and write a book review according the guidelines provided in the assigned readings. This assignment, which should be no more than 750 words, is intended to help you hone in on the main points of historical monographs and to critically and analytically evaluate them.

Research proposal and bibliography: For this assignment you will write a 4-6 page research proposal in which you clearly articulate a thesis or argument, explain clearly and in detail how you plan to develop your thesis or argument (including the primary and secondary sources you will use and how you will use them), and how your thesis or argument fits within existing historiography on the subject. The proposal will be accompanied by an annotated bibliography that includes at least ten relevant secondary sources and four relevant primary sources. (The bibliography is in addition to, not part of, the 4-6 pages.)

Comparative media review: For this assignment you will choose at least 3 media sources (Internet, audio, video) that cover the same historical subject and write a media review, which compares the media portrayal of the historical subject with that of historical monographs or journal articles, analyzing reasons for similarities and differences.

Re-write policy: I allow re-writes for students who are regular in class attendance and have met all assignment deadlines. These re-writes will be due two weeks after I return the original assignments. (I will post specific dates as we go along.) The point of re-writes is not to earn you a few extra points on your grade – it is to help you learn from mistakes and improve your analytical, critical thinking, and writing skills. If you plan to re-write your assignments, you must meet with me to ensure that you understand what you need to do to correct your mistakes and improve your skills. I will not accept re-written assignments from students who have not met with me about their original assignments.

Late assignments will not be accepted except in emergency circumstances, so please put all due dates on your calendar and plan to finish them well before the deadline, to prevent last-minute computer problems, not completing an assignment due to illness, etc. Please contact me immediately if you experience an emergency situation that may hinder your ability to submit an assignment on time. My schedule is full, and I plan ahead for time to grade each assignment so that I can return it to you quickly. After I have completed grading the entire class's work on a particular assignment, I will not grade any additional submissions.

Required Readings

Jules R. Benjamin, *A Student's Guide to History* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010).

All additional readings will be posted on Blackboard or handed out in class. Make sure you have the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader to access the pdf files. If you have trouble opening the files, make sure your pop-up blocker is disabled on Blackboard. Not all readings are listed on this syllabus, because students will be assigned to determine some of our readings as the course progresses.

Course Schedule

Attached you will find the course schedule, which will also be available on Blackboard. The schedule and assigned readings are subject to change.

Communication

Because I also supervise student teachers and work on grant projects outside of the UALR campus, the easiest method to reach me is via e-mail. I generally check and respond to e-mail several times a day during normal business days (i.e. Monday-Friday 8-5pm). If I have not responded to e-mail within 24 hours during the week, please try again, or try e-mailing within Blackboard. You may also leave a message with the History Department (501) 569-3235.

| Date | Topic & Assignments due | Readings |
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| Unit 1: Chronological Thinking | <i>How do historians think about the past?</i> | |
| Week 1 1/21, 1/23 | Why study history? Tools for success in history classes | Mary Lynn Rampolla, "Why Study History?" in <i>A Pocket Guide to Writing in History</i> , 6 th ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010) 1-5. TW. H. McDowell, "The Nature and Value of History" in <i>Historical Research: A Guide</i> (London: Longman, 2002) 3-14; Benjamin, chapters 1-2 |
| Week 2 1/28, 1/30 | Historical Chronology Parallel timeline activity due 1/30 | Parallel timelines– identify an individual in your family's history and bring a list of 5 important events in her/his life, as well as the dates Peter N. Stearns, "A World History Skeleton," in <i>World History: the Basics</i> (London: Routledge, 2011) 17-47. Bring a periodization of history from a region to class on Friday 1 /26 (i.e. U.S. History, a state's history, a different world region). |
| Unit 2: Historical Comprehension | <i>How do historians sort through competing evidence?</i> | |
| Week 3 2/4, 2/6 | Primary Sources | Benjamin, chapter 3 Choose a person in your family's history. Use the categories in chapter 3 of the Benjamin book (primary source, scholarly article, monograph, anthology, historical novel, map, statistical data, illustrations/photographs/other visual material, sound and video recording, artifact) to build a collection of primary and secondary sources that would help you learn more about the context of this individual's lifetime. |
| Week 4 2/11, 2/13 | Critical Analysis of Primary Sources | Patrick Rael, "How to Read a Primary Source," in <i>Reading, Writing, and Researching for History</i> , pp. 16-19. http://www.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/ Wednesday: Find a primary source on a topic of your choosing, apply the concepts outlined in this unit's readings, and interpret/analyze it. Bring your primary source to class on both Wednesday and Friday, and be prepared to present and discuss it. |
| Week 5 2/18, 2/20 | Multiple Perspectives Primary source assignment due 2/20 | Benjamin, chapters 4- parts of 5, pp. 51-70, also pp. 111-114 Non-written primary sources http://historymatters.gmu.edu/browse/makesense/ (read at least 2) |
| Unit 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation | <i>How do historians compare multiple perspectives, competing narratives, and craft an argument?</i> | |
| Week 6 2/25, 2/27 | Secondary Sources – Textbooks, Journal Articles & Monographs | Patrick Rael, "What Happened and Why? Helping Students Read and Write Like Historians," <i>The History Teacher</i> , vol. 39 no. 1 (November 2005), pp. 23-32. Excerpts from <i>History Lessons and History in the Making</i> Predatory Reading http://www.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/predatoryreading.htm Choose a scholarly historical monograph to read and review for this |

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| | | unit's assignment. Bring it to class on 9/23 and 9/25. |
| Week 7 3/4, 3/6, | Book Reviews | Benjamin, remainder of chapter 5 (pp. 71-87) Presentation – Speech Communication Center – creating effective presentations “How to Write a Book Review,” http://www.lavc.edu/Library/bookreview.htm Using JSTOR, find two book reviews of the approved book you will read & review for this unit. Bring your book reviews to class and be prepared to discuss them, along with the assigned reading. |
| Week 8 3/11, 3/13 | Thesis statements and arguments | Benjamin, chapter 6, pp. 109-111, 118-121 Wednesday/Friday: In class activity: Identifying thesis statements and evidence |
| Week 9 3/18, 3/20 | Historiography Book review due 3/18; presentations in class 3/20 | “What is – and How to Write – a Historiographical Essay,” www.muskingum.edu/dept/history/downloads/Historiographical Essay.doc Daniel Woolf, <i>A Global History of History</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 1-21. Peter N. Stearns “Disputes in World History,” in <i>World History: The Basics</i> (London: Routledge, 2011) 154-173. |
| Unit 4: Historical Research Skills | <i>How do historians research, write, and document the past?</i> | |
| Week 11 3/25, 3/27 | Beginning Historical Research, Writing Research Questions | Monday: meet at Ottenheimer Library Wednesday: presentation from UALR Center for Arkansas History and Culture Benjamin, chapter 6, pp. 88-109 |
| Week 12 4/1, 4/3 | Documenting sources, writing research proposals | Benjamin, chapter 6, pp. 116-127, Wednesday and Friday: Annotated bibliographies and research proposals: in class activity; “How to Write a History Research Proposal” http://facstaff.uww.edu/jaffej/seminar/proposal.pdf , Benjamin chapter 8 |
| Week 13 4/8, 4/10 | Writing and Editing Research proposal & annotated bibliography due 4/10 | Monday: Benjamin chapter 7 Wednesday and Friday: In-class activity – evaluating research proposals and annotated bibliographies |
| Unit 5: History, Media, and Decision-Making | <i>How has history been used by non-historians to influence decision-making?</i> | |
| Week 14 4/15, 4/17, | Films, Literature and History | Monday: Robert Brent Toplin, “The Filmmaker as Historian,” <i>American Historical Review</i> , vol. 93 no. 5 (December 1988): 1210-1227. Robert Rosenstone, <i>Visions of the Past: the Challenge of Film to our Idea of History</i> . Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995, pp. 19-44. Wednesday and Friday: In-class activity – films, literature, documentary filmmaking, YouTube and history |
| Week 15 4/22, 4/24, | Wikipedia and Internet content | Monday: Evaluating Internet Sources Toni Greer, et al, “An Educators’ Guide to Credibility and Web Evaluation,” http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/wp/credibility/index.html |
| Week 16 4/29, 5/1 | History and Politics | Monday/Wednesday: Use the library newspaper and periodical databases to find an article connecting an historical event with a |

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| | | <p>current political debate or issue. Come prepared to discuss your issue and its connection to politics.</p> <p>The future of the historical profession – selections from <i>American Historical Review Perspectives</i></p> <p>http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2010/1012/1012pro1.cfm</p> <p>http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2010/1010/1010pro1.cfm</p> |
| Final Exam Week | Media Review due by noon 5/8 | |