

Senior Seminar in History (HIST 400.01)

Fall 2008, Truman State University
BH 163, TR 4:30-5:50
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Description

Senior Seminar is the capstone experience for all history majors at Truman State University. It is the course that caps off everything that you have learned. Combining and building on the knowledge in historiography and skills in research you have acquired so far, it culminates in a major research paper that is subject to rigorous academic standards. Passing the course proves that you have earned your degree in history. You are on the one hand to demonstrate an awareness of the intricacies of doing history and being a historian and on the other hand to apply that awareness in your research paper.

Course structure

The course has two parts. During the first three weeks, we examine the debate among historians at present about the character of historical inquiry. What is at stake is the very possibility of telling the truth about the past. This part culminates in a review essay. In the remaining months of the second part of the course, we consider and engage the research project. Historical practice is not a solitary endeavor. It occurs within several sets of communities, only the smallest one being this class. We work collectively and in small increments, following each step in the writing process together, from deciding on a topic, choosing sources and developing a bibliography to writing drafts and revising. We meet frequently to give progress reports and to solicit feedback and advice orally and in writing.

Readings

Following are the required books for this class. In addition, I expect that you already own a recent edition of Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers* and know how to use it.

The Apprentice Historian: A Collection of Student Essays Compiled by Phi Alpha Theta–Nu Chi. Carr, Edward Hallett. *What is History?* New York: Knopf, 1961.[ISBN: 039470391X]

Elton, G. R. *Return to Essentials: Some Reflections on the Present State of Historical Study.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. [ISBN: 0521524377]

Jenkins, Keith. *Re-thinking History.* London, New York: Routledge, 2003. [ISBN: 0415304431]

Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, 5th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007. [031244673X]

Course policies

You will both give and receive input and criticism on your work from me, your peers in a smaller group, and from the members of the seminar as a whole. Because you are a member of an interpretive community where your contribution adds to and detracts from other members' ability to benefit from it, it is essential that you turn in all work on time. I will not read, listen to, evaluate, or give feedback on anything that is not delivered at the scheduled time, and I will not expect you and your peers to do so either.

Activities, assignments, criteria for evaluation, and due dates are listed in the course calendar below with the exception of a very important component: your participation. Participation plays a crucial role in the seminar and is a significant part in my evaluation of your performance. Participation means contributing to the learning of other students and hence yourself by engaging them and the matter at hand seriously, rigorously, and critically.

A paper is good when your argument is persuasive and clear. This means that the argument needs to be your argument. An argument is an original and interesting claim that is at once truthful and falsifiable. Though it may build on a topic that you have begun to explore in another class, the paper must be a new project, not a recycled one. Plagiarism (whose definition includes recycled papers) means an automatic F in the course and is grounds for expulsion from the university. You must moreover demonstrate its originality by contrasting it in a literature review to existing work on the subject. It is part of your job as a historian to demonstrate that your work is original. That the argument is persuasive means that it is drawn from and supported by ample primary sources and appropriate secondary work. That the argument is clear means that it is explicit, logical, and pursued in error-free prose in a structurally sound exposition with discrete sections and well-formed paragraphs.

As an experiment, I would like to publish the papers from this class as a print-on-demand book with lulu.com.

Consider presenting your paper at the Student Research Conference which will take place Tuesday, April 7, 2009 (see <http://src.truman.edu/>).

Assignments and grades

Course grades will be based on the following assignments. You can check your grade progress in Blackboard (there is a total of 1000 possible points in the class). All work must be typed and turned in on time. Failure to do so will result in no credit for the class.

| <u>Assignment</u> | <u>Points</u> |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| Participation | 100 |
| Writer profile (Aug 28) | 20 |
| Review essay (Sept 11) | 100 |
| Research paper proposal (Sept 25) | 30 |
| Working bibliography (Oct 2) | 50 |
| Annotated bibliography (Oct 14) | 50 |
| Outline (Oct 21) | 50 |
| Peer review (Nov 18) | 100 |
| Final paper (Dec 4) | 500 |

Class Schedule

Week 1 (Aug 26-28) Course Introduction

Assignment (due Aug 28): Write and turn in a two-page writer profile of yourself. What are your main strengths and weaknesses as a writer? Be prepared to share and discuss your profile and those of others.

Weeks 2-3 (Sept 2-11) Historians

Tues, Sept 2: The Modern Historian: Discussion of *What Is History?*

Read: Carr, *What is History?*

Thurs, Sept 4: The Postmodern Historian: Discussion of *Rethinking History*

Read: Jenkins, *Re-thinking History*

Tues, Sept 9: The Traditional Historian: Discussion of *Return to Essentials*

Read: Elton, *Return to Essentials*

Thurs, Sept 11: Review essay

Assignment: Write a ca. 5-page review essay that (1) summarizes and interprets the texts by Elton, Carr, and Jenkins and (2) advances a theoretical position of your own vis-à-vis those texts. (You might agree with one or more of the texts, or parts of them, or develop an independent theoretical standpoint.) Be prepared to share, discuss, and defend your position in class.

Week 4 (Sept 16-18) Oral presentations

Assignment: Prepare an oral statement of the topic of your paper. Be as specific as possible. You should begin to research your topic aggressively at this point.

Read: Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. Come prepared to discuss what comprises a successful research paper.

Week 5 (Sept 23-25) The Apprentice Historian

Read: the papers in *The Apprentice Historian* critically and think about what their strengths and weaknesses are. Grade and rank them and be prepared to state the topic, problem, and argument of each paper.

Assignment (due Sept 25): Research paper proposal, including a paragraph describing your project, the research questions you seek to address with the project, a hypothesis of what you expect to find.

Wednesday, Sept 24: Attend at least one of the McNair Program's Research Presentations (in VH 1000 from 9:00 - 3:30) and report back on it to class on Thursday.

Week 6 (Sept 30-Oct 2) Bibliographies

Assignment (due Oct 2): Prepare and turn in a working bibliography to your paper. A working bibliography is like a reading list: primary and secondary sources (listed separately) that you will read as you develop your topic and argument; sources with which you think you will be working in the paper. Your paper needs also to have a working title.

Week 7 (Oct 7) Progress reports

Week 8 (Oct 14-16) Annotated Bibliography

Assignment (due Oct 14): Write and turn in an annotated bibliography. An annotated bibliography is one where each source for the paper is listed along with a brief explanation of its general content, argument (if any), and utility for making your argument. List primary and secondary sources separately.

Week 9 (Oct 21-23) Outline
Assignment (due Oct 21): Write an outline of your paper.

Week 10 (Oct 28-30) Progress Reports

Week 11 (Nov 4-6) Progress Reports

Week 12 (Nov 11-13) Progress Reports

Week 13 (Nov 18-20) Peer Review

Assignment (due Nov 18): Finish and turn in a **final draft** of your paper along with one for each of two peers. This full draft should, with the exception of an occasional flaw in structure and slip in formulation, read and look like a finished paper. Turn in your portfolio.

Assignment: Peer review two papers (one for content and the other for grammar) according to the rubric.

Week 14 (Nov 25) Copy Editing

Week 15 (Dec 2-4) Conclusion

Assignment (due Dec 4): Final paper

Final exam: Monday, December 8, 1:30-3:20