

History 6000
Historical Methods and Practice
Fall 2006

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Office Hours: T/Th 3:00-4:00PM and by appointment

Course Goals

This course introduces beginning graduate students to the professional study of history. Students will learn about the discipline of history and the historical profession, and how historians communicate with each other and a broader public. In this course, students will learn how to locate primary and secondary sources necessary for their research, and how to present the results of their research in clear, intelligible prose. By the end of the course, students will have selected a research topic and identified the archival sources and secondary sources necessary for the completion of their project.

Readings

Books:

William Strunk Jr., and E.B.White, *The Elements of Style*. Fourth Edition.

Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Sixth Edition.

Required Readings on Electronic Reserve:

Hayden White, excerpts from "The Burden of History" and "The Fictions of Factual Representation," in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*.

Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, "Introduction" and "Truth and Objectivity," in *Telling the Truth about History*.

Wallace Stegner, "Looking Backward," in *Mormon Country*.

Peter Novick, "The Professionalization Project," in *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession*.

Robert Orrill and Linn Shapiro, "From Bold Beginnings to an Uncertain Future: The Discipline of History and History Education," *American Historical Review*, vol. 110 (June 2005), 727-751.

George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language," *Collected Essays*.

Schedule

Week I Course Introduction
Aug. 29

Week II Visit to Special Collections at USU Library
Sept. 5

Week III **Finding Aids Assignment Due**
Sept. 12 Discussion of finding aids

Week IV Sept. 19	First Essay (“Thinking and Writing about History”) Due Finding a thesis topic
Week V Sept. 26	Second Essay (Novick and Orrill/Shapiro) Due Finding an advisor and putting together a committee
Week VI Oct. 3	Journals Report Due Completing the Program of Study form
Week VII Oct. 10	Reports on Historical Associations and H-Net Discussion Groups Preparing a Curriculum Vitae
Week VIII Oct. 17	Book Review Due Presentations of book reviews
Week IX Oct. 24	Proposed Thesis Topic, Bibliography, and List of Archival Materials Due Discussion of thesis topics and sources
Week X Oct. 31	Visit from Dr. Christopher Conte, DGS Come with questions for Dr. Conte
Week XI Nov. 7	NO CLASS MEETING
Week XII Nov. 14	NO CLASS MEETING
Week XIII Nov. 21	NO CLASS MEETING
Week XIV Nov. 28	Historiographical Essay Due Remember to bring TWO copies, one for Dr. Mentzel and one for your peer critique.
Week XV Dec. 5	Critique of Historiographical Essays. Concluding Remarks

**FINAL PROJECT: Thesis Proposal due in History Department Office by 5:20PM,
December 12, 2006.**

Grading:

Finding Aids Report:	5 points
Historical Assoc. Report	5 points
Journal Review	5 points
Bibliography/Archives	5 points
First Essay	10 points
Second Essay	10 points
Book Review	10 points
Class Participation and Oral Reports	10 points
Historiographical Paper	20 points
Thesis Proposal	20 points
TOTAL:	100 POINTS

**History 6000
Assignment Details**

All assignments are due at the beginning of the seminar meeting.

**First Assignment: Reports on Library and Electronic Research Finding Aids
Due September 12**

This assignment will familiarize you with finding aids and resources that will be vital for subsequent assignments in this class, and future historical research and writing. For this assignment, you should visit both the Merrill Library website (<http://library.usu.edu/>) and the Merrill Library itself – librarians there will assist you with this project, as they will with your future research.

Compile a list of ten (10) finding aids that will direct you to scholarly literature and primary sources for historical research. Five should be general, and five more specific to your field of study. At least three should be electronic. (Some may be available in both print and electronic versions.) Indicate which guides are available in Merrill Library, and provide the internet address for electronic guides.

Include a brief description for each listing – no more than a brief paragraph. What is the scope and intent of each finding aid? What sorts of documents, scholarly literature, or citations does it provide access to? Be sure to bring enough copies of your report for each member of the class.

Examples of finding aids you may use include:

America: History and Life
Dissertation Abstracts
Guide to the National Archives of the United States
J-Stor

Second Assignment: Thinking and Writing about History (First Essay)
Due September 19

Readings: Hayden White, excerpts from “The Burden of History” and “The Fictions of Factual Representation,” in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, p. 27-31; 121-128.

Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, “Introduction” and “Truth and Objectivity,” in *Telling the Truth about History*, p.1-12; 241-270.

Wallace Stegner, “Looking Backward,” in *Mormon Country*, p. 227-235.

For this assignment we are reading essays that examine how historians and others write and think about history. Hayden White attacks the validity of writing history as an intellectual enterprise. Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob respond to critiques of history and assert its continuing relevance. Wallace Stegner questions the role of history in popular consciousness, using Utah as an example.

After reading these essays, compose a response essay. First briefly summarize each essay’s arguments. Condense their argument down to its essence in no more than a paragraph or two. Then, express your reactions to their arguments. Do you find them convincing? Why or why not? Be sure to articulate your thoughts and reasoning in a clear way. In this paper the emphasis is on what you think – so do not let your summary of the articles take up the majority of your paper. The paper should be no more than 4 or 5 typed pages.

Third Assignment: Being a Professional Historian (Second Essay)
Due September 26

Readings: Peter Novick, “The Professionalization Project,” (Chapter 2) in *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p. 47-60.

Robert Orrill and Linn Shapiro, “From Bold Beginnings to an Uncertain Future: The Discipline of History and History Education,” *American Historical Review*, Vol. 110 (June 2005), 727-751.

While the First Short Essay assignment addressed the problems of writing about history, these articles invite us to think about the nature of the discipline of history and the historical profession. As in last week’s assignment, evaluate the arguments and main points in these essays. The paper should be 4 or 5 pages.

Fourth Assignment: Journals Report Due October 3

Select five journals relevant to your areas of research interest. Examine multiple issues of each journal. As you do so, consider the following questions:

Journal Subject Matter:

What is the scope of each journal? What types of history – thematic, chronological, or geographical – does each journal emphasize?

Journal Structure:

How is each journal organized? What kinds of articles, reviews, or other pieces does it publish?

Journal Publication Information:

Where is each journal published? Is it affiliated with a university, historical association, or some other institution? How long has it been in publication?

You should all look at the *American Historical Review*. But select four more specific journals for your report. One of the journals should examine local, regional, or state history if that is applicable to your research area.

For class, prepare a brief presentation on the five journals. Also prepare a brief essay discussing each of these journals. Describe each journal concisely in a paragraph. Then compare and contrast the journals. Are these journals quite similar, or markedly different? Do you think some of the journals are more effective than others, or more useful for your research? Your paper should be 3 to 5 pages in length.

Fifth Assignment: Reports on Historical Associations and H-Net Discussion Groups Due October 10

Report on Historical Society

Go to the website for the AHA, the American Historical Society, which is the primary professional organization for all historians in the United States, regardless of specialization:

<http://www.historians.org/>

Spend some time examining the AHA website. It has all sorts of information that you may find useful – information on upcoming conferences, information on History Ph.D. programs in the U.S., and information on the history of the AHA: <http://www.historians.org/info/ahahistory.cfm> (Some features of the website are accessible to members only.)

Once you have looked at the AHA website, go to its list of affiliated societies:

<http://www.historians.org/affiliates/index.cfm>

Select one of these that seems suited to your research interests, and go to its individual website. (You should look at more than one to be sure you select a society with a substantive website.) **Write a one-page summary about this organization.** What is its history? What is its historical focus? Does its website include a mission statement for the organization? Is its membership open to anyone, or does it restrict its membership to professional historians? What does it cost to join? Does it hold conferences for members? Does it grant any prizes or fellowships for research,

publications, or scholarship? Address these issues in your report, and be prepared to discuss them in class.

H-Net Discussion Groups Report

Go to the website for H-Net, Humanities and Social Sciences Online: <http://www.h-net.org/>

Go to the H-Net list of online discussion groups: <http://www.h-net.org/lists/>

Select TWO (2) discussion groups relevant to your areas of study, and subscribe to them. (There is no cost to subscribe, and you can unsubscribe later if you wish.)

Write a brief report summarizing these two discussion groups – perhaps a paragraph apiece, and no more than a page total for both of them combined. Are these discussion groups affiliated with historical organizations? What is the primary subject area for each discussion group? What are some recent message topics in each group? Do these groups offer reviews of recent books in their field? If so, what are some of the titles, and do they ask subscribers to write reviews? Do the groups offer any other resources to members, such as sample syllabi or information on conferences? Discuss these issues in your report, and be ready to discuss them in class as well.

Sixth Assignment: Proposed Thesis Topic, Bibliography, and List of Archival Collections Due October 17

For this assignment you will need to spend time thinking about potential thesis topics and resources that could be utilized to research your topic. Your topic should be broad enough to be refined or refocused later, but not so broad as to be too large a subject for an M.A. thesis project. Likewise, the sources you have located need to be substantial enough for a thesis project. Ideally, they should also be available locally or accessible in reprinted or electronic form. The number of archival items you plan to utilize may vary – you can use multiple archival collections, the collected papers of an individual or organization, a set of correspondence, or even just one substantial diary.

Your paper for this assignment should include the following information:

A paragraph-length statement explaining your thesis topic. What is the subject you wish to explore, and what is the question you intend to answer? (If you are considering more than one topic, you can describe each one separately.)

An annotated list of the archival materials you have found. How will they help illuminate your topic? What is the location and status of these archival materials, and how easily will be able to access them?

A bibliography of books and articles. This will be the basis of your historiographical paper. Your list should consist of 12 to 15 sources. No more than five can be journal articles unless you make special arrangements with the instructor. The bibliography should be typed following Turabian format.

The names of two faculty members in the History Department who are potential members of your thesis committee. Why did you chose these two individuals? Indicate which one you expect to chair your committee.

Remember that this thesis topic, selection of archival sources, and thesis committee are entirely preliminary. What you turn in next week will likely differ from the draft thesis proposal you will turn in as the final project for this class, and will almost certainly change or evolve before you finalize your actual thesis project. This assignment is intended to help you prepare for writing your actual thesis proposal, which you should complete by the end of your first or beginning of your second year in the M.A. program. As always, feel free to confer with me or other faculty members if you need advice or assistance with this assignment.

Seventh Assignment: Book Review **Due October 24**

For this assignment each of you will select a book that will inform your particular area of research interest. You will review your book for this paper. The review should focus on your critical analysis rather than simply summarizing the book. In short, don't just tell me what the author says – tell me what you think.

Your review essay needs to concisely summarize the book, but most of the essay should be devoted to analysis. Consider the following questions as part of your analysis:

What is the thesis of the book?

How is it organized, and is it readable?

What sorts of sources (primary or scholarly) does the author utilize?

Are the author's arguments and conclusions convincing? Why or why not?

Does the book fully address its subject, or do you find it lacking or incomplete in some respects?

Your essay should have a clear introduction, conclusion, and organizational structure. Effective writing is an essential component of successful analysis and convincing critique, and therefore counts as a significant proportion of your grade. Please include a bibliographic citation for your book at the top of the first page of your review essay. Since you are only discussing one book, a simple page number at the end of quotations i.e., (134) will suffice for citations. Your review paper should be no more than four pages in length. Also be prepared to present your book to the class in a short presentation of approximately five minutes.

Eighth Assignment: Historiographical Essay **Due November 28**

This paper is one of two final projects for History 6000. For this 18 to 22-page paper, you will discuss 10 to 12 scholarly works drawn from your proposed thesis bibliography. As in your book review, your essay should briefly summarize and critique each book. For this essay, however, you should analyze them comparatively, considering how each author approaches the subject or theme and contributes to your understanding of it. You can structure your essay in different ways. Are these books generally similar, or radically different? If it is clear that the historiography has changed over time, you can discuss the works chronologically. If it appears that these authors tend to approach the subject in a few distinctive ways, you can group the books by research methods, arguments, or the conclusions the authors reach. How you organize your essay is up to you – but it

must be organized. It has to have a clear analytical framework that demonstrates that you have examined each of these sources, and have determined how they relate to each other. Remember that many of these books may serve as the basis of the historiographical section of your thesis proposal assignment as well.

Use footnotes or endnotes. All formats should follow Turabian guidelines.

Ninth Assignment: Critiques of Historiographical Essays Due December 5

For this assignment, you will prepare a brief (2 pages maximum) written critique of another student's paper. This critique should essentially be a review of the paper. In two pages, you obviously will not be able to talk about all the books and articles the author discusses. Instead, focus on the big picture. What is the historiography about? What is its argument? How is it structured? Is it clear and convincing, or not? Are there problems with writing, or other flaws that detract from the paper? Consider these questions as you write your critique. Above all, remember that this should be constructive criticism – advice and observations which may help each of you when writing papers in the future. You will also present your critique to the class, so be prepared to talk for a few minutes about it.

Final Assignment: Thesis Proposal Due by 5:20PM, December 12

For the final assignment in History 6000, you will write a preliminary thesis proposal of no more than ten pages in length.

This proposal should answer a few basic questions:

What is your topic?

What is the question (or questions) you hope your thesis will answer?

What archival sources or other sources will you utilize to research your topic?

How does your project relate to the existing historiography written on this topic?

Your proposal should also include the following:

Title page, with the names of your thesis advisor and committee members

A draft of your Program of Study

A specific list of primary sources and their location or means of access (Don't just list archives.)

A list of relevant scholarly books and articles

Again, remember that this thesis proposal is preliminary, and may differ greatly from the thesis or Plan B paper you eventually write. This assignment is intended to help you prepare for writing your actual thesis proposal, and should demonstrate in a convincing way that your archival sources and your topic are a viable thesis project. As always, feel free to confer with me or other faculty members if you need advice or assistance with this assignment.

(Sincere thanks to Prof. L. Culver for allowing me to borrow freely from his syllabus)