History 493: Historical Research Seminar

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Office Hours: T 1-3 pm / F 2-4 pm (or by appointment)  Spring 2007

Overview:

This seminar assumes a general background in modern American history and a basic knowledge of methodology as well as historiography. It will emphasize the preparation of a major research paper based upon both primary and secondary sources. The paper will explore and analyze a topic in modern American history, selected in consultation with the instructor.

Texts:

• Peter Hoffer, Past Imperfect
• Kate Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations (6th ed.)

All texts are available at the bookstore.

Written Requirements:

• **Topic memo**: Each student will write a short memo (250 words) describing their proposed project in general terms. It should discuss sources, pose questions, and raise issues – it does not have to offer a thesis. Consult the example in the course packet for guidance.

• **Annotated bibliography**: Each student will compile a bibliography of at least 25 titles. It should include secondary works (15), journal articles (5), and primary documents (5) as well as brief comments (several sentences) on their relevance and significance. Consult the example in the course packet for guidance.

• **Journal précis**: Each student will prepare a brief essay (250 words) summarizing (one paragraph) and analyzing (one paragraph) a scholarly article related to their topic. The analysis should focus on the evidence and logic used to support the thesis. Consult the examples in the course packet for guidance. Include the article with the précis.

• **Historiographical essay**: Each student will write an analytical essay (1000 words) identifying the major interpretative issues surrounding their topic. The essay should survey the points of scholarly consensus and contention by reviewing two journal articles and one important secondary work. Consult the course packet for more details.

• **Peer critique**: Each student will prepare a careful evaluation (500 words) of a classmate’s paper, focusing on the quality of the argument, structure, evidence, and style. Consult the course packet for more details.

• **Research paper**: Each student will prepare a paper of 7500 to 8000 words (30 to 32 pages) with title page, appropriate footnotes, and formal bibliography. The paper is due on _____ (see syllabus). The rewrite is due on _____ (see syllabus). It may enable you to raise your original grade by one letter (from a B- to an A- for example) or to a B-, whichever is higher. Failure to submit either the paper or the rewrite will result in an “F” for the course.
All written work must conform to the standard guidelines set forth in Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*. Any act of plagiarism (see the OWU Catalog and *The History Handbook*) will lead to an “F” for the assignment and a report to the dean of academic affairs, with additional penalties possible.

**Oral Requirements:**

- Class discussion
- Topic overview
- Research reports
- Historiography presentation
- Paper presentation
- Peer editing
- Peer critique

Regular attendance and informed participation are required. More than one excused absence will lead to a reduction of one letter in the course grade. Any unexcused absences will result in an “F” for the course.

**Grading:**

- Annotated bibliography 12.5 percent
- Historiographical essay 12.5 percent
- Class participation 25 percent
- Research paper 50 percent

Late work will result in substantial penalties (one full letter grade per day). Significant progress will receive appropriate recognition. Class participation will include the topic memo, writing quizzes, journal précis, and peer critique.

**Topics and Readings (assignments are due in class that day unless otherwise noted):**

1. January 16:  **Course Introduction**

2. January 23:  **Historiography (I)**  
   Due: Hoffer, *Past Imperfect*, Part I; F&B worksheet

3. January 30:  **Individual Conferences (I)**  
   Due: Topic memo (prior to conference)

4. February 6:  **Paper Topics**  
   Due: Topic memo (class copies); annotated bibliography
5. February 13: Historiography (II)  
   Due: “The Humpty Dumpty of Scholarship” (ERes)

6. February 20: Historiography (III)  
   Due: Historiographical essay (presentation); quiz #1

7. February 27: Individual Conferences (II)  
   Due: Progress report

8. March 6: Peer Editing (I)  
   Due: Introduction (class copies)

9. March 13: University Holiday

10. March 20: Peer Editing (II)  
    Due: Conclusion (class copies)

11. March 27: No Class  
    Due: Research paper

12. April 3: Individual Conferences (III)

13. April 10: Historical Controversies  
    Due: Hoffer, Past Imperfect, Part II (class debate); quiz #2

14. April 17: Peer Critique  
    Due: Revised file for ERes posting by noon on April 13

15. April 24: Individual Conferences (IV)

16. May 1: Oral Reports  
    Due: Research rewrite (two copies); class presentation

For changes and updates, please consult the ERes course page. Students contemplating the study of history at the graduate level should plan to offer an oral defense of their paper before a faculty committee consisting of two members of the History Department.