

History 300: Archival Research and Writing

Spring 2021

Section 1: Thursday and Tuesday, 11:00 am-12:15 pm, Virtual Classroom

“Each age writes the history of the past anew.” —Frederick Jackson Turner, 1891.

“Too many students, both graduate and undergraduate, think that the aim of education is to memorize settled answers to someone else’s questions. It is not. It is to learn to find your own answers to your own questions.” —Turabian 2.1

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Office Hours (on Zoom): [Mondays 11:00-1:00](#), [Tuesdays 12:30-1:30](#), and by appointment

Course Description and Objectives

In History 300 you will begin to master the art of “doing history”: asking thought-provoking questions about the past, evaluating previous scholarship, seeking out evidence in primary sources, and using that evidence to build authoritative answers. You will practice this art by completing a semester-long research project culminating in a polished paper and in-class presentation. You will choose your research question yourself, with my approval, but you must have enough primary sources to answer your question.

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Conduct self-directed historical research.
- Write an effective original research paper.
- Deliver a professional oral presentation describing historical research.
- Constructively review the research and writing of others.

Required Text

- Turabian, *Manual for the Writers of Term Papers*, 9th ed., required for purchase (Turabian)

Contacting me

Helping you learn is the *most important* and *most rewarding* part of my job. If you have questions or concerns about the course, either visit me during office hours or email me to make an appointment. Please put “History 300” in the subject line and tell me what times you are available to meet.

How to succeed in History 300

Attend regularly, participate actively, and make steady progress each week on research and writing. As with any three-credit course, you should expect to spend 6-9 hours each week on out-of-class work. Because this is a writing-intensive class, it will be especially demanding. Multiple absences (either physical or mental) will make it difficult or impossible to complete the course, whatever the reason. In History 300, students generally CANNOT “catch up” late in the semester after falling behind. If you are worried about your progress, please contact me ASAP.

Collaborative Learning

In History 300, each member of the class (including me) shares responsibility for the learning of every other member of the class. Throughout the semester, you will exchange constructive feedback with your classmates. Helping others with their projects will help you improve your own. It is the most important thing you will do in this class.

Archival Research

This course was recently retitled “Archival Research and Writing” to reflect how much the work of historians revolves around archival manuscripts. Then COVID-19 shut down our campus, including the UWSP archives. Thankfully the archives have reopened for researchers by appointment, but due to social distancing requirements they can no longer accommodate class visits. We therefore will not be spending class time in the archives, and you will not be required to use archival sources for your final paper.

That said, if you are investigating a central Wisconsin topic, or if you discover that archival collections could help in your research, I encourage you to contact Kyle Neill, our instructional archivist: kneill@uwsp.edu. He'll talk through what you can use, and how. If appropriate, he can arrange for you to visit the archives safely and efficiently.

Feeling Overwhelmed

If you are a human being, you will probably find yourself getting overwhelmed at times during this course. I recommend the following, in any order:

- Find a quiet place to sit and breathe deeply. Rinse and repeat.
- Know that everyone who has ever pursued a major research project has felt the same way, including your professor. That doesn't make the feeling go away, but at least it isn't just you. See “Manage Moments of Normal Panic,” Turabian 4.6.
- Shift gears. Spend time doing something completely different. Preferably outside.
- Break your project down into bite-sized pieces. Identify small tasks that you can do relatively quickly (“read that source”). Focus on one task at a time.
- Step away from your computer—far away if necessary—take out a pad of paper, and start writing whatever comes into your head.
- See me. Email me with the subject heading “help!” to schedule an urgent appointment.
- Reward yourself for making progress. Ice cream and chocolate work well.

Use of Student Work

Students often benefit from seeing examples of strong work completed by other students. For that reason, I may distribute exemplary student work, after removing all identifying information. If you object to my using your work in this way, please notify me and I will respect your wishes.

Students with Disabilities

I will make every reasonable effort to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities. Any student requesting accommodation must meet with staff of the UWSP Disability Services and Assistive Technology Center (DATC) as early in the semester as possible. No accommodation will be granted until I receive and agree to a formal plan approved by DATC.

Academic Integrity

Cases of academic misconduct, including plagiarism, will be formally reported following the policies laid out in UWSP's Student Academic Disciplinary Procedures. Plagiarism consists of submitting work created by someone else as your own. For more information on academic integrity, please ask me or consult [this brochure](#). Students found to have committed academic misconduct will receive an F for the course.

Grading

Short assignments:	10%
Attendance and participation:	10%
Workshops and peer review:	10%
Primary source analysis essay:	10%
Historiographic essay:	10%
First draft of paper:	20%
Research presentation:	10%
Final draft of paper:	20%

Major Assignments

All assignments must be typed and double-spaced, with page numbers and standard font and margin sizes. They must be written in your own words, except for quotations in quotation marks.

Guidelines for Effective Writing

1. Stay focused: avoid trying to cram too much into your paper.
2. Begin each paragraph with a strong topic sentence: a statement of the paragraph's main idea.
3. Use active language: replace passive phrasing (usually involving "is," "are," or "were," etc.) with active verbs. For example:
 - Passive: "this was written by Dr. Harper"; "her success was reflective of hard work."
 - Active: "Dr. Harper wrote this"; "her success reflected hard work."
4. Use quotations sparingly: limit yourself to one brief quotation per paragraph; use quotations only to illustrate a point you have already made in your own words.
5. Revise revise revise: no writer can do it all in a first draft. Go back over your draft before you submit it in order to strengthen topic sentences, replace passive language, etc.

Things to avoid

- Sweeping, unsubstantiated generalizations and assumptions ("people believed that..."; "Americans wanted...")
- Thesis overreach: stick to what your evidence will support. In a single semester, you will be able to find and write about only a small number of sources, so you will be able to support only a very limited thesis. That is good: a limited thesis is easier to support effectively.
- Vague statements such as "this source is biased." All sources are biased in one way or another, and yet we can still use them as evidence provided we keep their limitations in mind. When you discuss a source's limitations, be specific.
- Awkward phrasing: try reading your sentences aloud to yourself (or, have a friend read them aloud to you). If they sound clunky or repetitive, fix them.

For any assignment, if there are any questions about the legitimacy of your sources, or how to cite your sources, you must confer with me prior to submitting your work. The use of illegitimate sources, or the use of sources without clear citations, will earn a zero in the relevant part of the grading rubric.

Resources

In addition to contacting me, you may also find it helpful to consult:

- Instructional Archivist Kyle Neill (kneill@uwsp.edu)
- The Writing Lab in the UWSP Tutoring-Learning Center
- Reference librarians
- Turabian chs. 4–7, especially section 4.6. For citation formatting, see chs. 16-17.
- Online guides to writing research papers such as:
 - <https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/assignments/planresearchpaper/>
 - <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/ReviewofLiterature.html>

Research Questions

A good question is narrow enough to be answered in a semester-long research project, using available sources, including archival sources. Assess your question with the following test:

- Does your question focus on a short period of time (ideally 1-3 years)?
- Does it focus on a specific place (for example, Marshfield, Wisconsin)?
- Does it focus on a specific group of people (for example, UWSP students)?
- Can you imagine multiple different answers to your question?
- Can you phrase your question using either “why...?” or “how...?”
- Does your question pass the Google test? (If you can answer a question with a Google search, it’s not a research question).
- Are you excited about spending a semester trying to answer the question?
- Are there primary sources available that could help answer the question?

If you answered “yes” to all eight of these questions, then you probably have a great research question. If you answered “yes” to six or seven, you’ll probably be okay but should check with me. If you answered “yes” to five or fewer, you may need to get back to the drawing board.

Historiographic Essay

In an essay of 4-5 double-spaced pages, you will describe, compare, and evaluate the arguments of three scholarly publications (peer-reviewed journal articles or chapters from scholarly monographs) related to your research topic. In the weeks ahead, you will draw on this analysis when you draft the historiography section of your research paper.

A successful historiographic essay will

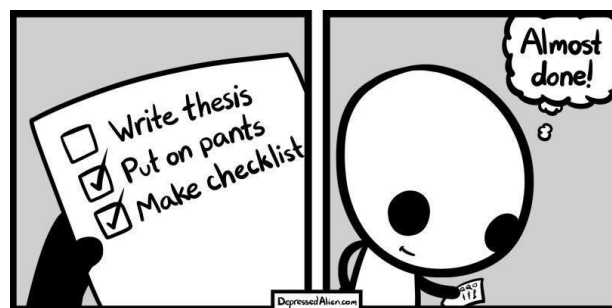
- Describe and evaluate the “scholarly conversation(s)” the publications are engaged in. Taken together, what can you learn from these works? What questions do they leave unanswered?
- For each scholarly publication:
 - Explain the author’s argument.
 - Briefly describe the supporting evidence and the publication’s structure.
 - Explain the historiographic context of the argument (what other scholarship does the author respond to?)
- Present material in a well-organized and well-written essay with an introduction (including a thesis statement: your overall assessment of the “scholarly conversation”); body paragraphs with strong topic sentences; and conclusion.
- Cite all sources in footnotes, using Turabian note format.
- Articulate your ideas in clear, effective prose: using active language, effective topic sentences and transitions; quoting minimally; and using standard grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Your essay will include your name, a title, page numbers, and normal fonts and margins.

Primary Source Essay

In this essay, you will both practice the skill of interpreting evidence and take a first step toward writing your final paper.

A successful primary source essay will:

- Answer your research question with a clear thesis statement.
- Support the thesis with evidence from four primary sources. Keep in mind (and, where it is helpful, explicitly discuss) the sources’ origins and limitations.
- Present your answer in a well-organized and well-written essay of 4-5 double-spaced pages, with an introduction (including a thesis statement that answers your question), body paragraphs with strong topic sentences, and conclusion.
- Cite all sources in footnotes, using Turabian note format, clearly indicating both the specific documents being cited and their source.
- Articulate your ideas in clear, effective prose: using active language, effective topic sentences and transitions; quoting minimally; and using standard grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Your essay will include your name, a title, page numbers, and normal fonts and margins.



Research Paper

Logistics

First Draft: The first draft is a complete version of your final research paper (10-15 double-spaced pages). It will represent the best work you can produce at this stage of the project. It will be graded according to the same criteria as the final draft (see below).

Final Draft: Upload your file before the end of the official final exam period.

A Successful Paper Will

- Articulate a clear and persuasive argument, summarized in a thesis statement of one or two sentences, underlined.
- Support that argument effectively with evidence from at least 10 primary sources. You may not conduct oral interviews for this project.
- Critically evaluate relevant historiography: at least four scholarly publications by historians (published by peer-reviewed journals or scholarly presses).
- Follow a clear structure, usually including an introduction, historiography section, background section, narrative sections, and conclusion, totaling 10-15 double-spaced pages.
- Explain the significance of your research findings (i.e., so what?)
- Cite all sources in footnotes, using Turabian note format, clearly indicating both the specific documents being cited and their source.
- Include a full bibliography, in Turabian bibliographic format, listing primary and secondary sources separately.
- Articulate your ideas clearly, using active language, effective topic sentences, and smooth transitions; quoting minimally; and using standard grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
- Be submitted in MS Word format, including your name, a title, page numbers, and normal fonts and margins.
- *Respond effectively to peer and instructor feedback on earlier work.*

Course Schedule: all changes will be announced in class and on Canvas.

Tuesday, Jan. 26: Take the red pill.

Thursday, Jan. 28:

- Turabian ch. 1, "What Research is and How Researchers Think about It"
- Furay and Salevouris, "The Nature of History" and "Stages of Historical Consciousness" (2010). Which stage do you identify with?
- Davidson and Lytle, "The Strange Death of Silas Deane" (1982)

Unit 1: Historiography

Tuesday, Feb. 2: textbooks and note taking

- Hollitz, "The Truth about Textbooks" (2009). Why are textbooks "one of the biggest hindrances to understanding the past"?
- Turabian ch. 4.2-4.6. How have you taken notes in the past? Which of the Turabian recommendations seem most useful?

Thursday, Feb. 4: Historiography example, part 1

- Taylor, "Revival and Development of the Woman Suffrage Movement in Georgia" (1958)
- Green, "The Rest of the Story: Kate Gordon and the Opposition to the Nineteenth Amendment in the South" (1992)
- Take notes on each article and bring them to class. Your notes should include, briefly:
 - Source (author name, article title, journal title and date of publication)
 - Topic
 - Argument
 - Evidence (what kinds of primary sources are used to support the argument?)
 - Relevant historiography (what previous scholarship does the author respond to? And/or, what later scholarship responds to this article?)
 - Significance ("so what?")

Tuesday, Feb. 9: Historiography example, part 2

- Goodstein, "A Rare Alliance: African American and White Women in the Tennessee Elections of 1919 and 1920" (1998)
- Shah, "'Against Their Own Weakness': Policing Sexuality and Women in San Antonio, Texas, during World War I" (2010)
- Take notes and bring them to class. This time, for historiography, think about how these articles are related to the ones you read for Tuesday.

Thursday, Feb. 11: How will you find secondary sources?

- Recommended: Turabian 3.3-3.4.
- Try out the following research tools. Look for, and use, LOC subject headings and keywords. Take notes on your finds. Be ready to discuss them in class.
 - Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.com/>
 - Jstor (use advanced search; filter for history): <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.uwsp.edu>
 - America: History & Life: <http://tinyurl.com/ahl-uwsp> (Do NOT use other EBSCO databases to find secondary sources)

- UWSP catalog (use advanced search): <http://www.uwsp.edu/library/Pages/default.aspx>
- Find, and read, one scholarly article (from a peer-reviewed history journal) relevant to your general interests. Avoid book reviews, historiographic essays, and syntheses. Look for scholarship based on primary sources. Download a PDF and post it to Canvas.
- Post to Canvas your notes on your article (same format as last time).

Tuesday, Feb. 16:

- Continue exploring search tools.
- Find at least two more scholarly articles (from peer-reviewed history journals), or books. In addition to the tools listed above, look for leads through the article(s) you've found already, either in the footnotes or via Google Scholar's "Cited by" feature.
- Post the article PDFs and your notes to Canvas (if it's a book, take notes on one chapter).

Thursday, Feb. 18:

- Read the sample historiographic essay on Canvas.
- Read Anne Lamott, "Shitty First Drafts," 1994
- Find at least two more scholarly articles (from peer-reviewed history journals), or books. Post PDFs and notes to Canvas.
- Identify ways in which the articles you have found are related to one another.¹

Tuesday, Feb. 23:

- Choose at least three of the articles you have found so far.
- Prepare a narrative outline of your essay (complete thesis statement, topic sentences of each paragraph, and full citations of sources).
- Read Smith-Howard, "Ten Strategies for Starting to Write" (2016)

Thursday, Feb. 25: draft historiographic essay due

Tuesday, March 2: historiographic essay workshop. Complete peer review assignment

Thursday, March 4: final historiographic essay due

Unit 2: Evidence

Tuesday, March 9:

- Complete primary source scavenger hunt, using the resources below (or others, as appropriate). Experiment with different filters and ways of searching. Record all information necessary for citation (see Turabian chs. 3.2 and 17 for details).
- Historical newspapers: <http://libraryguides.uwsp.edu/historicalnewspapers>
- Congressional publications: <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.uwsp.edu/congressional>
- US Government publications: <http://catalog.gpo.gov/>
- Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970: <http://sanborn.umi.com.ezproxy.uwsp.edu/>

¹ "Related" may mean similar to, different from, in agreement with, in conflict with, in response to, or any number of other kinds of connections.

Thursday, March 11:

- Read Kent State document set.
- Complete document analysis. You need to address these questions:
 - Who created the document? When and where did they create it? For what audience? For what purpose(s)?
 - What information does the source contain? What questions could it help answer?
 - How reliable is the information? In what ways is the source's usefulness limited?
 - How is the information in this source related to what you've seen in other sources? What additional kinds of sources might be helpful to learn more?
 - What questions do you have about the source? In what ways is its meaning or significance unclear?

Tuesday, March 16:

- Watch Kyle Neill's video introducing you to the UWSP archives (link TBA)
- Go to the UWSP Universal Access site: <https://uwsp.access.preservica.com/>. Follow the link for Finding Aids. Browse the finding aids for various collections. Find cool stuff.
- Go to "Archival Resources in Wisconsin": <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/wiarchives/>. Click "Search." Set the "Limit to" box to "Wisconsin Historical Society/All Area Research Ctrs." Try various search terms. Figure out how the site works. Find cool stuff.
- As you explore these resources, keep in mind these questions:
 - What are finding aids, and how can we use them?
 - For any given collection: what kind of documents does it contain? Who created them? For what audience? Why? How did they end up in an archive?
 - What questions about the past might the collection help answer?
 - What are the collection's limitations? What other sources might complement it?

Thursday, March 18:

- Identify two or three primary sources you may use for your project. Analyze the sources, as we did with the Kent State documents, and come to class prepared to share what you found.
- Write down 2-3 research questions you might use these sources to answer.

March 19–March 28: Spring Break

Tuesday, March 30:

- **Research Prospectus due**
- Find and analyze at least four more primary sources. Pay especially close attention to how these sources are connected to one another.

Thursday, April 1:

- Choose four sources to use in your primary source essay.
- Prepare a narrative outline of your essay (complete thesis statement, topic sentences of each paragraph, and full citations of sources).

Tuesday, April 6: draft primary source essay due

Thursday, April 8: primary source essay workshop. Complete peer review assignment.

Tuesday, April 13: final primary source essay due

Thursday, April 15: How will you structure your first draft?

- Turabian ch. 6
- Write an outline including a thesis statement and descriptions of sections (about 2 pages total)

Tuesday, April 20: How will you write this?

- Turabian ch. 7

Thursday, April 22: first draft of paper due

Please bring hard copies for peer review groups and for me.

Tuesday, April 27: TBA

Thursday, April 29: Draft Workshop. Complete first draft peer review assignment.

> **Between Dec. 1 and 10: meet with me for an individual revision conference.**

Tuesday, May 4: revising and presenting

> Skim Turabian chs. 9, 10-12 and 13.1-2. Which parts are most helpful for you?

May 6, 11, 13: Research Presentations

Final paper due in official exam period: Wednesday, May 19, 8:00-10:00 am.