

History 300: Methods and Skills of History

Spring 2018

Section 1: Monday and Wednesday, 9:30-10:45 am, 231 CCC

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

“Whatever may be the limitations which trammel inquiry elsewhere we believe the great state University of Wisconsin should ever encourage that continual and fearless sifting and winnowing by which alone the truth can be found.” —UW Board of Regents, 1894.

Prof. Rob Harper

CCC 469

715-346-4157

rharper@uwsp.edu

Office Hours: Monday 11:00-12:00, Tuesday 2:00-4:00, 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, seeking out evidence in a variety of sources, and using that evidence to build authoritative answers to your questions. You will practice this art by completing a semester-long research project culminating in a polished paper and in-class presentation.

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 Texts

- Furay and Salevouris, *Methods and Skills of History*, 4th ed., required for purchase (MSH)
- Turabian, *Manual for the Writers of Term Papers*, 8th 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. 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. Most students who miss deadlines will withdraw from the course. Don’t let that be you. If you are worried about your progress, please contact me ASAP.

As with any other 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, you will probably find yourself closer to nine.

You will devote most of those out-of-class hours to your research project, which will require steady work throughout the semester. You will choose your research question yourself, with my approval, but you must have enough primary sources, including archival sources, to answer your question.

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. You will also complete in-class group activities. 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

Working with archival materials is one of the greatest joys, and most important skills, of historical research, and a key requirement of the History 300 research project. As an Area Research Center (ARC), the UWSP Archives house a wonderful collection of primary sources documenting central Wisconsin history. Equally important, UWSP archives patrons may access items from other ARCs around the state, including the world-renowned collections of the Wisconsin Historical Society. Items you request through the ARC network can be transferred for you to study here at the UWSP archives (this is an incredibly unusual and valuable service: in nearly all other college and university systems, you would have to travel to each different archive).

Early in the semester, we will spend two class periods in the archives, and as you plan your research projects you will need to consider first and foremost whether appropriate archival sources are available. After you complete your research prospectus, you will meet individually with UWSP Archivist Ruth Wachter-Nelson to discuss your plans, including ordering items you may need from other ARCs. Please keep in mind the following guidelines:

- You must meet with Professor Wachter-Nelson by appointment. To set a time, please contact her by email: rwachter@uwsp.edu. Mention History 300 in the subject line. In your email, list 3 to 4 times when you are available.
- Bring your prospectus (including your research question and list of sources) to your appointment. Arrive on time. Missing an appointment will affect your grade in the course.
- Archival materials may be used only in the Archives Reading Room, which is open Monday-Friday, 7:45-12:00 and 1:00-4:30. Plan accordingly.
- Transferring materials from other ARCs may take several weeks: request items early.

Most archival materials are unique and irreplaceable, so please observe these rules to protect them:

- You must sign in before beginning your research.
- No food or drink is allowed in the Reading Room.
- Personal items such as backpacks, purses, brief cases, laptop cases, umbrellas, and coats cannot be kept at your research table. There are free lockers available to store them.
- Unlike a library where you get books yourself, a staff member will retrieve material for you.
- In the Reading Room, you may use pencils, laptops, notebooks, notecards, and citation manuals. You may NOT use pens or highlighters.
- Many archival materials are fragile. Handle them with care.

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. Of course, 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 UWSP Disability Services staff as early in the semester as possible. No accommodation will be granted until I receive and agree to a formal plan approved by Disability Services.

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. To learn more about academic integrity, please ask me or consult <http://library.uwsp.edu/Guides/VRD/plagiarism.htm> . 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. All assignments must be written in your own words, except for direct quotations, which must be enclosed 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 clear statement of the main idea the paragraph will present.
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: over-quoting obscures your ideas. 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 all of these things when writing 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. Since your evidence (for this assignment) includes only four sources, you will be able to support only a very limited thesis. That is good: a limited thesis is easier to support effectively, and briefly.
- 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:

- University Archivist Ruth Wachter-Nelson (rwachter@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:
 - <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/process.html>
 - <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/ReviewofLiterature.html>

Research Prospectus

Due in class on Wednesday, Feb. 14

“The point is to find a question that you want to answer. 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. To do that, you must learn to wonder about things, to let them puzzle you, particularly about things that seem most commonplace.” —Turabian 2.1

Requirements

Your prospectus will lay out your initial plans for your research project. It is tentative: you will revise your plans repeatedly as you move forward. The purpose of the prospectus is to help get you started. It will include:

- A narrowly focused research question.
- A working hypothesis (a tentative, testable answer to your question: see the Turabian Manual, 2.2). Alternatively, provide 2-3 possible answers.
- A brief explanation of why you think this project is worth investigating, including one or more “big questions” that your own research question is related to.
- A list of at least two relevant primary sources (print, archival, or electronic). List your sources in Turabian bibliography format (see Turabian chs. 16-17), including identifying information for the source (author, title or description, date), and its location.

Examples

Research question: “How did World War I change life in Superior, Wisconsin?”

Hypothesis: “The demand for ships in World War I meant lots of business for Superior shipyards, which brought thousands of workers to the city and boosted the regional economy.”

Explanation: “How did World War I change life on the home front? I’ve learned about the effects of World War II: did WWI have a similar impact? This paper will show how these changes played out in a small industrial city.”

Guidelines

“How” and “why” questions are better than “what/where/when” questions. A good question is focused narrowly enough to be answered in a semester-long research project, using available sources, including archival sources. Avoid questions for which answers are obvious, widely accepted, or based on personal beliefs. Avoid questions that are about evaluating historical ideas, policies, or individuals. *Above all: ask a question that you find meaningful or interesting.*

Grading criteria

Submissions will be graded on how well they meet these guidelines and on the use of standard grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Primary Source Analysis

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

Due dates

- First draft: upload your file in MS Word (*.docx) format to the D2L Dropbox AND bring three paper copies to class on **Monday, Feb. 26.**
- Final draft: upload your file in MS Word (*.docx) format to the D2L Dropbox AND bring one paper copy to class on **Monday, March 5.**

A successful 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.

Historiographic Essay

In an essay of 3-4 double-spaced pages, you will describe, compare, and evaluate the arguments of two or 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.

Due dates

- First draft: upload your file in MS Word (*.docx) format to the D2L Dropbox AND bring three paper copies to class on **Monday, April 2.**
- Final draft: upload your file in MS Word (*.docx) format to the D2L Dropbox AND bring one paper copy to class on **Monday, April 9.**

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 of 3-4 double-spaced pages, 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.



Research Paper

Due Dates

Wednesday, April 18: Bring four copies of your first draft to class AND upload the file to the D2L Dropbox in MS Word format (*.docx). 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).

Thursday, May 17: Upload your file (in MS Word format) to the D2L Dropbox by 12:15 pm.

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, including at least two archival 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 D2L.

Monday, Jan. 22: Take the red pill.

Wednesday, Jan. 24: Welcome to Wonderland!

Meet in the archives (506 LRC)

- > Read the syllabus; purchase required texts
- > Read "The Strange Death of Silas Deane" (on D2L)

Monday, Jan. 29: What is historical thinking?

- > Read MSH 13-20, 27-35. What do they mean by "stages of historical consciousness"?

Wednesday, Jan. 31: What did you find in the archives?

Meet in the archives (506 LRC)

- > Complete "Historians in Wonderland" assignment:
 - In the archives on Jan. 24, find at least one primary source that you think is really cool. If possible, scan it to disk (or photograph it) and email me a copy.
 - Optional: meet individually with Ruth Wachter-Nelson for help navigating the archives. Please email her at rwachter@uwsp.edu to make an appointment.
 - Write a brief (400-600 words) report on what you found. In the report, you will
 - Describe the source you found.
 - Suggest how historians might use this source to answer questions about the past.
 - Prepare a brief (2-3 minutes) oral presentation about what you found (and how).

Between Feb. 5 and Feb. 14: required individual research conference with me

Monday, Feb. 5: What kinds of questions do historians ask, and how do they answer them?

- > Read Turabian ch. 2. What makes a good research question?
- > Read Turabian ch. 3.1-3.2 and MSH 169-77. What are primary, secondary, and tertiary sources?

Wednesday, Feb. 7: How do historians find and take notes on sources?

- > Read Turabian ch. 4.2-4.6
- > Read MSH 103-14 and 120-23, and complete the notetaking exercise (122-23)

Monday, Feb. 12: How can you find more sources?

- > Explore historical newspapers and government document databases. Experiment with different filters and ways of searching. Look for sources relevant to your topic.
 - Historical newspapers: <http://libraryguides.uwsp.edu/historicalnewspapers>
 - Congressional publications: <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.uwsp.edu/congressional>
 - US Government publications: <http://libraryguides.uwsp.edu/go.php?c=14751030>
 - Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau Digital Collections: <http://lrbdigital.legis.wisconsin.gov/>
 - UWSP catalog (use advanced search): <http://www.uwsp.edu/library/Pages/default.aspx>
 - Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970: <http://sanborn.umi.com.ezproxy.uwsp.edu/>
- > Print out and bring to class at least one primary source from the databases (1-2 pages). Record all information necessary for citation (see Turabian chs. 3.2 and 17 for details).

Between Feb. 14 and 28: required conference with archivist Ruth Wachter-Nelson.

Wednesday, Feb. 14: Research Prospectus due

Monday, Feb. 19: How do historians use primary sources?

- > Complete Kent State exercise 4 (MSH 193-96). Bring your answers to class.
- > Read Anne Lamott, "Shitty First Drafts," 1994 (on D2L)

Wednesday, Feb. 21: What can you learn from your primary sources?

- > Choose two or three primary sources you may use for your project. Analyze the sources, following the format on MSH 185-88, and come to class prepared to share what you found.

Monday, Feb. 26: Draft Primary Source Analysis due

Wednesday, Feb. 28: Primary Source Analysis workshop

- > Complete PSA Peer Review assignment

Monday, March 5: Final Primary Source Analysis due

Wednesday, March 7: How do historians find secondary sources?

- > Read Turabian chs. 3.3-3.4.
- > Try out the following research tools. Look for sources relevant to your topic. 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, and filter for history journals): <http://www.jstor.org/> (on campus) or <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.uwsp.edu/>
 - America: History & Life: <http://tinyurl.com/ahl-uwsp>
 - UWSP catalog (use advanced search): <http://www.uwsp.edu/library/Pages/default.aspx>

Monday, March 12: How can historians most effectively read secondary sources?

- > Read MSH 131-39 and complete exercises 2 and 3 (MSH 144-48). Print out the précis to hand in.

Wednesday, March 14: What can you learn from your secondary sources?

- > Choose two secondary sources for your project. Analyze each using the format on MSH 147-48.

Monday, March 19: How do historians analyze historical interpretations?

- > Read MSH 217-26 and complete exercise 4 (MSH 232-34).

Wednesday, March 21: What will your historiographic essay look like?

- > Bring to class your notes on secondary sources, on paper.

March 23-April 1: Spring Break

Monday, April 2: Historiographic Essay draft due

Wednesday, April 4: Historiographic Essay workshop

- > Complete Historiographic Essay Peer Review.

Monday, April 9: Final Historiographic Essay due.

Wednesday, April 11: How will you structure your first draft?

- > Read Turabian ch. 6 and MSH 83-90.
- > Write an outline including a thesis statement and descriptions of sections (about 2 pages total)

Monday, April 16: How will you write this?

- > Read Turabian ch. 7 and MSH 241-48.

Wednesday, April 18: First draft of paper due in D2L Dropbox AND in class

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

Monday, April 23: Draft Workshop

- > Complete first draft peer review
- > **Between April 23 and May 9: meet with me for an individual revision conference.**

Wednesday, April 25: revising and presenting

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

April 30-May 9: Research Presentations

Final paper due at end of official exam period: Thursday, May 17, 12:15 pm