

History 300: Methods and Skills of History

Spring 2016

Section 1: Monday and Wednesday, 12:35-1:50, 224 CCC

Section 2: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00-12:15 pm, 231 CCC

"Each age writes the history of the past anew with reference to the conditions uppermost in its own time." —Frederick Jackson Turner, Portage, Wisconsin, 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.

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Office Hours: Monday 3:00-4:00, Wednesday 3:00-5:00, 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 original research paper that presents a coherent argument, supports that argument with credible evidence, and relates that argument to previous scholarship.
- 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*, 3rd ed., required for purchase (MSH)
- Turabian, *Manual for the Writers of Term Papers*, 8th ed., required for purchase
- A collegiate dictionary

Contacting Me

Helping you learn is the most important and most rewarding part of my job.

If you have any questions or concerns about the course, either visit me during office hours or contact me by email to make an appointment. I receive and reply to email more quickly than voice mail. Please put "History 300" in the subject line.

Assignments and Workload

As with any other three-credit course, you should expect to spend 6-9 hours each week on coursework outside of class. Because this is a 300-level, writing-intensive class, you will often find yourself near the top of that range. If you spend 6-9 hours each week on coursework and are worried about your progress, please contact me ASAP.

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 individually, subject to my approval, but it must be possible to answer your question with available primary sources, including at least three archival sources. To help you stay on track, the project schedule includes frequent deadlines. In order to meet them you will need to work steadily each week, even if nothing is due at the next class period. Some courses allow students to “catch up” late in the semester after falling behind: not History 300. Most students who miss deadlines or put off work have to withdraw from the course. Don’t let that be you.

Throughout this course, you will complete various small assignments both in and out of class. I design these assignments to help you develop your skills and make progress on your projects. Some assignments will be announced in advance. Others will not.

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.

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 regularly exchange constructive feedback with your classmates both in and out of class. You will regularly 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.

Grading

Short assignments and workshops:	20%
Research prospectus:	10%
Annotated bibliography:	10%
Narrative outline:	10%
First draft of paper:	10%
Research presentation:	10%
Final draft of paper:	20%
Attendance and participation:	10%

Attendance

Success in this course depends heavily on regular attendance and active participation. Multiple absences (either physical or mental) will make it difficult or impossible to complete the course successfully, regardless of the reason. If circumstances beyond your control force you to miss class, please notify me ASAP so we can explore your options.

Use of Student Work

Students often benefit from seeing examples of strong work completed by other students. For that reason, I will sometimes distribute exemplary work of students in this course, after removing all names and other 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 such accommodation must first 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.

Desire2Learn (D2L)

I will post course handouts, grades, and other useful information on our D2L site, available at <<http://www.uwsp.edu/d2l>>. If you need a copy of any material from the course, that is the first place to look.

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.

Course Schedule

All class meetings will take place in the regular classroom unless otherwise noted. The following schedule is tentative and partial: I will announce (in class and on D2L) additional reading and writing assignments over the course of the semester.

Jan. 25/26: Take the red pill.

Jan. 27/28: Welcome to Wonderland!

Meet in the archives (506 LRC)

- > Read the syllabus; purchase required texts
- > Read MSH 11-17, 28-30, and Writing Capsule 1 on p. 9
- > Complete the following assignment:
On pp. 28-30, Furay and Salevouris present four different student attitudes about history, which they call "Stages of Historical Consciousness." Following the guidelines in Writing Capsule 1, write a well-organized paragraph that describes your own understanding of history, and how you came to that understanding. In your answer, you may compare or contrast your own attitude with the examples in the book, but use your own words (do not quote from the book). Bring a double-spaced copy of your paragraph to class.

Feb. 1/2: How do historians use evidence?

- > Optional: meet with UWSP Archivist Ruth Wachter-Nelson, rwachter@uwsp.edu
- > Read "The Strange Death of Silas Deane." Key questions:
 - What do the authors mean by the "art of historical detection"?
 - Why did historians change their explanation of Deane's death?
- > Read Turabian ch. 3.1 and MSH 139-47, and complete set A exercises 1-3 (147-53).

Feb. 3/4: What did you find in the archives?

Meet in the archives (506 LRC)

- > Meet with UWSP Archivist Ruth Wachter-Nelson
- > Complete "Historian in Wonderland" assignment (see handout)

Feb. 8/9: How will you find more sources?

- > Read Turabian ch. 3.2-3.5 and MSH 77-87
- > Complete set A exercises 1-3 (MSH 87-93)
- > Write a well-organized paragraph (like the one you wrote for Sept. 4) assessing the helpfulness of the readings. Your paragraph should answer some or all of these questions:
Which of the tools and methods in the readings have you used before? Which are new?
Which sound more or less helpful? What did you find easy or hard to understand? Bring a double-spaced copy of your paragraph to class.

Feb. 10/11: meet in 316 LRC. What resources can you use to find more primary sources?

- > Read MSH 93-95 and Turabian ch. 4.2-4.6
- > Complete set B exercises 1-4 (MSH 97-104)

Feb. 15/16: How should you interpret primary sources?

- > Start finding useful sources for your project. Be ready to talk about them in class.
- > Complete set A, exercises 4-5, "Lexington Green" (MSH 152-56).

Feb. 17/18: How can you create a research question and hypothesis?

- > Read Turabian, overview of part I and chs. 1 and 2. Key questions:
 - What parts of these chapters are most helpful for this class, and your project?
 - What are the characteristics of a good research question and hypothesis?
 - What kind of question can I answer with the sources I have already found?

Feb. 22/23: What will you be working on?

- > **Research Prospectus due on D2L**
- > Read MSH 184-90. Key questions:
 - Can you think of other examples of the three different kinds of generalization?
 - On pp. 184-85, the authors describe a hypothetical student research paper. What are the key elements of the paper's structure (not its topic)?
 - Explain, in your own words, the difference between an opinion and an interpretation.
- > Complete set A, exercises 1-2 (MSH 190-94)

Feb. 24/25: Prospectus Workshop

- > Complete prospectus peer review
- > Schedule individual research conference with instructor

Feb. 29/March 1: How should you read secondary sources?

- > Read MSH 105-21 and complete set A exercises 1-3
- > Find more primary and secondary sources for your project

March 2/3: How can you use secondary sources to find yet more sources?

- > Read Murphy, "Public Mothers." Key questions:
 - What research question does Murphy set out to answer?
 - What kinds of sources did she consult? (check the footnotes).
 - How is her article related to other (earlier) secondary sources?
 - Which parts of the article rely on primary sources? Which rely on secondary sources?

March 7/8: How can you integrate information from all these sources?

- > **Annotated Bibliography due on D2L**
- > Bring MSH to class

March 9/10: You will argue that...

- > Read Turabian ch. 5
- > Complete set B exercises 1 and 2 (MSH 69-73). Upload your paragraph to D2L.

March 14/15: What happened on the upper Missouri?

- > Read MSH 257-64. Key questions:
 - Who created these documents? For what audience? For what purpose?
 - What inferences can we draw from these documents about the conflict between the Arikaras and Ashley's men? What inferences should we NOT draw?
 - The Arikaras involved did not write any of these documents. Neither did most of Ashley's men. What (if anything) can we learn from the documents about how they would have explained these events?

March 16/17: How will you organize your paper?

- > Read Turabian ch. 6
- > Pretend you are writing a paper using the upper Missouri document set. Write a one-paragraph introduction to that paper, following the guidelines in Writing Capsule 4 (MSH 69). Your paragraph must include a clear thesis statement (your explanation of what happened and why) and briefly summarize the evidence (from the document set) that supports your thesis.

March 18-27: Spring Break

March 28/29: Take a deep breath.

- > **Narrative Outline due on D2L**

March 30/31: Narrative Outline Workshop

- > Complete narrative outline peer review

April 4/5: How will you write this thing?

- > Read Turabian ch. 7 and MSH 205-16

April 6/7: No class.

- > Take 75 minutes and do something relaxing and enjoyable. Then go back to working on your draft.

April 11/12: Take another deep breath.

- > **First Draft due on D2L**
- > Schedule revision conference with instructor

April 13/14: Draft Workshop

- > Complete first draft peer review

April 18/19: What will you do with the feedback on your work?

- > Read Turabian chs. 9, 11, 12. Key question: which suggestions are most helpful for you?

April 20/21: How can you give an effective presentation?

- > Read Turabian chs. 10, 13.1-2. Key question: what is the main point of your paper? How can you explain it most clearly?

April 25-28: TBA

May 2 through May 12: Research Presentations

Final draft due at end of official exam period: Wednesday, May 18, 4:45 pm