**History 300: Research Methods**

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| Course Meetings: **Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-1:45pm**  **231 Collins Classroom Center**  Office Hours: **Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 2-3pm**  **(Library 2nd Floor at the open study tables)** | UWSP – History Dept.  473 CCC  Dr. Neil Prendergast  [nprender@uwsp.edu](mailto:nprender@uwsp.edu) |

**How does a work of history get written?**

That question is at the root of all we’ll do this semester. This course will introduce you to the methods historians use to produce written research, as well as give you the opportunity to try these methods yourself. In fact, much of this course will be “learning by doing.”

In this class, we will examine how historians create a usable past for the public. While we might think of writing history as compiling primary sources into a neat storyline, that work is actually just part of the historian’s task. Certainly reading sources in the archive comprises an essential element of history, as does careful footnoting—and, to be sure, this course will train you in such work—but writing history also means putting your research into conversation with that of other scholars.

“Scholarly conversation” is a term that always makes me cringe. (All I can envision is tweed, pipe breath, and more tweed.) But the term means something important, something I have found worth dedicating most of the hours of my professional life: building a large, relevant set of reliable knowledge. Think of that. In our era of twenty-four cycles of fake news, an alternative way of thinking and learning exists. In this course, I welcome you to the club of people who patiently reason.

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| **Enduring Understandings**:  Historical writing is an evidence-based discussion among scholars across time.  **Learning Outcomes**: After taking this course, students will be able to:   * Conduct archival research * Write a research paper that meets basic standards in the discipline of history |

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| **Course Structure and Assignments:** Case studies, then your own turn researching: that is the basic shape of the semester.  With the case studies, I will walk you through how particular elements of researching are present in a scholarly conversation. We will look at how historians have written about the cutover districts of northern Wisconsin, the union strikes at the Kohler Company in eastern Wisconsin, and the community organizing at the toxic Love Canal site in upstate New York. I chose these case studies because they offer us examples of historical work in many subfields: gender, class, environmental, political, and labor history, as well as the histories of race and religion. There will be something for everyone.  During the case studies, there will be a daily assignment for each of our class meetings. Details will be available in class. (12 total @ 5 points each = 60 course points out of 200 total)  When you begin researching on your own, you will select one of the three case studies and delve deeper into it. I will have more to share about this arrangement, but for now, note that you will not be able to select any topic under the sun. As you research, six intermittent assignments will keep you on track. More details will be available on assignment sheets. | ***What do historians do at archives?***  ***How do I cite information?***  ***What does “historiography” mean and who would say such a word?***  ***How do I find relevant primary and secondary sources?***  ***How do I make a long research paper manageable?***  ***Is all this even worth it?***  *These are the types of questions we will address in the case studies. From there, you will have what you need to begin your own research* |
| 1. Case Argument Map: designed to display visually the arguments made by other scholars regarding you topic. (10 of 200 course points)  2. Annotated Bibliography: a listing of all sources with brief descriptions of each. (10/200)  3. Prospectus: a formal plan for your research project. (20/200)  4. Historiography: a written description of how other scholars have written about your topic. (20/200)  5. First Full Draft: you will submit a draft and receive my comments in advance of turning in your final paper. (20/200)  6. Panel Discussion: your oral presentation will be a formal discussion among fellow students all of whom researched the same topic. (20/200)  And then there is the final paper itself, worth 40 of 200 course points. | |

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| **Office Hours**: You are welcome to visit me in my office. I set aside office hours so that I have the chance to talk with students one-on-one. During Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 2-3pm, I do not have any other commitments. My only commitment is to speak with my students. I hold office hours at the Library on the Second Floor. Look for me at the open study tables. |

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| **Readings:** Our readings will be on D2L as downloadable PDF’s. Print the articles and bring them to class. **A schedule of readings will be available as a separate document handed out in class and posted on D2L.** |
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| **Grading**: Letter grades for the semester follow the typical pattern: | | | | |
| A 93-100 | B+ 87-89.99 | C+ 77-79.99 | D+ 67-69.99 | F 59.99 and below |
| A- 90-92.99 | B 83-86.99 | C 73-76.99 | D 60-66.99 |  |
|  | B- 80-82.99 | C- 70-72.99 |  |  |

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| **Course Policies:** During the class, cell phones and other electronic devices are prohibited. If you are a parent or are otherwise obligated to be available to your family via cell phone, then please discuss that situation with me, so I know that you have a good reason for keeping your phone turned on.  The prohibition of electronics also extends to laptop computers (unless approved by the Learning Technology Center). While laptops are great aides in studying, the focus in class is on class, not the computer screen. If you do prefer to have your notes in a computer file, you will find that typing them from your handwritten notes will aid you greatly in digesting the material.  For information on plagiarism, consult <http://www.uwsp.edu/centers/rights>. See Chapter 14, Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures, pages 5 -10, for the disciplinary possibilities if you are caught cheating. As an instructor deeply concerned with fairness in the classroom, I pursue each and every case of plagiarism and cheating. Please note that turnitin.com is used for the essay assignments. |
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| **Life Happens:** I understand you have a life outside this class. I understand that life might make it difficult to complete some assignments, attend class, or simply to do well. I do my best to be flexible because I know those circumstances are out of your control and my control. I’m on your team.  I also know that some real learning has to take place in this class. You will have more opportunity in life if you understand history, read critically, and write well. This class has to be one of your priorities. I do my best to be flexible, but I have to adhere to some standards. If something comes up, let’s talk. |
| **Equity of Educational Access:** If you have a learning or physical challenge which requires classroom accommodation, please contact the UWSP Disability Services office with your documentation as early as possible in the semester. They will then notify me, in a confidential memo, of the accommodations that will facilitate your success in the course. Disability Services Office, 103 Student Services Center, Voice: (715) 346-3365, TTY: (715) 346-3362, <http://www.uwsp.edu/special/disability/studentinfo.htm>. |
| **NOTE: This syllabus is a general plan. Changes may be announced in class, via email, or on D2L.** |