

HIST 501: Methods and Principles of Historical Research
(3 credit hours)
Thursday, 6:00-8:45 p.m.

Instructor: Craig M Nakashian
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Course description

This course is designed to give advanced students in History to opportunity to produce an originally sourced and researched graduate seminar paper in a topic of their choice.

Texts

Richard Marius and Melvin Page, *A Short Guide to Writing About History*, 8th Edition (Longman, 2012)

Student Learner Objectives

Students will analyze evidence related to a historical topic of their choice.

Students will write an extensively researched essay on the aforementioned topic.

Students will discuss historical theories and evidence related to the topic they have written about, and those of their colleagues.

Assessment/Requirements

Research Paper [60 points]

Students are required to write a research paper of some 16-20 pages based on original research and analysis. More important than the length, the instructor wants students to write a well written, well organized and well-researched paper that cites approximately 15-30 primary or peer-reviewed secondary sources.

Paper Draft and Review of Peer's Papers (20 points): On April 13, students are required to submit a draft of their research paper to two peers for review. Over the next week, they must also carefully review, comment upon and assess two of their peers' papers. They then need to photocopy the papers with their comments and emendations and submit the copies of the papers to the instructor, along with a short (one paragraph) assessment of each paper. Reviewers also need to attach a copy of their assessment to the paper and return it (with their comments on it) to the author. The paragraph can assess any of the strengths or weaknesses of the paper. The reviewer might have already commented on the grammar and writing style in the paper corrections, so comments about the author's argument, the organization of the paper, or the cohesiveness of the paper might be useful. The guiding question when writing the assessment should be: "How can the author improve the paper?"

Class Participation [20 points]

Discussion is vitally important. During and/or after class, I will record on a matrix each student's participation and will evaluate the quality of each student's participation. Good participation means reading and thinking about the materials, and engaging with that material in class by asking and answering questions. Participate!!

Tutorials: Tutorials are class sessions reserved for the instructor to advise students in their research and writing. Students should inform the instructor ahead of time that they plan to attend a tutorial so that the instructor can reserve a time for them. Each student should arrange at least one tutorial session with the professor over the course of the semester.

Grading Scheme [100 points total]

My grading system is designed to put you in control of your final grade. For each assignment you complete you will accumulate points. The more points you accumulate, the higher your grade becomes. You can always tell how you are doing by comparing your point total to the scale below. The only way to lose points is by missing class.

A = 90 -100 B = 80 -89 C= 70 -79 D= 60 -69 F= 59 and less

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities may request reasonable accommodations through the A&M-Texarkana Disability Services Office by calling 903.223.3062.

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is expected of students enrolled in this course. Cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration, falsification of research data, plagiarism, and undocumented use of materials from any source, constitute academic dishonesty, and may be grounds for a grade of "F" in the course and/or disciplinary actions." For additional information see the university policy manual.

Email Account

Upon application to Texas A&M University-Texarkana an individual will be assigned an A&M-Texarkana email account. This email account will be used to deliver official university correspondence. Each individual is responsible for information sent and received via the university email account and is expected to check the official A&M-Texarkana email account on a frequent and consistent basis. Faculty and students are required to utilize the university email account when communicating about coursework.

Drop Policy:

To drop this course, a student needs to complete the Drop/Withdrawal Request Form; this form is located on the University website (<http://tamut.edu/Registrar/droppingwithdrawing-from-classes.html>) or obtained in the Registrar's Office. Students must submit the signed and completed form to the faculty member for each course indicated on the form for their signature. The signature is not an "approval" to drop, but rather confirmation that the student has discussed the drop/withdrawal with the faculty member. The form is submitted to the Registrar's office for processing either in person, email (Registrar@tamut.edu), or fax (903-223-32140). Incomplete forms missing any of the required information will not be accepted by the Registrar's Office for processing. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the form is completed properly before submission.

WEB sources:

- Historians and the Web: A Beginners Guide (American Historical Association)
<http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/1996/9601/9601COM3.CFM>
- Reading Writing, and Researching for History. A Guide for College Students (Patrick Rael, Bowdoin College)
<http://academic.bowdoin.edu/WritingGuides/>
- University of Chicago (Turabian) Style Documentation (Bedford/St. Martin's)
<http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/hacker/resdoc/history/footnote>
- Basics of Chicago Style Documentation (University of Wisconsin)
<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocChicago.html>
- Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide (University of Chicago Press)
http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html
- Chicago Manual of Style Citation Guide (Ohio State University)
<http://library.osu.edu/sites/guides/chicagogd.php>

Tentative Class Schedule

January 19: Introduction and Presentation of Research Topics

January 26: Chapters 1-3, Marius and Page, *Short Guide to Writing about History*.

February 2: Chapters 4-6, Marius and Page, *Short Guide to Writing about History*
Work on ***Tentative Research Plan***

February 9: Students must submit their ***Tentative Research Plan*** and be prepared to present a summary of it to the class.

February 16: **NO CLASS**

February 23: **NO CLASS.**

March 1: **TUTORIALS**

March 8: **TUTORIALS**

March 15: **NO CLASS. Spring Break.**

March 22: Class will discuss students' progress in research and writing.

March 29: **NO CLASS.**

April 5: **NO CLASS.**

April 12: **Draft of paper due.** Students will exchange their papers with another student for peer review. Class will discuss students' writing progress.

April 19: **Peer-reviewed comments and appraisals due.** Students must return research papers to the authors with their comments and peer-reviewed appraisals of at least one paragraph. The student reviewer must also submit their appraisals and copies of the reviewed paper with his or her comments on it to the instructor.

April 26: **TUTORIALS**

May 3: **NO CLASS.**

May 10: **Research papers are due.**

Essay Grading

Thesis

- Does the essay have a clear thesis? You should be able to summarize the main point of your essay in one or two sentences; the whole purpose of the essay is to convince the reader of that main point. Be clear about what you are trying to prove, and let your reader know.
- Is it a strong thesis? I am looking for interesting, original explanations of why things happen in history; avoid weak topics that focus on insignificant points or ones that are so obvious that they do not require detailed proof.

Arguments

- Is the thesis supported by a sufficient number of logical arguments and sub-arguments? In order to convince the reader that your thesis is correct you will need to present several supporting arguments; some of those arguments may in turn require support of their own.
- Does each argument contribute directly to your thesis? An essay this brief needs to remain sharply focused on your thesis; don't wander off into other topics.

Evidence

- Is each argument or sub-argument supported by convincing evidence? Remember that primary evidence is generally more convincing than secondary, and that the most convincing way to use primary evidence is to quote it directly. Be sure to *explain* all primary evidence as well.
- Is all evidence correctly quoted and cited? If you paraphrase from any source, you must give the original author credit. If you copy from any source, you must use quotation marks *and* give a brief citation, either in parentheses after the quote [(Esler, Western World, p. 9); (Tacitus in Discovering..., p. 55)] *or* in a footnote. If you quote from a source that is not among the course readings, you must also give a complete citation in a bibliography. *Note: failure to correctly cite paraphrases or quotes is plagiarism, and I will hammer for you it!*

Clarity/Organization

- Is the essay clearly organized and easy to follow? Does support for your thesis proceed logically from point to point, and is each point presented in a separate paragraph? Often the only way to keep a complex structure of arguments and sub-arguments organized is to outline it first.
- Is the meaning of each sentence clear and easy to follow? *When in doubt, keep it simple!*

Writing Errors

- Is the essay free from embarrassing errors in spelling and punctuation? Mistakes make you look dumb, which makes the job of convincing your reader much more difficult. In particular, watch for mistakes caused by homonyms (easily confused words) and apostrophes. *Proofread!*
- Are all sentences grammatically correct? In particular, watch for sentence fragments, comma splices, fused sentences, and subject-verb disagreement.

Some Basic Writing Tips:

-Be as specific as possible in your introduction. Use your introduction to introduce us to your arguments and thesis. Do **NOT** use it to write broad, empty, and sweeping statements that are vague but not germane to the topic. For instance, if your assignment is to consider how Christianity changed the Roman empire, do not begin it with something like this, "Throughout the broad sweep of human history, religion has been an important factor of society." While this may be true, it is general, vague, and tells us nothing. Instead, consider a beginning more like this, "Christianity's growth in popularity in the Roman empire shifted the basic social relationship from one of citizen and emperor to one of worshipper and deity." This is far better. It is to the point, it makes an argument, and it represents a clear indication of what you'll be arguing.

Bibliography:

Arndt, J. Christopher; Michael J. Galgano and Raymond M. Hyser. Doing History: Research and Writing in the Digital Age, Wadsworth Publishing, 2007

Howell, Martha C. and Walter Prevenier. From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods, Cornell University Press, 2001

Marius, Richard A. and Melvin E. Page. Short Guide to Writing About History, Longman, 2007

Presnell, Jenny L. The Information-Literate Historian: A Guide to Research for History Students, Oxford Univ. Press, 2007.

Storey, William Kelleher. Writing History: A Guide for Students, Oxford University Press, 2003.

Tosh, John. The Pursuit of History, Longman 2006.