The University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

**HISTORY 4961/V/W, sect. 001 - History Major Paper (Spring 2016)**

Office hours: Prof. Gary Cohen
Tues. & Thurs., 11:15-12:00; 918 Heller Hall
Wednesday, 1:30-2:45; tel. 612-624-5712 or 624-2800 (dept.)
and by appointment e-mail: gcohen@umn.edu

This course is taught as a seminar and is the required capstone course for completion of the History major. It is designed to advance your skills in historical research and writing and to assist you in preparing and completing your major paper. This is your opportunity to do independent historical research and analysis and to write your own original account and explanation of an historical development. The major paper is a 20-30 page essay based on original research in primary sources (i.e., letters, diaries, memoirs, contemporary interviews, newspaper articles, government papers or other contemporary documents), rather than simply articles or books by historians.

The following required book is available in paperback in the university bookstore and is recommended for purchase:


This course syllabus, all handouts, and some additional required readings are posted on the Moodle site for this course, which you can access by logging into MyU from the University of Minnesota website (http://www1.umn.edu/), and selecting “My Courses.”

**Topics and Reading Assignments for Each Class Meeting**

**Week 1 - January 20 - INTRODUCTION: Getting started**

**Week 2 - January 27 - DEFINING A RESEARCH TOPIC & THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

**Required Reading:**


In-class work: defining workable research questions; and an introduction to Academic Search Premier and Historical Abstracts – Online (U of MN Libraries website)
Week 3 - February 3 – SAVVY READING OF HISTORICAL WRITING

**Required Reading:**


“How to Read a Secondary Source,” “Predatory’ Reading,” and “Some Keys to Good Reading,” and “Analyzing Arguments”

**Assignment due:** Reading secondary sources, Part 1 (Follow instructions on assignment handout); and preliminary bibliographical search for books and articles on your paper topic

In-class:  analysis and discussion of selected secondary sources

Week 4 – February 10 - IDENTIFYING AND FINDING PRIMARY SOURCES

**Required reading:**

Begin to work on bibliography assignment due February 22/23 (see handout for instructions).

**Assignment:** Meet with a faculty consultant in the area of your research before February 12 to discuss your research topic, sources, and research plans.

In-class: searching for primary sources, and library visit.

Week 5 – February 17 – CRITICAL READING AND ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY SOURCES

**Required reading:**

K. L. Turabian, *Student’s Guide to Writing College Papers*, chapters 4 and 5


“How to Read a Primary Source”

**Assignment due:** In-class oral report on primary sources (See instructions in handout)

Week 6 – February 24 - PREPARING A WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY (NO class meeting)

Assignment due: Post Working Bibliography assignment on the Moodle site by midnight on February 22/23. (See instructions in handout)

Week 7 – March 2 - DEVELOPING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND DRAFT BIBLIOGRAPHY (NO class meeting)

Individual meeting #1: Each student should schedule an individual meeting with the instructor, sometime during the week of February 29 through March 8 to discuss the working bibliography and research plans.

Week 8 - March 9 – no class meeting

Week 9 – March 23 - PAPER OUTLINE, INTRODUCTION, AND REVISED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Required reading:

K. L. Turabian, Student’s Guide, chapters 6 and 7


“Structuring Your Essay” and “The Three Parts of a History Paper”

Assignment due: Outline, introduction, and revised annotated bibliography due in class! (See instructions in handout)

In-class small-group work on paper outlines

Week 10 - March 30 – CONTINUING RESEARCH AND INITIAL WRITING OF PAPER (NO CLASS MEETING)

Required reading:

K. L. Turabian, Student’s Guide, chapters 8, 12, and 13

Meet with your faculty consultant in the period between March 28 and April 4 to go over the outline and updated bibliography.

Assignment due: Post on the Moodle site a one-paragraph report on your meeting with the faculty consultant no later than midnight, April 4/5.

** Monday, April 4, is the last day to cancel spring full semester classes without approval by the college scholastic committee. **

Week 11: April 6 – INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH THE CLASS INSTRUCTOR (NO CLASS MEETING)
Continue your research and writing.

**Required reading:**


“Citing Sources”

K. L. Turabian, *Student’s Guide*, chapters 9 and 10

**Individual meeting #2:** Schedule a meeting with the HIST 4961 instructor for a time between April 5 and April 11, AFTER your meeting with your faculty consultant, to discuss the results of the meeting with the consultant and your progress on the research and writing.

**Week 12 – April 13 - PEER REVIEW OF FULL FIRST DRAFTS, Part 1**

**Assignment due:** Full first draft of entire paper due! Post it on the Moodle site by midnight on April 11/12 and bring a hard copy to class on April 13 for peer review in the small groups, focusing on argument, use of evidence, etc.

**Week 13 – April 20 - PEER REVIEW OF FULL FIRST DRAFTS, Part 2**

Work on revising your first draft. Bring a hard copy to class on April 20 for peer review in the small groups on writing style, grammar, etc. You may bring either the same copy you brought to class on April 13 or an updated version if you want feedback on the most recent draft

**Required reading:**


“History and Rhetoric”

**Week 14 – April 27 – SHORT ORAL PRESENTATIONS ON FINAL VERSIONS**

**Required reading:**

**Assignment due:** Prepare and present a 5-minute oral summary of your paper’s central argument and evidence to the class on April 27. A short discussion will follow each presentation. Guests are welcome!

Week 15 – May 4 - REVISIONS  (NO class meeting)

THE FINAL, POLISHED VERSION OF YOUR MAJOR PAPER (COMPLETE: TEXT, NOTES, AND BIBLIOGRAPHY) WILL BE DUE IN HARD COPY NO LATER THAN 4:00 PM ON **THURSDAY, MAY 5**, IN THE HISTORY DEPT. OFFICE, 1110 Heller Hall.

**Course Format**

The class meetings will be devoted to seminar discussions of the issues raised in the readings, small group work on your assignments, and oral presentations of your work. The readings listed for each week should be completed before class, and ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION IN EVERY CLASS MEETING IS EXPECTED. Absences will result in poor performance in the course. In several weeks of the semester when you are working on your research and writing, there will be no class meeting. In some of the other weeks, class meetings may not take the whole scheduled time.

Any student with a documented disability condition (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, systemic, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations should contact the instructor and U. of MN Disability Services at the beginning of the semester.

To avoid distractions, students are asked to turn off cell phones, pagers, e-mail, and text messaging during class sessions. If you bring a tablet, notebook, or laptop computer to class, it should be used only for relevant course work.

**Assignments:**

The various assignments are designed to lead you through the process of defining a research topic, identifying bibliography, doing the research in primary and secondary sources, and writing a major paper. The course is organized to break down the whole process into stages; each stage will address pertinent historical methods and techniques and involve a written assignment. The final paper will be expected to demonstrate understanding of the major recent works of historical scholarship on the chosen topic and to use a careful reading of primary sources to construct an original description of the historical event or development together with your own argument about how it happened and its meaning. The paper will be evaluated on the basis of the argument (or thesis) developed in it, the relevance and quality of the evidence presented, and your analysis of it. Class participation will be an important part of the course and will contribute to the quality of your final paper. The class will not meet every week, but attendance and participation in all scheduled class discussions and exercises are required and will be critical to your success in the course. Class members will work in small groups for some stages of the research and writing.
## Assignment due dates and grading

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reading secondary sources, pt. 1 (Bring to class February 3)</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td>Primary source oral report (In class February 17)</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td>Working bibliography (Post on website by midnight Feb. 22/23)</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outline, introduction, and revised annotated bibliography</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td>(Bring to class on March 23)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Faculty consultation written report (Post on website by midnight April 4/5)</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td>Full first draft of entire paper</td>
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<td>(Post on website by midnight April 11/12; bring a copy to class April 13)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Peer review:</td>
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<td>Part 1 (In class on April 13)</td>
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<td>Part 2 (In class on April 20)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral presentation (In class on April 27)</td>
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<td>Final paper (due in hard copy no later than 4:00 pm on <strong>THURSDAY, MAY 5</strong>, in the History Department office, 1110 Heller Hall)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>In-class exercises, discussions, consultations, etc.</td>
<td>20%</td>
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**NOTE:** To meet the major paper requirement for the B. A. in History, the Department of History requires a course grade of C- or better in HIST. 4961 for those students who take this course.