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HSTA 594.02: Graduate Research Seminar

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Course Description: This seminar challenges students to engage in the craft of researching and writing history. Students will devise a topic, design a research proposal, conduct primary and secondary investigations, and write multiple drafts of original narrative, analysis, and interpretation. The ultimate goal is the production of a substantial essay (30-35 pages) of publishable quality. Research topics will be chosen in consultation with the instructor.

Goals & Outcomes: This course is intended to hone skills fundamental to the historical discipline: the ability to pose significant questions about the past; to find and analyze appropriate primary sources; to critically assess historical scholarship; to write clear and persuasive narrative and analysis; and to engage in collaborative peer review. Students who successfully complete this course should develop each of these vital skills.

Level: This course is designed for graduate students in the History Department’s MA and PhD programs. Other students are admitted with the consent of the instructor. All students should have experience working with primary sources and crafting original historical scholarship. If you have questions about your level of preparation, please speak with the instructor.

Assessment: Students are evaluated by the quality of their participation in class discussions and peer review sessions. Research projects are assessed by the depth of research, the clarity of writing, the quality of analysis, and the overall significance and originality (both historical and historiographical) of their conclusions.

General Expectations: Original research and writing are the most important tasks for historians and the crown jewels of the profession. Developing the skills to research deeply and to communicate clearly is the most important part of your graduate training. This course—and your research project more generally—should be a top priority.

All assignments should be of professional quality, word-processed, and produced in the proper format. See general guidelines below. All sources referenced must have full citations in correct Chicago Style. Late papers will be automatically down-graded. You must turn in every written assignment to pass this course. Final research essays must adhere to the conventions of the historical profession.

Basic Course Requirements:
Attendance & Participation
Preliminary Assignments
Project Development & Research Proposal
Preliminary Writing Assignments and Rough Draft
Substantial Contributions in Peer Review Sessions
Final Research Essay
Course Readings & Research Costs: The guiding text for this course is a website developed by Professor William Cronon and his graduate students at the University of Wisconsin, “Learning to Do Historical Research: A Primer for Environmental Historians and Others”: [http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/index.htm](http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/index.htm). Other readings that may be assigned will either available on the course’s MOODLE site or obtainable through on-line databases. Historical research and graduate seminars bring costs for photocopying, printing, and other miscellaneous items. Expect to incur costs throughout the research and peer-review process.

Academic Honesty: You are expected to practice academic honesty and adhere to the Student Conduct Code: [University of Montana student conduct code](http://www.umt.edu/policies/Code_of_Conduct). Plagiarism or other academic misconduct may result in a failing grade and prompt further disciplinary action from the University. If you have questions about how to avoid plagiarism, see the instructor.

Local Archives and Libraries: Depending on your topic, many of your primary sources may be acquired through online databases and interlibrary loan (or perhaps from previous work out of state). Some of you, however, might choose topics for which sources exist in local archives; don’t assume that just because your topic is not about Montana or the West that you won’t find things here. I recommend meeting with appropriate archivists early in your project conceptualization. At the Mansfield Library, Donna McCrea is Head of Archives and Special Collections ([donna.mccrea@umontana.edu](mailto:donna.mccrea@umontana.edu)); and, Susanne Caro is the Government Documents librarian ([susanne.caro@umontana.edu](mailto:susanne.caro@umontana.edu)). Other local archives include the Missoula Public Library Audra Browman Research Room and the Montana Historical Society Research Room.

The Writing Center: The University of Montana Writing Center offers individualized sessions for undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty members, at any stage of the research and writing process. A grievous misperception is that only struggling writers should avail of this resource. Quite to the contrary, the best writers will take advantage of all possible forums for discussing their ideas and having their work read and commented upon. Utilize this free service early and often! [www.umt.edu/writingcenter](http://www.umt.edu/writingcenter); 243-2266. The website also has some very useful handouts under the “Resources for Writers” tab.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Jan 25 (week 1): Introductions, Research Agendas
*Introductions and discussion of research projects. Overview of the Cronon research webpage. Overview of the Mansfield Library webpage and some online databases.*

- DUE: 2-Page Preliminary Statement of Research Project and Working Bibliography

This should include a title & subtitle for your project; a statement of the key historical research questions driving your project; a sense of the types of primary sources you'll be using to answer your questions; and a sense of the project's historiographical originality (what other scholars have written about your project; how your approach is similar or different, etc.). For the bibliography, please use correct Chicago Style formatting and include separate sections for primary and secondary sources.
Feb 1 (week 2) – Preliminary Research, Research Agendas & Organization

Discussion of the reading; discussion of primary source searches & research agendas; research organization and note-taking presentations

- **RDG:** Cronon, Introduction; How to Frame a Researchable Question; What are the Documents?; On the Search; The Pleasures of Note-Taking

- **DUE:** Detailed Research Agenda (1-2 pages in list or bullet-point format)

  This document should identify specific primary source databases and archives to be worked; secondary sources in hand or to be obtained and read; and a prioritized list of tasks you deem important for the stage you’re at (eg. work on iterations of my research questions; narrow down secondary works to focus on; etc.). This list could also include more practical matters such as setting up a dual monitor; freeing up space on your hard drive; obtaining a new filing system, etc. Whatever will set up the best conditions for a productive semester of research and writing.

- **DUE:** Presentation on a Research Organizing System

  This polished 10-15 minute presentation should guide us through some system for organizing primary and secondary sources, citations, notes, and drafts. This could be a demonstration of a computer program you use like Schrivener or Endnote; an overview of the way you organize files in Word and Adobe; or a demonstration of how you file old-fashioned notecards or the like. Anything you have tried that seems to meet at least some research project needs.

Feb 8 (week 3): Arguments, Narrative, and Historiographical Framing

Discussion of preliminary research findings; revised research questions & agendas; and your understanding of your project in relation to other scholars’ work.

- **RDG:** Cronon, Arguments and Narrative; Positioning Your Argument

- **DUE:** Annotated Bibliography

  This bibliography should include five to seven books or scholarly articles that you find pertinent to your research project. They should be listed in a clear, logical order (alphabetically, chronologically, or thematically) with full bibliographic citations. Each should be followed by one to paragraphs (150-200 words) of summary description of the work and critical assessment of its sources, methods, arguments, and uses. For more on annotated bibliographies, see any of a number of guides, such as: [http://guides.library.cornell.edu/annotatedbibliography](http://guides.library.cornell.edu/annotatedbibliography); [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/03/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/03/)

- **DUE:** Preliminary Historiographic Statement:

  In 1-2 pages, address the following questions: What have historians said about my topic? With what scholarly literatures does my research and writing engage? How will my research project contribute to the existing scholarly literature(s)?
Feb 15 (week 4): Analyzing and Triangulating Sources; Preparing to Write
Discussion of Cronon reading; source analysis methodologies and primary source critiques (how you are evaluating and using your sources); and critical evaluation of sample research proposal.

- RDG: Cronon, Drafting, Revising, and Editing; Sources for Environmental History; Sample Research Proposal (available on Moodle)

- DUE: Come prepared to discuss your proposed methodology and modes of analysis of your primary sources. Sketch out your answers to questions such as: What is the nature of my primary sources? (who, how, when, where, why were they created?) What kinds of questions can my various sources answer? What kinds of questions can they not answer? Are they to be used quantitatively or qualitatively? Are they to be read literally, skeptically, between the lines, etc.? Are they in dialogue with each other? etc.

- DUE: Come to class prepared to discuss the sample research proposal (organization, style, strengths & weaknesses, etc.)

Feb 22 (week 5): Presentation & Discussion of Final Research Proposals
Discussion of research proposals and revised project agendas.

- DUE (Feb 19, 12 noon): Upload your research proposal (apprx 6 pages) and bibliography (apprx 2 pages) to Moodle by Sunday, February 19 @ 12 noon.

- RDG: Come to class having read and commented extensively on your colleagues’ research proposals. Further details of my expectations will be provided.

March 1 (week 6): Continue Researching & Writing. No Formal Class
Mandatory One-on-One Meeting during class time (11-1:50pm)

March 8 (week 7): Presentations of Research Findings
Presentations and discussion of research findings.

- DUE: Presentation (apprx. 15 minutes) of your research findings. What questions have you been trying to address? What answers or interpretations have you been coming to? How have you reached these conclusions? Have new questions arisen? In other words, where did you thinking on this topic begin, where is it now, and where is it going? Utilize samples of your primary evidence to show us where your findings are coming from.

March 15 (week 8): No Formal Class
Continue researching and begin crafting historical argument & historiographical framing. Optional one-on-one meeting.

March 22 (week 9): Spring Break; No Class

March 29 (week 10): Historical Argument & Historiographical Contribution
Discussion of peer work.

- DUE (March 26, 12 noon): Upload your essay’s historical argument (1-2 paragraphs
minimum) and your essay’s historiographical contribution (1-2 paragraphs minimum) to Moodle by Sunday, March 26 @ 12 noon.

- **RDG:** Come to class having read and commented extensively on your colleagues’ work. Further details of my expectations will be provided.

**April 5 (week 11): Introductions & Outlines**

*Discussion of peer work.*

- **DUE (April 2, 12 noon): Upload** your draft introduction (4-6 pages) & thorough outline to Moodle by Sunday, April 2nd @ 12 noon

- **RDG:** Come to class on Thursday having read and commented extensively on your colleagues’ introduction and outline.

**April 12 (week 12): Craft Rough Drafts – No Formal Class**

*Mandatory One-on-One Meeting during class time. Come prepared to discuss the status of your research and writing.*

**April 19 (week 13): Craft Rough Drafts – No Formal Class**

**April 26 (week 14): Rough Drafts & Peer Review**

*Discussion of peer work.*

- **DUE (April 21, 12 noon): Upload** your complete rough draft to Moodle by Friday, April 21st @ 12 noon

- **RDG:** Come to class having read and commented extensively on your colleagues’ rough drafts. Further details of my expectations will be forthcoming and available on Moodle.

**May 3 (week 15): Revision & Final Essay Preparation—No Formal Class**

*Optional One-on-One meeting.*

**TUES, May 9 (week 16) Final Research Essay due @ 12 noon**

(exam time for this course is 10:10-12:10)

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**Standard Paper Writing Guidelines:**

1. Double-space your work (Not single, 1.5, triple-spaced, or otherwise)
2. Write in a standard font (Times New Roman; Calibri) at 12 point.
3. Use 1-inch Margins (Top, Bottom, Left, & Right).
4. Do not skip extra lines between paragraphs. If your word processor does this automatically, make the necessary adjustment.
5. Insert page numbers (number on the first page is optional).
6. Cite your work in footnotes. Use proper Chicago style footnote form.
8. Write about the past in past tense. (“Fidel Castro spoke …”). When writing about a text, it is acceptable to use present tense. (“Eric Foner argues…”)

9. Proofread & edit your work. Reduce unnecessary wordiness; eliminate as much passive voice as possible.

10. Read your paper aloud and correct any sentences that were difficult to speak.