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HIST 300.01: The Historian's Craft

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The Historian's Craft, required for all history majors, is designed to introduce students to the historian's tasks as teacher, researcher, and writer. The first portion of the class will be devoted to discussion of the nature of the historical enterprise and the challenges of classroom teaching. The second portion of the class will acquaint students with selected fields of historical study and will give them the opportunity to discover and interpret historical sources. The final portion of the course will emphasize the steps of the research, writing, and revision processes.

Course Readings

Gary Nash, National Standards for United States History
Eric Foner, ed., The New American History
William Kelleher Storey, Writing History: A Guide for Students

Course Policies

All assignments are due on the dates noted on the syllabus. Unless otherwise indicated, papers are due in class. No late papers or assignments will be accepted.

Grades will be assigned according to the following criteria: A=outstanding; B=good; C=inadequate; D=seriously inadequate; F=unacceptable. Although the University does not compute pluses and minuses in your GPA, they will be used on your individual assignments and to compute your overall grade. Students must take the class for a traditional letter grade, not pass/no pass.

Incompletes are intended for use by students who have fulfilled all course requirements (including attendance) prior to a medical, family, or personal emergency that prevents the student from completing the remainder of the course. Incompletes will be granted at my discretion based on this criteria. Students must arrange incompletes as early as possible.

Plagiarism or cheating of any kind is grounds for failure in the course. More serious penalties, including suspension or expulsion from the university, are also permitted according to the Student Conduct Code. Ignorance is no excuse for plagiarism. If you have questions about proper documentation, see me before you hand in your papers.
Course Requirements

1. Attendance (10 percent)
Attendance is vital to your performance in this class. Each student is permitted one “free” absence. (Late arrivals and early departures will each count for one-half of an absence.) Thereafter, a second absence will result in an attendance grade of B, a third in an attendance grade of C, a fourth in an attendance grade of D, and a fifth in an attendance grade of F. Under extraordinary circumstances, students may have one additional “excused” absence. Absences will be excused at my discretion. Do not assume that notifying me of the absence means that it has been excused. Additional work may be assigned to make up for excused absences.

2. Participation (10 percent)
Active class participation, as well as attendance, is essential to this class. Participation in this class has two dimensions. First, you are expected to demonstrate through your participation in class discussion and activities that you have done the reading and prepared for class. Second, you will be asked to submit brief written assignments at most class meetings. Each written assignment will be assigned a point value, as indicated in the class schedule below.

3. Document Analysis (30 percent)
In order to give you practice in locating and using primary sources, you will complete three short papers based on selected sources. Further details will be provided in class. Each short paper will count for 10 percent of the final grade. Improvement will count in your favor.

4. Rough Draft (10 percent)
You should write multiple drafts of every writing assignment. Your rough draft, therefore, may not be a first draft, but a second or a third. In evaluating your rough draft, I will look primarily for a clear thesis, a graceful introduction, and a strong conclusion. In addition, your rough draft will be subjected to a peer review. Your rough draft should be at least 15 typed, double-spaced pages long. Use one-inch margins and a reasonable font size (for example, 12 point New Century Schoolbook). You should submit three copies of your rough draft. I will grade one of these. The others will be reviewed by two of your peers. Peer reviewers are encouraged to write specific comments and suggestions on the rough drafts and to comment on sources, methodology, and interpretation as well as grammar, spelling, and organization.

5. Paper Presentation (10 percent)
This assignment gives you the opportunity to share your research findings with the class. Plan on a 10-20 minute presentation of your research. Visual aids and handouts are encouraged.

6. Final Draft (30 percent)
Your final draft should be 20-30 typed, double-spaced pages long, with one-inch margins and a reasonable font size. Your final draft will be evaluated primarily on the basis of your use of primary and secondary materials, your writing style, and the coherence and persuasiveness of your argument. Your final draft must be properly documented and proofread (NOT spell-checked) for grammatical and spelling errors.

Future Teachers’ Option

For History/Education majors, there is an alternative to the final research papers. Future teachers may choose to design their own “standards” for history; rewrite a chapter of a textbook in order to meet those standards; and design a primary-source activity for classroom use along with the textbook chapter. For students who elect this option, the rough and final drafts will be versions of the chapter, while the paper presentation will be the primary-source activity. Some course assignments will be modified, as indicated on the class schedule, below.
Class Schedule

September 11: Introduction to Course: Trade Secrets
Workshop: Using the Library (3 p.m.)
Assignment: Secondary Source List (10 points). Print out ten potential secondary sources for final paper from Griznet (Save-Bib List) and Lasernet.

September 18: Conceptualizing History: Discuss Nash’s Standards, Chaps. 1 and 2
Workshop: Establishing Standards
Assignment: History Scoresheet (10 points) Each group will establish a set of (five or more) standards for teaching history. Future teachers should submit individual standards.

September 25: Teaching History: Discuss Nash’s Standards, Chap. 3
Workshop: Evaluating Textbooks
Assignment: Paper Proposal (20 points) Paper proposals should define the topic, list at least five secondary sources (either in Mansfield Library or already ordered through ILL—attach copies of order forms), and pose a question that the paper will attempt to answer. Future teachers should select the book chapter to be rewritten, list at least five secondary sources to be used to improve the chapter, and state the goals of the revision.

October 2: Discuss “Liberty and Power”
Workshop: Introduction to Government Documents/Mansfield Papers (2 p.m.)
Assignment: Diplomacy Worksheet (10 points)

October 9: Discuss “Social History” and “Western History”
Workshop: Introduction to the Archives/Local History (2 p.m.)
Assignment: Local History Worksheet (10 points)

October 16: Discuss “U.S. Women’s History” and “The History of the Family”
Workshop: The Range of Women’s History
Assignment: Document Analysis I

October 23: Discuss “African American History”
Workshop: Using Oral History—The WPA Interviews
Assignment: Document Analysis II

November 6: Discuss “American Labor History” and “Ethnicity and Immigration”
Workshop: Using the Census
Assignment: Document Analysis III

Film: A Midwife’s Tale
Read: Storey, Writing History, Chaps. 1 and 2
Assignment: Paper Outline (20 points) Your paper outline should provide the following information about your paper: title (with subtitle if relevant); thesis (one or two sentences maximum), and outline of your paper’s organizational structure. Future teachers should submit a title and an outline for their chapter. The title should indicate the slant of the chapter.

November 20: The Research Process, Part II
Workshop: Documentation
Read: Storey, Writing History, Chaps. 3 and 4
Assignment: Bibliography (10 points) Future teachers should submit a bibliographical essay rather than a list. See me for details.
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>November 27</td>
<td>The Writing Process, Part I</td>
<td><em>Storey, Writing History</em>, Chaps. 5-9</td>
<td>Rough Drafts Due</td>
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<td>December 4</td>
<td>The Writing Process, Part II</td>
<td><em>Storey, Writing History</em>, Chap. 10</td>
<td>Paper Critiques (10 points)</td>
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<td>December 11</td>
<td>Paper Presentations</td>
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<td>December 18</td>
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