



Dr. James Paxton
Comenius 306
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HISTORY 371: SENIOR SEMINAR

Clio, History's Muse.

Course Description

Welcome to History 371: Senior Seminar.¹ As the capstone of the history major, this course more than any other you have taken in the history department is yours. This course gives you the freedom and opportunity to explore a topic that most interests you and to put into practice everything you have learned about how to be a historian. During the semester, you will write a high quality, article-length paper. Your paper will be based on original research from primary sources, but it will also engage the historiographical context of your topic. I hope you will find the process both challenging and rewarding.

Although research and writing may seem like a solitary endeavor, as you will soon find out it is a collaborative effort. During the research, writing, and rewriting process, you will be working and consulting closely with several people. I am the primary instructor for this course and the person you should contact with any questions or concerns. You will also be assigned an “outside advisor” with whom you will meet twice during the semester. Outside advisors are faculty whose own areas of expertise are closest to those of the topics you are working. You will also be assigned to a writing group of your colleagues with whom you will exchange work, ideas, and constructive criticism. Our semester will culminate in a mini-conference in which you will present a version of your paper not only to the class but also to members of the history department and invited guests.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, you will have enhanced your abilities to:

- Approach writing as a process, one that involves considerable ongoing reflection and revision.
- Locate and use primary sources.
- Engage in historiographical debates.
- Appreciate the way in which the conventions of writing change according to format and audience.
- Use writing conventions appropriate to the discipline of history.
- Give and receive constructive criticism.
- Deliver effective oral presentations.

In this course you will undertake three different types of writing, each with a particular set of conventions and each for a different audience.

Research Paper. The final paper must be at least 25 pages long, written in formal academic prose with footnotes and bibliography for an audience of other historians. All

¹ I would like to thank my colleagues in the history department for their suggestions on this syllabus. I am especially thankful to Dr. Sandy Bardsley for devising the course and syllabus on which I have based this course.

of you should be able to present your work in an academic setting, such as an undergraduate conference or Moravian College's scholarship day. I hope that some of you will consider submitting the final version of your paper to journals for publication. Please note you will be writing this paper in stages throughout the semester with lots of opportunity for feedback and rewriting between each stage.

Journal Entries. Throughout the semester you will be writing weekly journal entries to reflect on the process of research and writing. Journal entries must be at least one-and-a-half pages long, double-spaced. Journals serve as a place for you to untangle ideas, think through research strategies, and even vent about the frustrations you encounter. I will read every journal entry to ensure that you are keeping up your journal entries and taking them seriously. In terms of format and style, journal entries may be less formal. They will be graded for content, regularity, and willingness to engage with ideas, rather than for stylistic concerns such as spelling and grammar. Nonetheless, I do expect you to proofread your journals before handing them in. Journals are due at the **beginning** of the class in which they are due. Late journals will not be accepted.

Feedback to Others. As part of the process of writing, you will help others with their papers and they will do the same for you. During each stage of writing, you will write up comments to help other members of your writing group. I will assign you to a writing group once the semester is underway. The main audience will be that of your peers, although I will also collect a copy of your comments in order to help you with the important (if often overlooked) skill of offering useful feedback and constructive criticism.

Required Texts

No texts have been assigned for this course. I assume that you have copies of *The Bedford Handbook* from Writing 100 and Mary Lynn Rampolla's *Pocket Guide to Writing History* from HIST 270. If you do not have these books, then borrow or purchase them.

Attendance

While attendance is not mandatory, you are strongly encouraged to attend all classes. Missed classes will be difficult if not impossible to make up, as much of your grade depends on weekly journals and your participation in writing groups.

Grade Distribution=

Journals (11 entries; 1% each)	11%
Table of secondary and primary sources	3%
Abstracts of primary sources	5%
Index cards or computer equivalents	15%
Writing throughout the semester	20%
Participation	16%
Final Paper	20%
Conference Presentations	10%

The participation grade reflects the quality and quantity of your contributions to the class and your writing group. It is not an attendance grade.

Late Policy

Papers turned in after the beginning of the class on which they are due will be assessed a penalty of 10% for the first day they are late and 5% for each day thereafter. Computer and printing problems are not acceptable reasons for lateness.

Academic Dishonesty

According to the Moravian College Student Handbook, the following constitutes plagiarism: “as the use, deliberate or not, of any outside source without proper acknowledgment.” Plagiarism will result in the offender receiving zero in the course. Please consult the Student Handbook for fuller details.

Students with Disabilities

Students with physical, learning, or medical disabilities should speak to me and contact Laurie Roth, Director of the Learning Center, to arrange the appropriate accommodations. Please make these arrangements in the first weeks of the semester.

Class Schedule

Week 1

Aug. 31 - Introduction

Week 2

Sept. 7 Beginning Research

- Read the Syllabus
- Read notes by Patrick Rael entitled “research papers: Keeping a Research Journal” and “Research papers: paper Writing Steps.” Handout.
- Order and start to read potential secondary sources on inter-library loan.
- Journal 1: Focus on finding a topic.

Week 3

Sept. 14 Locating and Using Primary Sources

- Compile and turn a table of primary and secondary sources.
- Order potential primary sources in inter-library loan.
- Journal 2: Focus on historiography. How is your thinking evolving about your topic changing as you see what other scholars have done in the secondary sources you are uncovering? Are you disqualifying some topics because they have been done too thoroughly? Are you identifying topics that others have ignored?

Week 4

Sept. 21 Research Methods

- Turn in abstracts of primary sources
- Journal 3: How are your ideas developing new that you are engaged with the primary sources? What themes do you see in them? Which look like they will be most helpful to you? Are your impressions of the historiography changing at all as you examine the sources scholars have used?
- Read notes by Patrick Rael entitled “Research Papers: Taking Notes.”

Week 5

Sept. 28 Individual Meetings with Me and Expert Consultants (times to be arranged)

- Journal 4: How are the latest primary sources you’ve examined shaping your thinking about the topic? Are you noticing anything that has surprised you?
- Continue to read secondary sources and make notes on primary sources.
- Compile an agenda for our meeting, containing at least three questions or issues on which you would like help. Print this out and bring three copies to the meeting. Also bring your index cards to the meeting.

Week 6

Oct. 5 Writing Workshop I

- Chunk 1 due (at least 5 pages, focusing on historiography). Email it me and to your writing group members by 4pm October 2)
- Read “Useful Feedback & Constructive Criticism” in handout.
- Return feedback to group members for in-class distribution.
- Journal 5: What did you learn from your meeting with your expert consultant? How did it feel to start the writing process? Are you happy with what you have written? What thoughts do you have about where to go next? What new things are you noticing in the primary sources?

Week 7

Oct. 12 Writing Workshop II

- Read notes entitled “Initial Paper Outline.”
- Chunk 2 due (at least 5 pages, based on primary sources research) & initial paper outline and email it to me and your group members by 4pm on Oct. 9)
- Return feedback to group members for in-class distribution.
- Bring index cards to class.
- Continue to research.
- Journal 6: What were some of the most helpful suggestions you received from the writing workshop? What will be the topic of your second chunk and why? Email this entry to me 24 hours before meeting.

Week 8

Oct. 19 Writing Workshop III

- Chunk 3 due and revised outline and email it to me and your group members by 4pm on Oct. 23.

- Return feedback to group members for in-class distribution.
- Journal 7: What new ideas are you coming up with as you encounter new sources? Are you mostly confirming patterns you have already seen, or are you finding new patterns and going off in new directions?

Week 9

Oct. 26 Individual Meetings with Me

- Compile an agenda for our meeting containing at least three questions or issues on which you would like help. Print this out and bring two copies to the meeting.
- Bring index cards to the meeting.
- Journal 8: Are things beginning to come together for you? What major concerns do you still have? What research do you still have to do?

Week 10

Nov. 2 Writing Workshop IV

- Read “Introduction & Conclusion” in handout.
- Introduction, conclusion, and revised outline due. Email these to me and your group members by 4pm on Oct. 30.
- Give feedback to group members for in-class distribution.
- Journal 9: How are you feeling about things at this stage? What needs to be done before you can put the complete draft together?

Week 11

Nov. 9 – No Class – Instructor Away

Week 12

Nov. 16 Writing Workshop V

- Write your complete first draft and email it to me and your group members by 4pm on Nov. 14.
- Write feedback to group members for in-class distribution. Plan ahead so you will have the time to read and comment on the drafts.
- Read notes by Patrick Rael entitled “Research Papers: Revising the Draft.”

Week 13

Nov. 23 Individual Meetings with Me and Expert Consultant

- Journal 10: What do you think are the main strengths and weaknesses of your paper? Which parts of your work are you most pleased with? Where will you be focusing your efforts in the next two weeks? Where would you like help?

Week 14

Nov. 30 Individual Meetings with Me

- Compile an agenda for our meeting containing at least three questions or issues on which you would like help. Print this out and bring two copies to the meeting.
- Journal 11: As this is your last journal entry, you might use it as a chance to reflect on the overall process to date. How have your ideas evolved over the

semester? What aspects of the paper do you still need to nail down before next week?

Week 15

Dec. 7 Preparing Conference Papers

- Write your final paper and email it to me by December

The instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus with appropriate notification.

Exam Period Mini-Conference

- Prepare a 15-minute conference presentation which summarizes your paper.