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HIST 371
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Senior Seminar

Senior Seminar is the capstone course in history. It is the course that allows you to use all your skills, techniques, and ideas in history to explore a topic you love. This is a rigorous and demanding course. You have started to work on your topic over the summer and are now well prepared to do research at the highest level of your college experience. At the end of the semester you have produced a high quality, article-length paper. Most of your work will be solitary research in your study, archives, libraries, and reading rooms. But all scholarly work happens in an intellectual community. I will be your primary instructor whom you should contact with any concerns or questions. You will have another student from class writing a thorough comment on your paper draft. You already have a senior seminar advisor with whom you will meet twice during the semester. Finally, you will have the community of scholars in your peers critiquing and commenting on your ideas, presentations, and text drafts.

Objectives.

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

- § Approach writing as a process, appropriate to the discipline of history.
- § Locate and use primary sources.
- § Locate and use secondary sources and engage in historiographical debates.
- § Give and receive constructive criticism.
- § Deliver effective oral presentations.

Research Paper.

- § Length: 25 to 30 pages
- § Secondary sources:
 - § 10 scholarly books (no textbooks) or more.
 - § 15 scholarly articles, chapters or books or more.
- § Primary sources:
 - § 5 lengthier (over 30 pages) texts or, depending on the topic, a large number of smaller texts.
- § Internet sources:
 - § Not allowed.
 - § Exceptions: Secondary sources from JSTOR or Ebsco in pdf-format, primary sources in which case you deal with them as you do with any primary sources.
- § Staged writing. The writing process extends over the whole class.
 - § Choosing topic
 - § Crafting a working bibliography (Rampolla)
 - § Writing the introduction
 - § Discussing your paper in a seminar setting
 - § Writing the draft
 - § Giving a formal presentation on your topic

- § Submitting the final version of your paper.
- § All the papers and assignments have to be submitted in person in class. No email submissions are allowed. There will be no extension time for writing except in the case of a **documented illness**.

Writing Introduction. The introduction is the foundation of your paper. It sets the framework of your research by identifying your thesis, mentioning the evidence (primary sources) that you will use, introducing the most important historical interpretations on your topic, and giving a short, synoptic structure of your paper. In the course of your research you will change almost every component of your introduction.

Seminar Discussion. In November, you will have the opportunity to have a thorough discussion of your paper draft in a seminar setting. I will assign you a commentator who will carefully read your paper. A seminar session goes as following.

- § A 10-minute synoptic presentation by the author of the paper.
- § A 20- to 30-minute detailed discussion of the paper draft by the commentator, author, and the audience.
- § The commentator should discuss:
 - § The relevance and meaningfulness of the thesis. Is it relevant? Can it be proved?
 - § The historiographic contribution of the author.
 - § Evidence.
 - § Detailed, page-by-page discussion of the paper. Are there factual errors? Are there conceptual errors?
 - § Discussion of the conclusions.
 - § Style and grammar (not discussed publically but notes made on the margins of the paper).
- § The commentator writes a two-page report in key words and submits the original text with margin comments.

Formal Presentation. In the last session, you will have the opportunity to give a 15-minute conference presentation of your research topic. There will be a handout detailing the requirements for the presentation.

Exam. There is a “preterm” exam in the first meeting. I will ask you what is the basic narrative of your topic? A successful answer of five pages (in blue book) requires that you know the time frame of your paper, the main related events, and can tell this “basic narrative” chronologically from B(eginning) to E(nd). The weight of the midterm is 15%.

Assignments.

- § There are four different types of assignments: statements, notes, introduction, and report.
- § There will be samples and handouts for all types of assignments.
- § For bibliographies and footnotes, follow carefully the guidelines in Rampolla. For any single mistake you will lose one point.
- § Statements are 500 words long, reflective writings on the assigned topic.

Evaluation

Preterm exam	15%
Paper	33%
Notes	24%
Comment on draft (seminar)	8%

Paper presentation	6%
First Draft	6%
Bibliographies	4%
Statements	4%

Attendance. One absence is allowed. After the first one each subsequent absence lowers your overall grade for the course by a third of a letter grade unless you have a documented illness or a written explanation from your athletic coach.

Workload. This is a demanding and intensive research seminar. It has been designed with the expectation that the total **minimum weekly workload** for this class is **sixteen (16) hours**. For a good paper more work is needed.

Text:

Rampolla, Mary Lynn , *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, 5th ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007).

Schedule

Aug 25	Introduction/ Preterm Exam. Sample of secondary source notes.	Due: Schedule a meeting with your senior seminar advisor.
Sept 8	Workshop: Bibliography and Notes. Prepare a preliminary working bibliography by following carefully Rampolla. Write at least 8 pages of notes on two most important scholarly books on your topic. Handout on thesis statement.	Due: Bibliography and Notes.
Sept 15	Individual Appointments. Prepare a statement of your thesis. Write at least 8 pages of notes on the third and fourth most important books on your topic.	Due: Statement of thesis and Notes.
Sept 22	Workshop: Bibliography. Prepare the complete bibliography by carefully following Rampolla's guidelines. Write at least 8 pages of notes on the fifth and sixth most important books on your topic. Handout on introduction.	Due: Complete Bibliography and Notes
Sept 29	Workshop: Introduction. Prepare an introduction that includes all the components appropriate for a scholarly article in history. Write at least 8 pages of notes on the seventh and eight most important books on your topic.	Due: Introduction and Notes.
Oct 13	Individual Appointments. Prepare a statement on your primary sources. Write at least 8 pages of notes on two most important primary sources for your topic.	Due: Statement of primary sources and Notes.
Oct 20	Workshop: Finding, reading, and interpreting primary sources. Write at least 8 pages of notes on your third and fourth most important primary sources. Handout on report.	Due: Notes.
Oct 27	Individual Appointments (7 students). Prepare a report of the meeting with your senior seminar advisor.	Due: Report on meeting with advisor.
Nov 3	Individual Appointments (7 students). Prepare a report of the meeting with your senior seminar advisor.	Due: Report on meeting with advisor.

Nov 10	Seminar discussions of papers (3 students)	Due: First Draft
Nov 17	Seminar discussions of papers (4 students)	
Nov 24	Seminar discussions of papers (4 students)	
Dec 1	Seminar discussions of papers (3 students). Handout on conference presentation.	
Dec 8	Conference: 12:50-6:00	
Dec 10	Final Paper	Due: Final Paper

General Guidelines for Paper

The length of your paper is 25 to 30 pages. A good paper has a structure as following:

- I. Beginning
- II. Middle/ Body
- III. End/ Conclusion
- IV. Bibliography

The beginning of your paper is an important part of your study. First, mention the thesis that you will prove in your paper. Second, discuss shortly the nature of your evidence base (primary sources). Third, introduce **all important interpretations** of other historians who have studied your topic and shortly discuss your take on these interpretations. Detail discussion of these interpretations takes place in the body. Finally, in two or three lines, mention how you will proceed in your paper, how you break down your main thesis into smaller theses to be discussed in individual sections of the paper.

The middle is the bulk of your paper. Discuss systematically, in compact paragraphs, each of the main themes that you find essential in your primary sources and that support your argument. Contrast your own interpretation with other interpretations (those you already mentioned in the introduction). Be critical in reading the other interpretations and try to **disagree** with them as much as possible. Move on to support your disagreement and your own point by providing evidence that shows how your interpretation is better than the others. It does not matter if you cannot provide exhaustive evidence for your argument. But it matters that you disagree and support your own thesis.

The conclusion is an important section of your paper. Pull the threads of your research together and tell your audience what are your findings, i.e., what was your argument and how did the data from the primary source support it. It is also important that you mention the limitations of your findings. You haven't explained everything but only a fragment of a large problem confined to its time, place, and your narrow source base. You can also now make specific suggestions for further research.

For style, footnotes, and bibliographic details see Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*.