

History 703, Fall 2005
US History Graduate Research Seminar

Professor Tom Jackson
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Office Hours: M, 3:30-5:00, w, 11-12:30, Th, late afternoon, by appointment

Th, 6:30-9:20
Science 217

This class is designed to be an intermediate step between History 709 and History 704, when you work entirely with your mentor on a research problem of your choosing. In this case, I place no limitations on your selection of research problems, other than that you identify a set of compelling questions and a bibliography of rich sources, secondary and primary. Understand, I use the term "problem," not "topic." I will explain the distinction. Also consult Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Student's Guide to Writing in History*, for a succinct and lucid treatment. Hers is the best general introduction to everything from identifying problems to taking notes and revising drafts.

I have designed the class to meet only several times over the course of the semester, understanding that I am personally available to give each of you guidance on framing your research problem and working with an available set of materials. You will read several of each other's proposals, and then comment on one of your peer's drafts. I urge you to see this as collaborative from the beginning, meeting up with people with like-minded questions and topics, discussing the challenges of research, or sharing preliminary drafts. I make no formal requirement that this happen however. Use Blackboard to pose questions or email each other.

I will describe the areas in which I am most qualified to advise students, those who may hope to quickly jump into a rich pool of primary research. But surely you will think of this course in relation to your specific field competency. Your mentors are certainly available to you for suggestions, but understand that I am the sole evaluator and judge of your final grade. The end product will be a paper of approximately 30 pages that would meet the criteria for submission to a peer-reviewed scholarly journal.

After tonight, class will meet September 1, September 22, October 20 and November 17.

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS AND DUE DATES

8/18: Introductions

What have been your biggest challenges in bringing empirical research to bear upon questions that matter to you and others? How have you dealt with them? Whose scholarship inspires you the most? Who do you take as a model for the kind of work you would like to do?

9/1: Discussion of the Research Process and Ideas for Individual Projects

Reading: Howard Becker, *Writing for Social Scientists* (Available in both bookstores).
What are the two most valuable guidelines or insights that Becker offers?

Reading: Thomas Jackson, Proposal to the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities: "*A Burning House*." (Download from the Blackboard Web Site). Would you fund this proposal?

9/19: Deliver Research Proposals to Blackboard via Discussion Board

9/22: Discussion of Research Proposals: 4-5 pp. Double Spaced with Bibliography

Deliver these to the blackboard discussion board by September 19. These should be substantial statements of the scope of your project, the main analytic problems you are posing, the secondary sources that have helped shape your inquiry, and an annotated bibliography of primary source collections likely to shed substantial light on your issues (perhaps 8-10 books or articles and the appropriate number of primary sources). The structure may vary, but invariably you should justify the importance of the project to readers, introduce the major concepts and tools of analysis you will bring to bear upon the sources, and give your reader a road map of the sources you plan to cover. You really must identify the lion's share of your sources and your compelling questions by this date. You will each read and critique four proposals.

10/20: Summary of Initial Findings (Those Who Do Not Live Nearby May Skip)

11/10: Delivery of "Second Draft" to Me and Your Peer Reviewer for Discussion Next Week

"Second Draft" only in that you have gone over it and revised it at least once. Don't give us raw stuff.

11/17: General Discussion of Challenges and Discoveries in Class – Peer Reviews and Strategies for Revision

12/8: Final Draft Due In the History Department

Grading:

Proposal: 15%

Peer Reviews: 10%

Second Draft and Final Revisions: 75%