Introductory Research Seminar

HIS 709.01          Fall 2005
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Office Phone: 334-4646         Hours: Tues./Thurs 2:00-3:00
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*Please note: the quickest way to communicate with me is through email rather than through my office phone.

Course Objectives

This course is designed as an advanced introduction to professional research practice. You will develop your own research project based on your individual interests. But this course will not operate as if you were pursuing a set of unrelated independent studies. Though your topics will differ widely, you will all be facing similar research and writing problems: finding primary sources, understanding what your evidence means, presenting your findings in an interesting and compelling interpretation. Thus the subject of this course is not based on any particular historical period or topic, rather it is the historical method—the process of historical investigation, and particularly the role of writing in the research process. I agree wholeheartedly with Booth, Colomb, and Williams, who explained in The Craft of Research that “writing is not just the last stage of a research project but from its beginning a guide to critical thinking.”

Your primary goal in this course is to write a compelling proposal for an original research project. You will develop the proposal in stages and, as in any professional grant competition peer review will be an important part of the research process in the course. The course will focus particularly on the types of methodologies historians have used to interpret written sources. To develop an expertise in research methods using non-text sources you may want to investigate courses the department offers in material culture and oral history.
By the end of the semester you should be able to:

- Recognize and understand the AHA standards of professional conduct and research practice.
- Identify and employ best practices in grant proposal writing in the humanities.
- Construct a meaningful original research problem.
- Explain the significance and contribution to the field of your original research project.
- Understand the relationship between historians and archivists and use archival finding aids to identify appropriate primary sources for your project.
- Develop a meaningful research bibliography.
- Identify and apply the best research methodologies for successfully completing your project.
- Assess different approaches to historical writing and employ the best approach for your project.

Course Readings

**Required Style Manual (at UNCG bookstore):**

**Journal Articles (various electronic databases and Reserves):**


Johnson, Michael P. Denmark Vesey and His Co-Conspirators. *William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (October 2001): 913-976.


Evaluation

Class Participation 20%
Long Research Proposal 50%
Short Research Proposal 30%

There will be a series of required, research and writing exercises designed to help you develop your proposal in stages. The work you produce will be an important focus of class discussion throughout the semester. It is therefore essential that you complete this work on time. Your class participation grade will be based in part on the quality of your work on these assignments. See the following due dates:

25 August Preliminary Topic Description (2-3 pages)
15 September Revised Topic Description, Statement of Project Significance, Research Bibliography
Use the online finding aids to locate at least one folder or box you would request with research potential for your project. Write a description of your search process and rationale for your selections.
13 October Methodology and Research Goals; Revised bibliography
3 November Short Proposal due (3-5 pages)

Course Schedule

18 August Getting started: course goals and how we’ll achieve them

25 August Standards of Professional Conduct
Read:
NEH policy on research misconduct:
http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/researchmisconduct.html
AHA Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct
Grant competitions:
http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/fellowships.html
http://www.acls.org/burkguide.htm
http://www.americanantiquarian.org/longterm.htm

**Assignment:** Preliminary topic overview, 1-2 pages; post to Blackboard by 10:00 am on 24 August. All students should read proposals and come to class prepared with questions and evaluation of strengths and weaknesses of each proposal.

1 September Intro to the Historical Method
Read: WMQ *Forum:* The Making of a Slave Conspiracy, part 1 and part 2

8 September Constructing a Research Problem
Read:

15 September **Assignment:** Revised Topic Description and Statement of Project Significance and bibliography due.

22 September Finding Evidence: Working with Archivists
Read:

**Assignment:** Using SHC Finding Aids: [http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv.html](http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv.html) Use the online finding aids to locate at least one folder or box you would request with research potential for your project. Write a description of your search process and rationale for your selections.

29 September Research Methodology—Using Statistical Data
Read:
6 October Research Methodology—Ethnographic Method and History
Read:

13 October Assignment: Methodology section and primary source bibliography due

20 October Research Methodology—History and Theory
Read:


27 October Approaches to Writing History: Narrative History v. Analytical History
Read:


3 November Assignment: Short Proposal due:
Peer Review and the Research Process

10 November PEER REVIEW

17 November PEER REVIEW

24 November Thanksgiving Holiday

1 December Final Proposals due