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. We will follow the approach of 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.

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 of your research to the appropriate historical field(s) of scholarship.
• 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.

Course Readings

Required Style Manual (at UNCG bookstore):

Journal Articles (Journal Finder and Reserves):


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:

24 August Preliminary Topic Description (use form posted on Blackboard)

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 based on how your choice fits your overall research goal.

2 October Statement of research problem due

12 October Historiography section due

2 November Methodology section and revised bibliography due.

16 November Short Proposal due (3-5 pages)

4 December Final Long Proposal due (about 20 pages)

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**Course Schedule**

17 August Getting started: course goals and how we'll achieve them

24 August Standards of Professional Conduct/What is original research?/Practical approaches for defining a workable research topic

**What is a Research Proposal?**

**Read:**
NEH policy on research misconduct:
http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/researchmisconduct.html
AHA Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct
http://www.historians.org/pubs/Free/ProfessionalStandards.cfm#SharedValues
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; email your topic description to the class list by . All students should read proposals and come to class prepared with questions and strategies for developing the focus of each topic idea.

31 August Assessing professional proposals as a form of scholarly writing

**Read:**
Sample proposals posted on blackboard

7 September  Beyond Google: Search strategies and resources for constructing a meaningful research bibliography

14 September  Finding Evidence: Working with archivists on the web and in the archive
Read:
Assignment: Using SHC Finding Aids: 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 based on how your choice fits your overall research goal.

Role of Historiography in the Research Process

21 September  What is historiography?
Read:

28 September  What is the difference between a research topic and a research problem?
Read:

5 October  What’s your problem?
Assignment: Distribute a statement of your research problem to the class list by the end of the work day on Monday, 2 October.

12 October  No Class
Assignment: Historiography section due
What is Methodology?

19 October  It's about the nature of the evidence you are using

Read:


26 October  It's about the strategies you employ for analyzing your evidence

Read:


**Assignment:** Bring to class photocopies of 1-2 pages of a secondary source from your research bibliography in which the scholar discusses a methodological issue that is important for your project or research goals.

2 November  No class

**Assignment:** Methodology section and revised bibliography due

Putting the Final Proposal Together

9 November  the short version vs. the long version

16 November  no class

**Assignment:** Short proposals due—distribute to class list

23 November  Thanksgiving Holiday

30 November  Short Proposals/peer review

4 December  Long Proposals due