



- 1) [\[Vacuum cleaners on display at the J.C. Harding & Co. store, probably in Washington, D.C.\]](#)
- 2) [\[Calvin Coolidge, half-length portrait, standing, facing left, tipping his hat\]](#).
- 3) *The Country Gentleman*, February 1926, (p. 68)

## 511A Seminar in Historical Research and Writing: “Modernizing America: Mass Consumer Culture in the Roaring Twenties”

### COURSE GUIDE

History 511a.si.wi

Fall 2007

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### Scope of the Course

*If we knew what we were doing, it wouldn't be called Research.*  
—A . Einstein

What do you think you know about the “Roaring Twenties”? This seminar will take as its subject the primary source materials in the Library of Congress digital collection, *Prosperity and Thrift: The Coolidge Era and the Consumer Economy, 1921-1929*. As the introduction to this collection explains, the 1920s was a decade marked by unprecedented prosperity between the brief depression following World War I and the decade-long Great Depression of the 1930s. Although the gap between rich and poor widened, working people at many income levels experienced a rise in their standard of living. “By the end of the 1920s, nearly half of the American population owned automobiles, radios, and durable consumer goods such as vacuum cleaners and washing machines. Chain stores and mail-order houses proliferated. New product offerings made their debut on the market each year, prompting companies to launch advertising and public-relations campaigns in an effort to stimulate consumption. Widespread electrification helped reduce the manufacturing costs of existing products. Consumer credit enabled many

people to make purchases even before they had accumulated enough money to do so.”  
[<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/coolhtml/coolhome.html>]

Students will design research projects focusing on an aspect of American society or culture in the 1920s and produce a 15-20 page research paper. You will develop your project in stages with a variety of writing and research assignments that work toward the production of the final paper. Research exercises and workshops will focus on strategies for developing a meaningful research topic, using different kinds of primary sources as evidence, applying effective citation strategies, and writing a persuasive argument.

## Learning Objectives:

- Construct a meaningful research topic.
- Use a variety of research tools including digital sources, databases, bibliographies, etc., to construct a meaningful research bibliography.
- Analyze different types of primary sources and place them in appropriate historical context.
- Produce an effective thesis.
- Write a persuasive and interesting argument using different types of primary sources as support.
- Document your research effectively using appropriate citations.

## Assigned Reading

### 1920s Historical Context:

Cohen Lizbeth. “Encountering Mass Culture,” from *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. [ereserves]

Dumenil, Lynn. *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1995. [selections]

Hale, Grace Elizabeth. “For Colored” and “For White”: Segregating Consumption in the South,” pp. 162-182. In *Jumpin’ Jim Crow: Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights*. Edited by Jane Dailey, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, Bryant Simon. Princeton University Press, 2000. [ereserves]

### Research Methodology

Galgano, Michael J., J. Chris Arndt, and Raymond M. Hyser. *Doing History: Research and Writing in the Digital Age*. Boston: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2008.

Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2007.

## Evaluation:

Annotated bibliography	15%
Participation and short writing assignments	15%
Prospectus and Primary Source Evaluation	15%
Presentation	15%
Final draft	40%

Assignments and due dates:

### **Participation and Short writing assignments (15%):**

These assignments are designed to break down the process of producing the final research paper into manageable parts. Some of these assignments are due BEFORE scheduled classes so that I can select useful samples for discussion in class workshops. It is essential that you complete these assignments on time.

5 September: Select a primary source from *Prosperity and Thrift* and write a preliminary evaluation using the standard questions for evaluating primary sources on p. 57 in *Doing History*. The standard questions are identified in the last paragraph of the section titled “What is a Primary Source?”

Due by noon on September 11—email me a one- or two-sentence summary of Cohen’s thesis or main argument in the assigned chapter.

Due by noon on September 18: One-paragraph summary of one of the assigned readings. Use the guidelines outlined in *Doing History*, “The Short Informal Essay,” p. 83 and Rampolla, 3b-1. Summaries, p. 29 to produce a successful summary.

September 19: Due in class: Be able to identify a historiographical footnote in Cohen, Hale, or Dumenil.

Due by noon on October 9: Write an annotation of Cohen **or** Dumenil using the intro and **two** different book reviews.

Due by noon on October 30: Introductions + brief summary (1 page single-spaced) of the most important historical context for your topic

### **Primary source analysis/Research Prospectus (15%)**

Due October 3. The format of this assignment will be a worksheet based on questions and guidelines outlined in *Doing History*, “Prospectus,” p. 19 and “Evaluating Written Evidence,” pp. 57-62.

### **Annotated Bibliography with revised prospectus due (15%)**

Due October 24. You will produce a research bibliography containing primary and secondary sources presented in appropriate citation format with annotations using guidelines described in Rampolla and *Doing History*. Your bibliography should show the most important books and journal articles for completing your project. Your bibliography may also contain scholarly

websites. Your prospectus should be about 1-2 pages explaining the most important research goals and presenting a working thesis for your project.

### Presentations (15%)

November 7 and 14. The authors of *Doing History* emphasize the important role of presentations in the professional research process. You will develop a 10-minute oral presentation summarizing your thesis and explaining the significance of your research project. The presentation process should help you identify and refine your core argument for the production of your final paper. Presentations will be evaluated for content as well as oral presentation style.

### Research Paper (40%)

Your final paper should be about 15 pages long, double-spaced. Your argument should be based on at least two different types of primary sources. You should document your research using appropriate footnote and bibliographic citations.

20 November, full draft due including footnotes and bibliography.

December 5 Final Paper due.

## Course Schedule

**August 22** Introductions

### The Research Process

**August 29** The project and the process

1. What's Your Final Goal? Surveying the Final Product

#### Read:

*Doing History*,

Appendix B: Jack Sheehan, "The Death of an Ideal City: Rebuilding London After 1666", pp. 168-184.

Chapter 1, What is History?

Rampolla,

Chapter 1: Introduction: Why Study History?

2. *Prosperity and Thrift*: Introduction to the Digital Database

#### Read:

Introduction and Chapter 1, pp. 3-55 in Dumenil, Lynn. *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1995.

Introduction to *Prosperity and Thrift*:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/coolhtml/ccpres00.html>. Read all 7 chapters, and "About the Collection" <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/coolhtml/ccabout.html>.

**September 5** Using primary sources as a tool for developing your research topic

**Read:**

*Doing History*,

Chapter 2: Locating the Sources

Chapter 4: Primary Evidence

Rampolla,

Chapter 2, “Working with Sources”

f-a. Formulating a research question, pp. 70-71.

**Writing Assignment:**

Due in class: Select a primary source from *Prosperity and Thrift* and write a preliminary evaluation using the standard questions for evaluating primary sources on p. 57 in *Doing History*. The standard questions are identified in the last paragraph of the section titled “What is a Primary Source?”

In class, teams will produce a research prospectus using your preliminary source analyses.

**September 12** Historical Context for understanding the 1920s: Evaluating Secondary Sources, part 1

**Read:**

Cohen Lizbeth. “Encountering Mass Culture,” from *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

*Doing History*,

Chapter 3, Tools for Analysis—Secondary Sources

**Writing Assignment:**

Due by noon on September 11—email me a one- or two-sentence summary of Cohen’s thesis or main argument in the assigned chapter.

**September 19** The 1920s: Evaluating Secondary Sources, part 2  
Book reviews as a research tool

**Read:**

Hale, Grace Elizabeth. “For Colored” and “For White”: Segregating Consumption in the South,” pp. 162-182. In *Jumpin’ Jim Crow: Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights*. Edited by Jane Dailey, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, Bryant Simon. Princeton University Press, 2000. [ereserves]

Chapter 2, “Work and Consumption,” pp. 56-97 in Dumenil, Lynn. *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1995.

**Writing Assignment:**

Due in class: Be able to identify a historiographical footnote in Cohen, Hale, or Dumenil.

Due by noon on September 18: One-paragraph summary of one of the assigned readings. Use the guidelines outlined in *Doing History*, “The Short Informal Essay,” p. 83 and Rampolla, 3b-1. Summaries, p. 29 to produce a successful summary.

**September 26** Workshop: Using primary source analysis to produce a research prospectus

**Read:**

*Doing History*,

“Prospectus,” p. 19.

“Evaluating Written Evidence,” pp. 57-62.

**October 3** Beyond Google: Research Tools for Finding Scholarly Secondary Sources

**Read:**

*Doing History*, Chapter 2: Locating the Sources

Rampolla

5b. Developing a Research Plan

5c. Conducting Research

**Writing Assignment:**

Due in class: Primary source analysis/Research Prospectus

**October 10** Strategies for Documentation

Taking Notes. Why do Historians Use Footnotes? What is Plagiarism? What is an annotated bibliography? Copyright in the Digital Age

**Read:**

*Doing History*, Chapter 6, Finishing the Paper

Rampolla,

Chapter 6: Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Avoid It

7-a. Using quotations

*Prosperity and Thrift*, Copyright and other restrictions:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/coolhtml/ccres.html>

**Writing Assignment:**

Due by noon on October 9: Write an annotation of Cohen **or** Dumenil using the intro and two different book reviews.

## **The Writing Process**

**October 17** Developing an effective thesis

**Read:**

*Doing History*, Chapter 5, Writing

Rampolla, “Moving from topic to thesis,” pp. 47-48.

**October 24** No Class      Annotated Bibliography/revised prospectus due

**October 31** Writing workshop

**Read:**

*Doing History*, Chapter 5, Writing, pay particular attention to the section titled “The Oral Presentation,” p. 97-98.

**Writing Assignment:**

Due by noon on October 30: Introductions + brief summary (1 page single-spaced) of most important context for your topic

**November 7** Presentations/Peer Review

**November 14** Presentations/Peer Review

**November 21** Thanksgiving (**Full Draft due Nov. 20, including footnotes and bibliography**)

**November 28** Peer Review and revising workshop

**December 5** Final Research Paper due. Course evaluations and summations.