Course Objectives

*If we knew what we were doing, it wouldn’t be called Research.*

—A. Einstein

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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Research Proposal</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Research Proposal</td>
<td>30%</td>
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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:

- **30 August** Preliminary Topic Description (use form posted on Blackboard)
- **13 September** 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 based on how your choice fits your overall research goal.
- **2 October** Statement of research problem due
- **11 October** Historiography section due
- **25 October** Methodology section and revised bibliography due.
- **8 November** Short Proposal due (3 single-spaced pages)
- **6 December** Final Long Proposal due (about 20 pages)

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**Course Schedule**

- **23 August** Getting started: course goals and how we’ll achieve them
What is a Research Proposal?

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

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.

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

Read:


13 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.
What is the Role of Historiography in the Research Process?

20 September  What is historiography?
Read:

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

4 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.

What is Methodology?

11 October  It’s about the nature of the evidence you are using
Read:
Assignment: Historiography section due
18 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.

25 October  No Class

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

**Putting the Final Proposal Together**

1 November  the short version vs. the long version

8 November  Methodology Workshop

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

15 November  Short Proposals/peer review

22 November  Thanksgiving Holiday

29 November  Short Proposals/peer review

6 December  Final Long Proposals due