

HIS 511-A Seminar in Historical Research and Writing
Fall 2008

American Indian History before 1840

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HIS 511 is the capstone course for history majors whereby students demonstrate their ability to research, write, and present original historical work.

We will accomplish these goals by crafting a research project on some aspect of American Indian history before 1840 (in other words, through the Indian Removal era). American Indian history, often falling under the designation ethnohistory, has exploded as a major sub-field of colonial American and US history in the past few decades. You will become better acquainted with this history through reading books and by participating in class discussions. American Indian history has undergone a dramatic transformation in the past couple of decades as Indian and non-Indian scholars from a variety of disciplines have trained their analytical eyes on many aspects of Indian history and culture.

Nearly any topic you can imagine can be investigated within American Indian history. You will consult with me to define, outline, research, and write your research project (see the class schedule for specific assignments and deadlines). You will read about and choose topics in Indian history ranging from the era of initial contacts with Europeans to the 1840s. Besides perfecting your research and presentation skills, students will learn how American Indian history is intimately connected with the history of colonization by France, Britain, Holland, the Netherlands, and Spain, as well as the United States.

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**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES** (borrowed from Rick Barton)

An undergraduate student taking this course should expect to ...

- acquire broad knowledge of American Indian history before 1840 and of Indian-European relations
- learn to locate, read and critique primary sources from the period
- learn to analyze, critique, and synthesize the writings of modern scholars (historiography)
- acquire effective research skills, including library work, note-taking, and source criticism
- synthesize material read from a variety of sources to produce a larger analytical conclusion
- produce a 15-20 page research paper utilizing both primary and secondary sources
- learn how to critique a peer's written work in meaningful, yet sympathetic, ways

A graduate student taking this course should expect to ....

- acquire broad knowledge of American Indian history before 1840 and of Indian-European relations
- learn to locate, read, and critique a wide variety of primary sources from this period

- become familiar with the arguments of major secondary scholars and articulate a clear distinction between his/her own arguments and those of the existing scholarship
- acquire or perfect research skills appropriate to the production of a 20-30 page research paper
- produce a closely argued and well-documented research paper on a topic relevant to the period
- learn to offer effective, yet constructive, criticism of the written work of his/her peers

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GENERAL TIPS

If you are struggling with a particular reading, email me. I am happy to discuss materials with you. Attendance will be taken. Given the importance of class discussions, students will be allowed only two unexcused absences. After the second absence, students’ course grade will be penalized a full letter grade for each day they miss. Note, however, that attendance is not the same as participation. Students must actively involve themselves in class by participating in class discussions to receive a passing grade for participation. Arrive on time. Turn off your cell phones and pagers. Don’t be shy; offer your ideas and let the class build on your thoughts, but please always be considerate and respectful of the opinions of your classmates. You will talk in class throughout the semester as preparation for your final oral presentation at the end of the semester.

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**REQUIRED BOOKS**

- Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition
- Devon A. Mihesuah, *So You Want to Write about American Indians?: A Guide for Writers, Students, and Scholars*
- Daniel Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country* (Harvard, 2003)
- Colin Calloway, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* (Johns Hopkins, 1998)

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GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

Class participation is an essential component of this class and an excellent way to learn. All students are expected to attend class regularly, to have completed the readings, and to raise questions and offer arguments. For every class that we discuss a common reading, you must bring and turn in a one-page, typed, single-spaced outline summarizing the major points of that week’s reading.

You will also complete **written and verbal peer assessments** of your classmates' work at certain times during the semester (see schedule below). Peer assessments of the first draft of each student's paper will be 2 double-spaced pages and presented in class. You are seeking to help your colleague improve his/her thesis, writing, use of evidence, and overall strength of argument.

Book Review

Write a professional-quality book review of no more than three (3) double-spaced pages on a secondary book related directly to your chosen research paper topic. You will turn in a list of three books and I will help you choose the one to write your review on. You must identify and discuss the book=s main thesis and principal contributions to the literature on that topic. In

other words, what is (was) new about this book and why is it important to our study of the Indian history? Then, discuss any weaknesses or interpretative problems with the book. See Mihesuah, *So You Want to Write about American Indians?* pp. 157-58 & Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, pp. 31-33 for further advice about writing book reviews. Due dates are listed below.

Sample Ethnohistorical Paper

Based on Captain Christopher French, "Journal of an Expedition to South Carolina," *Journal of Cherokee Studies* (1977) 2:275-94. (Copy will be handed out in class.)

Captain French gives an account of a military expedition against the Cherokees in 1760-1761. His perspective is that of a British officer. As an ethnohistorian, you should be able to reconstruct this expedition from the Cherokees' point of view, even though the document is written by a European man. This is often how American Indian history and ethnohistory has to be written because of the paucity of Indian-created sources. For this assignment, write a 5-7 page paper presenting the Cherokee Indians' view. You may use any format you choose-- journal, essay, memoir, interview, etc. You should explain not only what the Indians see and do, but why they act the way they do and how they interpret the events they witness and participate in. Utilize the readings you have completed in class to assist you in this paper.

Research Paper

Your research paper of 15-20 pages must demonstrate your use and analysis of primary and secondary sources to arrive at an original interpretation of your chosen topic. The paper is an individual assignment, not a group effort. The written paper will be completed in a series of steps; please consult the grading breakdown and schedule below.

****NOTE ON WRITING:** A good critical paper offers reasoned speculation supported by a careful examination of the evidence. Your essay should begin with an introduction which unambiguously states what your argument will be and how it will develop. Avoid repetition, using "big" words for the mere sake of using big words, and long quotations from the sources. Only summarize and describe what is necessary to make an argument; do not provide a full synopsis of a source. The essay should end with a conclusion that summarizes the conclusions you have drawn and considers the historical implications of your argument. All assignments should be typed and double spaced using a conventional 10 or 12 point font and standard one inch margins. Allow yourself time to revise and edit your papers. Revising requires that you reconsider your arguments, eliminate unnecessary material, and reorganize your paper for clarity. Editing requires that you check for factual mistakes and errors in punctuation, spelling and grammar. Consider reading your paper out loud; it makes it easier to notice errors you have made. The major papers and presentations will be graded using rubrics that have been attached to this syllabus and should be consulted before you begin to write.

Oral Presentation

In this graded assignment you will present your research as if you were participating in a professional history conference in a room of your peers (history professors and students). You will have only 12-15 minutes during the last two weeks of class to verbally present the principal findings of your research to the class, so you will only be able to present up to 6-7 double-spaced pages of written material. The main thing you want to get across is what your thesis is and how you reached that conclusion. See the attached rubric for the grading criteria. You should dress and act appropriately for a professional conference.

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**GRADING SUMMARY**

|                                                                  |      |              |  |            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------|--|------------|
| Class participation / discussion / written summaries of readings |      |              |  | 10%        |
| Book review                                                      |      |              |  | 10%        |
| Sample ethnohistorical paper                                     |      |              |  | 10%        |
| Peer Assessment                                                  |      |              |  | 5%         |
| Written Research Project                                         |      |              |  |            |
| Topic                                                            | DUE: | September 23 |  | 5%         |
| Bibliography                                                     | DUE: | October 7    |  | 5%         |
| Outline                                                          | DUE: | October 28   |  | 5%         |
| First Draft                                                      | DUE: | November 11  |  | 10%        |
| Final Paper                                                      | DUE: | December 9   |  | 25%        |
| Oral Presentation of Research                                    |      |              |  | <u>15%</u> |
|                                                                  |      |              |  | 100%       |

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CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1 (8/26)

Introduction to the course

Sign-in sheet with email addresses

Week 2 (9/2)

What is Ethnohistory?

Introduction to American Indian history before 1840

Readings: Mihesuah, *So You Want to Write about American Indians?* pp. 1-30

Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country* 1-11

-paper and discussion

Week 3 (9/9)

Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country* (all)

-paper and discussion

Week 4 (9/16)

Library Visit with Dr. Stephen Dew

- CITI Lab on Level 1 in Jackson

Week 5 (9/23)

Calloway, *New Worlds for All* (all)

-paper and discussion

Topic for Research Paper due – turn in via email or in class a typed one paragraph description of your proposed research topic. Tell me what the main question is that you are seeking to answer through your research. (Be aware that this topic and key guiding question may change after I

discuss the topic with you.) I will notify you via email later this week about the viability of your topic. If needed, we will meet outside of class to clarify your topic.

Week 6 (9/30)

Designing a research project

Reading: Mihesuah, *So You Want to Write about American Indians?* pp. 31-61 & 74-87
-paper and discussion

List of three books for book review due – via email or in class. I will notify you later this week which book to work on for your review.

Week 7 (10/7)

Bibliography for Research Paper due – in class. You must list at least 15 total sources, with at least five each being primary and secondary sources (I actually expect that you will have significantly more sources than 15). These are the sources you will use to write your research paper and compose your oral presentation. List primary sources (such as document collections, newspapers, government records) separate from secondary sources (written by historians or other scholars). See Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History* for formatting of sources – I will grade for proper formatting of sources and for the thoroughness and relevance of your listed sources.

Week 8 (10/14)

Book Review due.

You will present the topic and primary thesis of your review to the class – 5 minute presentation.

No class October 21, per Academic Calendar

Week 9 (10/28)

Outline for Research Project due – turn in a 1-2 page annotated outline of your research paper. Explain what the main question is that you are seeking to answer through your research. Clarify how the paper will be organized – divide it into sections – what will each section discuss? An outline provides you the opportunity to organize your thoughts and ensure that your topic and approach is not either too broad or too narrow. (Consult Mihesuah, *So You Want to Write about American Indians?* pp. 37-39 & Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, pp. 86-87)

Week 10 (11/4)

Election Day – Go Vote!

Sample ethnohistorical paper due

-discussion of ethnohistorical paper

Week 11 (11/11)

First draft of paper due & copy given to one of your peers. Your first draft should be a complete paper of 15-20 pages. I will use the attached writing rubric to guide my evaluation of your draft. Notice that content (your thesis and use of evidence in support of your thesis) and documentation and use of sources are weighted the highest in the evaluation. Your colleague will write a two-page paper emphasizing the perceived strengths and weaknesses of your paper. Everyone must point out both positive aspects of the paper you are assessing and areas in need of improvement.

Week 12 (11/18)

Peer Assessments & First draft returned by Prof. O'Brien

-peer assessment presented verbally (5-7 minutes)

-written copy of your peer assessment turned in to your colleague and to Dr. O'Brien

Week 13 (11/25)

Oral Presentations

Week 14 (12/2)

Oral Presentations

Final draft of paper due by Tuesday, December 9 at 12:00 noon in my office or my history department mailbox.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

UNCG Writing Center

Location: 3211 MHRA

<http://www.uncg.edu/eng/writingcenter/>

From the Writing Center website: "The purpose of the Writing Center is to enhance the confidence and competence of student writers by providing free, individual assistance at any stage of any writing project. Staff consultants are experienced writers and alert readers, prepared to offer feedback and suggestions on drafts of papers, help students find answers to their questions about writing, and provide one-on-one instruction as needed."

UNCG Speaking Center

Location: 3211 MHRA

<http://speakingcenter.uncg.edu/>

From the Speaking Center website: "The University Speaking Center provides one-on-one tutoring and instructional workshop services for UNCG students, faculty, employees, and members of the Greensboro community. Services are designed to help our clients further develop their oral communication confidence and competence. Assistance is offered in the preparation and delivery of speeches, development of knowledge and skill in interpersonal communication, and group or team communication."

THE 'LEGAL' STUFF (borrowed from Rick Barton)

1. In case later consultation should prove necessary, students are asked to keep copies of all graded assignments until at least the end of the semester.
2. All course requirements must be completed to receive a grade for the class. This means that you will fail the course if you don't, for instance, write the first paper.
3. Assignments are due on the date and at the time listed on the syllabus; if a crisis (such as illness) arises, it is **your responsibility** to contact me. If you do not contact me, the work (when eventually received) will be substantially penalized. Contact may be made by phone, email, or a note left in my mailbox in the History Department.
3. **PLAGIARISM:** Plagiarism is a type of cheating, and occurs when a person passes off (whether intentionally or un-intentionally) someone else's words or ideas as their own. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense, which, in its most overt forms, can result in formal disciplinary action by the university. This is a notoriously thorny area for students. Many students unintentionally

commit plagiarism by 'borrowing' ideas, interpretations, and/or actual words from other authors. Make sure that your words are your own, and that your interpretations are also your own. If you find yourself using someone else's words or ideas, make sure you have given him/her credit by using a footnote, endnote, or parenthetical citation.