

Historical Skills and Methods

Power, Progress, and Reform in America, 1865-1941

HIS391-02 | T/Th: 3:30-4:45 | Curry 331

Instructor: Dr. Susan W. Thomas swthoma3@uncg.edu,

Office Hours: T/Th 2-3:00 or by appt., MHRA2114

Course Overview

As a prerequisite for the capstone HIS511 course, HIS391 focuses on developing the skills required to do original research in primary sources and, in the context of secondary literature related to the topic, produce a scholarly paper. The readings for this course cover a period for which there are abundant and rich primary sources available both online and via the archives at Jackson Library. As we progress through the semester, we will continually focus on the mechanics behind the material we are covering and formulate possible research questions based on our discussions of the readings.

Required Texts

Brundage, Anthony. *Going to the Sources: A Guide to Historical Research and Writing*. Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2008.

Cohen, Elizabeth. *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Edwards, Rebecca. *New Spirits: Americans in the "Gilded Age," 1865-1905*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Furay, Conal and Michael J. Salevouris. *The Methods and Skills of History: A Practical Guide*. West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Lears, Jackson. *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920*. New York: Harper Collins, 2009.

McGerr, Michael. *A Fierce Discontent: the Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to demonstrate the following knowledge, skills, and habits of mind:

1. Develop appropriate research plans for different kinds of research questions inspired by primary source documents and other sources including historians' interpretations.
2. Recognize the kinds of questions that can be addressed by historical research.
3. Contextualize primary source documents in different ways; interpret different types of primary sources.
4. Identify and evaluate appropriate scholarly sources for investigating different kinds of research questions. Use research results to improve your questions.
5. Professional Ethics: Practice history with integrity based on the American Historical Association Standards of Professional Conduct:
<http://www.historians.org/pubs/Free/ProfessionalStandards.cfm>
6. Use some combination of peer review, instructor feedback, self-analysis, and/or research findings to effectively revise research design and written communication.
7. Synthesize evidence and communicate research findings effectively in writing.

Electronic Devices

Electronic devices are welcome only for the purposes of engaging with material relevant to the class. Cell phones and iPods should be turned off and put away when class begins.

Participation and Attendance

Participation and attendance go hand-in-hand, but merely attending class regularly will not earn an A for this portion of your grade. Participation means asking and answering questions, taking notes, and being actively engaged with the discussion in the classroom.

I take attendance and will regard more than three absences as excessive, providing there are no extenuating circumstances preventing your attendance. ***My policy is to deduct 2pts per absence from your final grade for each absence beyond the three.***

Student Responsibilities/Classroom Decorum

Each student bears the responsibility to attend class regularly and complete all assignments on time. Students will work together to create an open and respectful class environment in which each person's contribution is equally important. When students disagree with one another, with the readings, or with me, we will all remain courteous and express our views without intent to disparage or harm others.

Check your iSpartan email account regularly. This is the system I will be using to contact you, should the need arise. My email address is at the top of the syllabus for your reference. I always respond within 24 hours of receiving your message. If you do not hear from me in that time frame, check the email address and resend the message.

*****Academic Integrity and Plagiarism*****

In all assignments, students are expected to do their own work and abide by the Honor Code. You must provide references for materials consulted and/or quoted in your writing assignments. Plagiarism is a serious offense that could result not only in failure for the particular assignment, but also in failure for the entire course.

Course Assignments and Grade Distribution

Research Project: 50%

This is a course designed to introduce students to the skills and methods of historical research and writing. To accomplish this, we will be focusing on a period that encompasses the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Our broad themes will be the ideas of "power, progress, and reform," but we will branch out from these to also examine race, gender, ethnicity, class, and more. As we begin the course, think about what area you want to focus on and what sorts of questions you might need to ask to research and write about it successfully. You will spend the semester investigating your topic through both primary and secondary sources.

At the end of the semester, each of you will submit a Research Project that you will build during the semester.

Response Papers: 30%

We are reading four books this semester that pertain the period we are studying. You will each write two response papers for the books we read. Due dates for these books are noted on the syllabus

Homework and Participation: 20%

Any homework and in-class writings will comprise half of this grade. Participation and attendance will account for the remainder.

Late Policy and Attendance

I adhere to a strict policy regarding late work and absences. You will not be allowed to make up any in-class writings and may only submit missed homework in the next class period following your absence. Major assignments will suffer a full grade deduction for each day past the due date. Final projects may not be submitted late without a documented excuse.

Regular attendance is required. I allow up to three unexcused absences over the course of the semester. If you have an emergency that requires you to miss class, inform me as soon as possible so it will not count against you.

Important Dates

Sep 3: Research Topic Due
Sep 24: Thesis/Research Questions Due
Oct 1: Response Paper 1 Due
Oct 22: Rough Draft of Annotated Bibliography and Proposal Due
Nov 5: Rough Draft of Research Paper Due
Nov 19: Final Response Paper Due
Nov 26: Final Project Due

Schedule of Classes

This schedule includes 5 Research and Reading Days to facilitate completion of the assignments above. On two of those dates, you will each schedule an individual conference with me to talk about your ideas for your research project.

Week 1: History and Historiography

- T/Aug20—Intro to the Course

***Begin Reading Edwards, *New Spirits*

- Th/Aug22—Readings: Furay, Ch 13, "The History of History"; Brundage, Ch 5, "Exploring Changing Interpretations: The Historiography Essay"

Week 2: Historical Thinking

- T/Aug27: Furay, Ch 2, "The Nature of History: History as Reconstruction"; Brundage, Ch 1, "The Ever-Changing Shape and Nature of the Past"
- Th/Aug29: BB Reading, "Research Essay," "Learning to Do Historical Research: A Primer on How to Frame a Researchable Question," and "Research Tools"
Group Work and Brainstorming Session

Week 3: Continuity and Change

- T/Sep3: Furay, Ch 3, “Historical Thinking: Continuity and Change”; Brundage, Ch. 2, “The Nature and Variety of Historical Sources”

*****Topics Due**

- Th/Sep5: Library Excursion
Read Brundage Ch. 3, “Finding Your Sources: The Library Catalog and Beyond”

Week 4: Multiple Causality

- T/Sep10: **Discussion of Edwards, *New Spirits***; BB reading, “Whales in the Minnesota River?”

*****Begin Reading Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation***

- Th/Sep12: Furay Ch 4, “Historical Thinking: Multiple Causality in History”; Brundage Ch 4, “Getting the Most out of History Books: Critical Reading and Assessment”

Week 5: Context and Content

- T/Sep17 : Furay Ch 5, “Historical Thinking: Context”; BB Reading, “The Working Thesis Exercise”
- Th/Sep19: BB. “Historical Context”; Group Work and Brainstorming Session

Week 6: Reading History

- T/Sep24: Furay Ch 7, “Reading History”; Brundage Ch 6, “Engaging with Primary Sources: The Research Paper”

*****Thesis/Research Questions Due**

- Th/Sep26: **NO CLASS MEETING—RESEARCH AND READING DAY**
Sign up for Individual Conferences 2:00-5:00

Week 7: Response Paper Due, Edwards and Lear

- T/Oct1 Discussion of Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*

*****Comparative Response Paper Due**

*****Begin Reading McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent***

- **Th/Oct3: : NO CLASS MEETING—RESEARCH AND READING DAY**
Sign up for Individual Conferences 2:00-5:00

Week 8: Evidence—Where is it and how do I find it?

- T/Oct8: Furay Ch 9, “Evidence”; Brundage Ch 7, “The Open-Ended Nature of History”
- Th/Oct10: “Research: Internet vs Library”; “Evaluating Internet Research Sources”; Group Work and Brainstorming

Week 9: Fall Break—No Classes this Week!

Week 10: Interpretation—Evaluating Sources

- T/Oct22: Furay Ch 11, “Interpretation”

*****Rough Draft Annotated Bibliography and Proposal**

- Th/Oct24: On BB, “Using Primary Sources on the Web”; Group Work and Brainstorming

Week 11: Discussion of McGerr

- T/Oct29: Discussion of McGerr; Furay Ch 12, “Writing the History Paper”

*****Begin Reading Cohen, *Making a New Deal***

- **Th/Oct31: NO CLASS MEETING—RESEARCH AND READING DAY**

Week 12: Writing the History Paper

- T/Nov5: Discussion of Research Papers
- ***Rough Draft of Research Paper Due
- **Th/Nov7 : NO CLASS MEETING—RESEARCH AND READING DAY**

Week 13: Bringing it All Together

- T/Nov12: Discussion of Research Papers
- **Th/ Nov14: NO CLASS MEETING—RESEARCH AND READING DAY**

Week 14: Final Response Paper Due, McGerr and Cohen

- T/Nov19: Discussion of Research Papers
- **Th/Nov21: Discussion of Cohen**
- *****Final Response Paper Due**

Week 15: Projects Due!

- T/Nov26: **Last Day of Classes...Completed Research Projects Due to my office by 5:00**