

## HIS 411C: Seminar in Historical Research and Writing The Early Caribbean: Sources and Interpretations (Fall 2019)



***Class meeting times:***  
Mondays & Wednesdays 2:00-3:15 pm  
MHRA 2206

Dr. Linda Rupert  
[lmrupert@uncg.edu](mailto:lmrupert@uncg.edu)  
MHRA 2105

***Office hours:***  
Mondays 11-12, Wednesdays 3:30-4:30  
and by appointment

Columbus's arrival in the Caribbean in October 1492 was one of the most consequential blunders in human history—and it has been interpreted in many different ways over the past 500 years. In this course we will read a range of primary sources that document the impact of Europeans' conquest, settlement, and transformation of the region, with particular attention to the usefulness, limitations, and changing interpretations of the sources that are available to us. Each student will then identify and delve into a selection of primary sources related to a specific theme in early Caribbean history. The major project is to write an original research paper based on a careful reading and critical analysis of these sources, with reference to how different historians have interpreted the material.

### STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this course students will develop their abilities to:

- pose appropriate research questions around a suitable topic in early Caribbean history
- locate and analyze relevant primary and secondary sources
- construct a coherent, persuasive argument backed up by appropriate evidence
- write clear, compelling academic prose
- speak articulately about sources, research, and historical interpretation

### READINGS

The following book is required for this course:

Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. 9<sup>th</sup> edition. Bedford, 2017.

It can be purchased at the UNCG bookstore or from online sellers. Throughout Unit 1 there will be weekly handouts of primary and secondary sources, which will also be posted to Canvas. In Units 2 and 3 students will work with material that is appropriate to their individual research projects, drawing heavily on library resources. Always bring the week's handouts and Rampolla to class.



## **ATTENDANCE AND CLASS ETIQUETTE**

Students are expected to attend and be attentive in class; to have read and thought about the material; and to participate actively in discussions. You are allowed two absences in this course; for every class you miss thereafter your overall participation grade will be lowered by five points.

A classroom is a communal space where we gather to pursue a common goal. Get to know your fellow students! Please do not use cell phones or other electronic devices except as necessary for class work; do not bring food to class unless you have enough to share with everyone. You may bring an individual drink. Repeatedly arriving late, leaving early, leaving the room during class, and sleeping (or appearing to sleep) are disrespectful and disruptive—they will be counted as absences unless you have discussed extenuating circumstances with the professor.

## **COMMUNICATION AND MEETINGS**

We will communicate regularly in this course via Canvas and our UNCG e-mail accounts. Check both regularly. Feel free to e-mail me with any questions or concerns ([lmrupert@uncg.edu](mailto:lmrupert@uncg.edu)). You should expect to hear back within 24 hours, unless: 1) it is the weekend; 2) you receive an automatic “out of office” reply. It is your responsibility to make sure that the communication is successful and that all material gets to me on time.

Individual meetings are an important part of this course. It is your responsibility to attend meetings you have scheduled, and to be punctual and prepared. If you must cancel due to illness or an emergency please contact me immediately, and reschedule promptly. Five points will be deducted from your overall participation grade each time you miss a scheduled meeting, come unprepared, or arrive more than 10 minutes late.

## **USEFUL RESOURCES**

*History Department* ([his.uncg.edu/](http://his.uncg.edu/) and [www.facebook.com/UNCGDepartmentofHistory/](http://www.facebook.com/UNCGDepartmentofHistory/)): Keep up with departmental activities and fellow history majors!

*Dean of Students* ([sa.uncg.edu/dean/support/](http://sa.uncg.edu/dean/support/)): Supports and advocates for students in crisis, including those with family emergencies, extended illness, trauma, etc.

*Office of Accessibility Resources and Services* ([ods.uncg.edu/](http://ods.uncg.edu/)): Students who have documented disabilities that require accommodation should register with OARS and bring in the required paperwork during the first week of class. No accommodations can be made without this paperwork.

*Information Technology Services* ([its.uncg.edu/](http://its.uncg.edu/)): Your source for all tech problems, including computer malfunctions, issues with Canvas, etc. The professor cannot help you with these!

*University Writing Center* ([writingcenter.uncg.edu/](http://writingcenter.uncg.edu/)): Provides help with paper structure, argument, grammar, style, etc.

*University Speaking Center* ([speakingcenter.uncg.edu](http://speakingcenter.uncg.edu/)): Provides help for all oral presentations, to both individuals and groups.

## **COURSE OVERVIEW**

*You will receive a detailed schedule at the beginning of each unit.*

### **Unit 1: Getting Started (Weeks 1-5: August 21-September 18)**

*In this unit you will:*

- explore major themes in early Caribbean history and how historians have interpreted them
- review and practice the major skills needed for writing an original research paper
- identify a topic and appropriate primary source(s) on which to base a research paper

We will have weekly class meetings throughout this unit, with readings in primary documents and secondary sources.

*Weekly writing assignments* (2-4 pages; 700-1400 words) will help students develop analysis and writing skills. Rampolla will serve as a reference for research and writing.

### **Unit II: Getting it Down (Weeks 6-11: September 23-October 30)**

*In this unit you will:*

- closely analyze the primary source(s) selected
- develop one or more suitable research questions related to the material
- identify and read an appropriate corpus of secondary literature related to the paper topic, including both narrative and historical interpretation (historiography)
- produce a 12-15 page draft research paper, contextualizing the selected primary source(s) in a wider narrative and beginning to identify larger historiographic (“so-what”) questions

There will be a combination of regular class sessions; individual and small group meetings with the professor; and individualized research time. Reading assignments will focus on material that is specific to each person’s project.

*Weekly scaffolded assignments* will include deep analysis of the primary document(s) selected; paper abstract (draft and revisions); annotated bibliography; development of an appropriate narrative based on relevant secondary material; and the draft research paper.

**\*\*\*\*\* Draft research paper due on Monday, November 4 \*\*\*\*\***

### **Unit III: Fixing it Up (Weeks 12-16: November 4-December 4)**

*The primary task for this unit is to produce the final research paper 15-20 pages), which will be a substantial rewrite of the draft paper. It should address all the professor’s comments on the draft and incorporate a balance of the following three elements:*

- in-depth, original analysis of primary material
- historical narrative to provide full context
- engagement with one or more relevant historiographic issues

There will be a combination of regular class sessions, individual and small group meetings with the professor, and individualized research time.

**\*\*\*\*\* Final, revised paper due by Friday, December 5 \*\*\*\*\***