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History 391: Historical Skills and Methods [WI], Fall 2022

Purpose and Philosophy:

This course is meant to sharpen your tools of historical thinking, investigation, discussion, and writing. Your progress and success depend on practicing and mastering simpler tasks early in the semester that support more complex ones later. Informal writing and exercises come early, papers come twice in the semester. Along the way, I will demonstrate key skills and invite you to practice these same skills. Ideally, there is a big payoff here: 1. You will get more out of all your history courses, because you will understand how historians interpret and reconstruct the past. 2. With each of you putting your best energies into the class, everyone will benefit exponentially. 3. HIS 391 is the prerequisite for the capstone research course HIS 411, so what you learn now will be directly relevant to that "high impact" research experience, regardless of topical field.

History is everything that happened in the past, right? Well, maybe, but who could know all that? History must be attached to an active verb, as in "we are doing history." Even if we could recover and assemble all the relevant "facts" of an "event" lifted from the stream of time, we would still have to select the facts most pertinent to a question. We need to discern, interpret, and express patterns of meaning, a story, a reconstruction of past events that satisfy our thirst for explanation. To do so, we must assign weight and proportion to pieces of evidence, plot an engaging narrative, analyze causation, change, continuity, and context that helps explain why historical actors thought, felt, and acted as they did.

Primary Sources: Historians and history students reconstruct plausible and compelling interpretations from "the historical record" of primary sources. These constitute everything recorded or produced by past actors that has been preserved or can be recovered; they are "primary" to the events and characters themselves. These survivors—writings, artifacts, reports, images, films, memoirs, advertisements--bring past actors alive and challenge us to understand their world through their eyes. They are the flesh and blood of the recoverable past.

Secondary Sources: Almost no one visits the past without prior company, though discoveries of new sources are legion. To understand past actors more fully, we must turn to scholarship and secondary sources for testable theses, theories, and contextualization. We must understand something of the world that produced these people, the world they spoke to, and the understandings they shared with people who may be utterly unlike us. Scholars and talented writers can help us understand the bigger picture, and can help us formulate sharper, more informed questions. Scholars periodize the past, argue about what caused the Civil War, piece together accounts of colonialism from the perspectives of the subaltern, bring women out of the shadows of public life.

Take historical perspective. We are of a different time (not in every way better). We can never know them fully. But we have something they lacked: the precious gift of hindsight into their uncertain future, which is our partially understood past.

Historiography. The study of historical writing and reconstruction by scholars living in different eras is called "historiography." We will spend a lot of time learning how to discern a scholar's thesis, theories of history, main points, and evidence. You will learn to identify and appreciate alternative frames of reference and biases, helping you to pose new and better questions. I am assigning a fairly practical hands on guide that actually asks you to do history in a variety of ways.

Learning Goals for History Majors: Thinking in Time

Consider the recently revised History Department goals for your education. What do they mean? These generalizations encompass the many time periods, locales, questions, and methods that you find in this department and in historical writing generally. History Graduates will be able to:

1. Analyze historical duration, succession, and change in terms of human agency and larger systems or structures in a wide variety of places and periods. [Historical Comprehension]
2. Use historical thinking to contextualize and analyze primary and secondary sources representing different points of view. [Historical Analysis]
3. Conduct original research by investigating and interpreting primary and secondary sources. [Historical Research]
4. Use evidence-based reasoning to interpret the past coherently while developing and presenting an original argument, orally and in writing. [Historical Interpretation]

This class focuses on Department goals LG2 and LG3, with a significant exercise in LG4. Since these aren't abstracted from the sense you make of the past, LG1 will be relevant to the degree that understanding context matters. Statements about causation, continuity and change, the scope of human agency and the power of systems and structures are all, of course, analytical actions, involving thinking with evidence.

HISTORY 391 STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

1. Information Literacy. Search, identify, and evaluate primary and secondary sources. Secondary Sources: Historians record their best work in journals and books and encyclopedias that stand up to evaluation by other experienced historians. Primary sources are those closest to the originals, those professionally edited by people qualified to know what not to leave out and how to provide context]. Consistently practice full and accurate citation.
2. Distinguishing "Genres" of Historical Consciousness, or Ways of Knowing the Past. These include: "collective memory" in popular culture and official commemorations; the "cultural curriculum" promoted in families and community settings, including schools; individual remembrance in memoir and oral history; for-profit history in entertainment (books and films); public history in museums and other venues. Maybe the least popular but arguably most important, (and the focus of much of this class) will be original scholarship written by professionally trained historians.
3. Historical Thinking. Varieties of historical investigation and explanation include quantitative and qualitative analysis, analysis of visual rhetoric, and frequently in this class, comparison of the symbols and substance of politics. In the process you will learn to define and illustrate keywords and concepts in the sub-fields of social, political, and cultural history.

As a Practice, Historical thinking also includes:

4. Primary Source Analysis. Locate and contextualize primary sources. Make inferences from limited or ambiguous sources when conclusive evidence is lacking. Evaluate these historical sources in terms of plausibility, trustworthiness, and accuracy. Corroborate facts and points of view by comparing primary sources with each other and with other sources. Draw upon contextual knowledge to situate and explain the explicit meaning (text) and implicit assumptions (subtext). Pose research questions. Extract useful evidence from sources through careful note taking, through summary, paraphrase, selective quotation, and commentary. Keep in mind: you will always be answering a clear question, solving a problem of interpretation. Avoid plagiarism.
5. Secondary Source Analysis. Locate and evaluate scholarship that poses and answers clear questions. Accurately summarize the thesis, argument, or "limited interpretive generalization" (a key concept describing the level at which historians think). Identify and analyze scholars' concepts, methods, sources (as seen in their footnotes), conclusions, possible biases or "frames of reference."
6. Historiography. Explain how historical understanding has advanced through testing old interpretations against new evidence, or reinterpreting old evidence in light of new questions and theories. Recognize valid and flawed revisionism. Explain how scholarly point of view can shape interpretations and research methods, questions and answers.

7. Posing Research Questions. As a result of all of these skills, formulate, and refine questions that might lead to focused, researchable, interesting, and original writing. These will be inspired by reading primary source documents, considering historians' interpretations, examining your own inherited assumptions, and questioning ideas and myths present in the culture.

8. Writing Up Research Findings. Interpret the past in ways that explain change, causation, context, contingency, agency. Synthesize evidence and communicate research findings effectively in writing and orally. Again, this rises or falls on your skills generating useful notes that are guided by clear questions, notes that provide a useful mix of summary, paraphrase, and careful quotation. ALWAYS cite sources in full when writing formal research papers.

Learning Resources for Students, Support, Accommodations

My Commitment: I believe in your success as a student and will adapt my instruction to ensure your success. I vary teaching methods to ensure that my courses are accessible to all students. If you need any accommodation, be sure to talk to me and go through the [Office of Accessibility Resources & Services. \(Links to an external site.\)](#) Please also communicate with me how the accommodation is going. See the Canvas syllabus module for this section, which provides links to the University Speaking Center, Writing Center, Office of Accessibility Resources, and Counseling Center.

University Required Covid Syllabus Language for Fall 2022. [Linked in Canvas.](#)

Required Reading (Available for purchase in the bookstore and online).

Salevouris, Michael J., and Conal Furay. *The Methods and Skills of History: A Practical Guide*. 4 edition.

Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015. This has a lot of great exercises; Assignments come in SETS and EXERCISES, and "Set A. Exercise 1." will be referenced in this syllabus by "A.1." followed by page numbers.

Examples: A.1.25-30. Or selected items within a set rendered as A.1.C-D.25-27, which means Set A., Exercise 1., Items C through D., pages 25-27.

This is an ebook and you are allowed to download from that ebook. I will provide links to pages and chapters. Re: Bookstore: I moved it from recommended to required so that those who pay through tuition may not have to pay out of pocket. If you got it another way and now get it through the First Day program, try to return it for credit.

Also linked in Canvas: Downloadable short .pdf documents and web pages. I can provide a paper course reader if enough students request it, for minimal cost.

Strategic Reading: Practice strategic reading, i.e. preview and highlight main ideas and turning points evident in paragraph transitions and sub-headings. Find that paragraph early on that encapsulates the structure of the whole. Be able to summarize the thesis and supportive ideas and evidence. Especially preview first the conclusion, which is meant often to wrap up the puzzles and contradictions and offer an at least partial resolution. If the reading is long and time is short, skim and scan for details that answer a question. See also ch. 8 on reading in the text.

Time Commitment: Generally the University assumes that you will spend two hours for every one hour of class time. Block that six hours out in your calendar. Your time investment will reap dividends far beyond this course or grade. Approach the week or module as a whole in advance, by surveying the readings and questions first, and watching my course "run-through" videos in the Canvas LMS. Then allocate hours of preparation, and dig in, with the intensity that you bring to those things you have done that you do best (sports, music, parenting, whatever)!

Writing Assignments: All "writings" must be submitted on Canvas using either .rtf, .docx, or .pdf format, so I may download, comment, and upload your writings. Use full citations in endnote style when writing the formal papers. Learn these rules. See Rampolla's Student Guide, chs. 6-7, which will remain at the top of Canvas syllabus page. Papers should be double spaced unless otherwise indicated, 1" or .75" margins and no more either 11 or 12 pt. font, Times New Roman or equivalent. (Block quotes, used sparingly, should be single spaced).

This yields an average of 300 words per page.

Feedback and assessment: I use voice dictation software to comment directly on student papers, in addition to any comments or rubrics that you find on Canvas. All assignments that I ask to be submitted electronically must be named as I need to download, comment, and upload these: Your Last Name_HIS391_Date_Subject (like "Slave Narratives"). Don't just title them "History Paper."

Email Etiquette and Efficiency – Required Subject Line "HIS 391 Question" Please address questions to me via email regarding assignments, appointments, mishaps. Subject line: "HIS 391 question." If you don't hear back from me in 24 hours (weekends excepted), please try me again. Reach me: tjackson@uncg.edu is my University email. You must use your UNCG email account and have an active account to gain access to Canvas and the Library databases. Please do not ask for permission through a @gmail.com or other account.

Electronic Devices: Because we will want access to web sites and online information, including assigned pdfs, bring your laptops and tablets. You may use devices to access .pdf readings, but use them only for class purposes. I see a tendency among some students to bury their heads in their laptops or phones. Too much screen time can suck the attention and energy right out of a class. Right?

Citations: In formal writing that reflects your discoveries, you will be using full citations in Chicago Style endnotes (same thing as Turabian). You should learn them as you go along or try to memorize as much as you can from any of three sources. See any one of the THREE guides to citing sources at the top of Canvas syllabus page.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a serious offense of the academic code and is treated as such by faculty. Do your own work and clearly cite any sources you rely upon for your information. Familiarize yourself with the responsibilities of the instructor and the options we have under the university's academic integrity policy: <http://sa.uncg.edu/handbook/academic-integritypolicy/> I will report violations of the honor code to the Dean of Students through one of the two paths explained on the website. Both involve initial conferences with me for which you will have time to prepare, then move to agreed penalties, or mediation of the Academic Integrity Board. Watch: Plagiarism 2.0: Information Ethics in the Digital Age [Plagiarism 2.0 Video](#) (Beware specifically "Patch Writing" a form of plagiarism that plagues undergraduates, starting at 4:30 in the video). See also chapter from Rampolla at top of Canvas page. Turnitin is a software program attached to Canvas to clue you and your professor into possible plagiarism.

There is a Discussion Page for you to raise questions, and there is an anonymous option to communicate with me.

Attendance: Regular and punctual attendance is required. More than four absences for any reason will adversely affect your grade. Accommodations: Prolonged illness or personal and family emergencies and setbacks – let me know and I'll work with you. Don't even request an excuse for conflicting work schedules or early vacation plans. Appropriate accommodations should be registered with SOAR, and Covid illness or quarantine will surely be accommodated. Sports team players have their own process.

Assignments and Percentages

This is a Writing Intensive Course. I have made every effort to keep writing a habit and build in opportunities for feedback, expansion, and revision.

I. Participation and Preparation (20%)

Preparation as demonstrated by active speaking, cooperation, and respectful debate, is essential. Though this is not a speaking intensive class, I regard regular verbal participation as a crucial skill. You will receive points on quality more than quantity of your remarks; long-winded and off-topic comments won't gain you points. Rather I will reward how well you satisfy: 1. The relevance to the question under discussion. 2. Historical thinking, the application of concepts and principles to cases. 3. Your ability to cite specific pieces of evidence to illustrate your points. 4. Constructive responses, agreements or disagreements that show you are listening to your classmates. Get in the habit of talking to each other (while the class can hear you) not simply at me.

If you want to make sure your remarks get recorded, you might use one of the many paper scraps available to you at each entrance (just leave in a pile at both entrances). Just a phrase on what subject you spoke about, and your name. Use them also to raise questions not addressed in class. Participation extends outside of class when I post optional discussion boards, you attend a history department event relevant to the class, or when you comment on another person's post.

At times, you will be asked to pose an informed and researchable question, and justify its significance in terms of what you have learned and what remains a mystery that week.

II. "Exercises" from the Textbook and related materials (25%) – (Categorized in Canvas as "Exercises," Due before class). These can be very "chunky" or "granular," so pay attention closely to my explicit instructions, and when I ask for parts, don't do the whole exercises. Sometimes there will just be a text box in Canvas, sometimes an opportunity to upload digital pages from the textbook, other times a request to upload a Word or rtf document for direct commentary. Please don't email me any assignments.

Crucial! Learn my coding system for assigning specific exercises (often only the best parts): Salevouris assignments are organized in SETS and EXERCISES. Learn this: "Set A. Exercise 1. Examples 2,5,7 only, on pages 25-30" will be abbreviated "A.1:2,5,7;25-30." Sometimes selected items within a set rendered as A.1.C-D.25-27, which means Set A., Exercise 1., Items C through D., pages 25-27 (use the page numbers for quick access).

III. Writings – Response Papers, Blog Posts—Analysis of Scholarship or Primary Sources in Case Studies – usually 1-2 pages , 300-500 words (25%). (Categorized in Canvas as "Writings")

These will be more formal but still short Canvas text box, discussion post, or file upload assignments, most often asking you to synthesize insights from the case studies in After the Fact and various sources and articles.

NOTE: I will count the best 8 of each: Writings and Exercises. Don't skip them, but if you miss one or two, just move on and keep up with the rest.

IV. Midterm Paper (15%), 5-6 pp. 1250-1500 words, with endnotes. Revisit and deepen and revise something you have written about in the first half of the course. A formal paper, with properly formatted endnotes, not footnotes, and not bibliography. Based on 40% assigned readings, 60% discovered sources (favor primary sources). (See above for format rules). The extra resources can be sources either referenced in class or in the optional readings for assignments. These should not be the result of Google searches or thirdhand educational sites, like some UK high school. You want scholarship or original primary sources. The class will see many mini-tutorials on source discovery. I am very happy to brainstorm with you in advance! Actually one of the funnest parts of the job. See Canvas soon for some suggestions. Under no circumstances, will I accept papers tangentially related to the issues of any given day, i.e. no recycling work previously done.

V. Final Project: (20%) 8-10 pp. Due Dec 12 at 3:00, on Canvas

A thoroughly researched, clearly narrated, well explained examination of a focused problem that came out of one of the questions we considered in the second half this semester. Wide open, as long as it incorporates some scholarship and primary source analysis AND follows a question that the class has considered, something you have written about or something we talked about that piqued your interest.

VII. Extra Credit Option, (also required for Honors Contract students). 1-3 points on final grade, depending on how well you structure argument and evidence. Each day lists required readings and options for deeper inquiry. Almost all days will present the opportunity for one student to investigate more deeply and report to the class, on either: A significant work of scholarship of article or chapter length. A significant primary source that sheds important light on the issues of their day, quite apart from our present frames of reference. This can't be something that you write about for either the midterm or final. That is, no "double dipping" on extra readings for those and this.

Grading Scale:

A (93 and above), A- (90-92); B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82); C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72); D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D- (60-62); F (less than 60, unacceptable work).

CLASS SCHEDULE

ALL directions and links and questions found in Canvas! Canvas, the Learning Management System: This syllabus just lists topics, readings and some questions, so you can get a good overview. Canvas assignment pages are the authoritative guides to the course. They will also have clear links to Google Drive folders. Always check Canvas for the authoritative and complete assignments.

8/16: Introductions

8/18: Why Study History?

8/23: History, Historiography, and "The Disciplines"

8/25: Scholarship: Reading for the Thesis, Identifying Bias, Taking Accurate Notes

8/29: Interpreting Causation in the Salem Witch Craze of 1692—Social and Cultural Historians at Work

8/31: Independence -- Ideas and Actions in the American Revolution—Intellectual and Political History

9/6: Recovering Enslavement and Emancipation from Below, Through Oral History--Interviews, Their Social Context, and "Splits" in Collective Memory

9/8: Enslavement in the Court and Legislative Records--The UNCG Race and Slavery Petitions Project

9/13: Historical Thinking: Continuity, Change, Multiple Causation, Contextualization

9/15: Historical Thinking: Contextualization -- Appeasement at Munich 1939

9/20: Some More on Historiography--Frames of Reference, Interpretation and Generalization--Organizing Ideas and Factors of Change

9/22: Now Write a Little History (From a Frame of Reference) -- German Soldiers in WWI -- Thesis and Evidence, Paraphrase and Quotation

9/27: The Immigrant City and the Middle-Class Conscience--Jacob Riis and His Audiences

9/29: Between Victorian and Progressive: Jacob Riis' Immigrant Nativism

10/4: Progressive Symbolism and the Political Process--Upton Sinclair, TR, and Congress Take on the Meat Trusts

10/6: Upton Sinclair: Socialism and Reform in Meat Packing

10/11: Fall Break

10/13: Mid-term paper is due. No class.

10/18: Sacco and Vanzetti: Americanization and Nativism in the "Tribal Twenties"

10/20: Info Literacy--The Hunt for Sacco and Vanzetti (and Good Library Skills)

10/25: The Dust Bowl and the Great California Migrations

10/27: Dorothea Lange and John Steinbeck: Artists and Documentarians

11/1: Presidential Authority and Military Bureaucracy: The Atomic Bomb Debate

11/3: Did Father Know Best? Women and Popular Culture: TV, Magazines, The Power of the Media

11/8: The Greensboro Sit Ins: Change and Continuity -- Why Greensboro? Why 1960?

11/10: Black Revolution and the March on Washington Coalition

11/15: Vietnam and American Memory in Film and Oral History

11/17: Incident at Son My: The Load of Responsibility

11/22: Final Paper Commitment and Preliminary Bibliography, No Class

11/24: Thanksgiving break

11/29: Last day—Student Reports on Findings, or What the Rest of Us Don't Know Yet!

12/8: 6:30 PM, Final Paper is due on Canvas