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**HIS 511A - Seminar in Historical Research and Writing:  
"America Divided: The 1960s as a Watershed"**

Student rebellion, an avalanche of controversial liberal social legislation, nuclear brinkmanship, civil rights, women's challenges to discrimination and traditional gender roles, the roots of contemporary conservatism, urban riots, Vietnam, the antiwar movement, "sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll" -- no decade more than the 1960s compressed so much of the social and political history of the 20th century. And the sources are abundant for good student research. We will survey the major developments and turning points of the 1960s, then each student will pick a focused research problem with some element of interpretive controversy. I place no boundaries on the kind of history you want to do, only that it fall loosely within the decade (1956-1974), so others in the group can respond to, learn from, and evaluate your work.

The main purpose of this course is to advance your skills of research and writing through the phased production of a research paper, so there will be no common readings beyond the first 2 weeks. I am exercising tighter control over class research problems than I have in the past, to minimize the risk that you pursue a problem NOT locally researchable. This has happened in the past with unfortunate results. I also believe that the group learning process will be enhanced if we all focus on common issues. So please, **do not propose a research problem outside the boundaries of this class.**

This class has a strong collaborative dimension, though we do not meet every week. Attendance is mandatory (since missing one class means you miss a whole week, any unexcused absence will result in my lowering your grade by 1/2 of a letter for each session missed – excuses are limited to medical or family emergency, NOT work obligations or extra-curricular conflicts). Participation is mandatory: in discussions and in peer review of each other's ideas and proposals, both on Blackboard and in class. The best critiques mix searching challenges (questions, counter-arguments) with appreciation (since who wants to hear only what is lacking in their efforts?).

**Course Requirements:**

**Required Reading:** (Book available in UNCG bookstore and Amazon.com for less)

Isserman, Maurice, and Michael Kazin. *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

If you do not already own Mary Lynn Rampolla, *Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, order it now from the Internet and read it. I will hold you to its rules of citation, paraphrasing, plagiarism, etc. (Hardcopy also on reserve in the Jackson library). See Blackboard for links to good style web sites.

I may assign the class readings on the research process if I feel that is necessary.

**Participation and peer review (20%)**

The key words here are clarity and collaboration. This grade will be derived from your verbal contributions in class and written contributions on the discussion board.

**Literature review and research proposal (20%).** The only thing affecting the grade is if it is on time and I approve it. If you are late, or one of these needs to be revised for resubmission, your final grade will go down four points for every week. Also, of course this reflects that you have fallen behind, and that the final product won't be as rich as if you started earlier.

**First draft (30%)**

This should be at least 12 pages, conforming to necessary conventions of writing and citation. I will thoroughly comment and your peer reviewer will do the same. NB: No credit for late papers.

**Final draft (30%) 20 pages. (Subsumes last grade if higher)**

This grade reflects the quality of the overall work, and the degree to which you have followed suggestions for more research and better writing or organization. Frankly, in the past, this has been disappointing, since for many, it is your last semester, and the last month can be difficult. Obviously if your first draft is in superb shape, you will need to do less work than if it is too short, incoherent, and inadequately researched! But REVISION means just that -- throwing out tangential or repetitive or overly detailed material; adding research to fill holes in your argument; reorganization and substantial wordsmithing. So however good your first draft, a component of this grade will reflect how well you have incorporated suggestions. With the final draft I would like a list of the changes you made. The sentences you have not changed at all I request that you *italicize* so that I know what is fresh.

**Format for all paper copy writing:** Times New Roman double-spaced 12 pt. 1 inch margins all around (not 1.25) with footnotes, not endnotes. If footnotes are clear, there is no need for a final bibliography.

**SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

**1/12: Introductions**

Discussion of interests and introduction to library research. Acceptable and unacceptable sources. [Library Subjects > History> US since 1945 gets you to useful links and guidelines].

**1/19: The 1960s: Part One**

**Kazin and Isserman, *America Divided*, chs. 1-7.**

Pose one researchable problem, not topic, and post it on blackboard (500 words) by Wednesday at 5 p.m. so that I and at least one peer reviewer can comment. No credit for anything posted later. Everyone must read everyone's research problem and think about how you would help him or her clarify ideas and find sources. Each person must write a thoughtful 300 word commentary on one person's proposal. More gets extra credit. A problem is something that needs explaining. Go to the library and skim at least two books and two articles that are well focused on the problem. Cite them, and briefly give the gist of their argument as it specifically answers your problem. Comment constructively on at least one other student proposal, making concrete suggestions for clarifying the analytical problem and finding researchable primary sources.

**1/26: The 1960s: Part Two**

**Kazin and Isserman, *America Divided*, ch. 8 – conclusion.**

Same assignment as last week. Your posting is due by Wednesday at 5 p.m. Class will decide which of each student's two proposals is more compelling and RESEARCHABLE.

**CONFERENCES CONFERENCES CONFERENCES CONFERENCES with me are excellent ways of gaining focus and access to the best literature. I have been teaching this stuff for 20 years almost! I require each of you to visit me at least twice, once early in the game, again later as you are putting it together.**

**2/2: Discussion of Sources and Best Practices for Locating Primary and Secondary Materials**

You should have settled on a focused research problem and be busy as bees compiling a bibliography of relevant primary and secondary materials. Remember, there might be quite an interesting literature available on a problem which, unfortunately, Jackson library or a local repository or the Internet does not contain primary materials rich enough to satisfy the requirements of an original research paper.

**2/9: Discussion of Literature Reviews (Due Wednesday 2/8 at 5 p.m.)**

This is a five-page standard bibliographic essay that discusses how historians or other scholars have successfully or unsuccessfully addressed the problem you have selected. In such an exercise, you do not recapitulate their argument and content, but critically compare and engage their interpretations as they relate to the evidence they cite in their footnotes.

Your literature review is due in my mailbox and in the hands of your peer reviewer by Wednesday at 5 p.m. No credit if this is late. The peer reviewer will give you his or her feedback during class, and we will have a general discussion. Peer reviews should be at least one page single-spaced, with positive and constructive but hard-nosed criticism, and suggestions for further research.

**2/16: No Class -- Research**

**2/22: Research Proposals Absolutely Positively Due To Me and Your Peer Reviewer**

[Late proposals or unacceptable proposals will be due the following Wednesday for discussion on Thursday next week. Late or unacceptable proposals will cause your final grade to sink four points – that means that this is a pass/fail option. Until you pass this part, there is no continuing with the course].

**2/23: Discussion of Research Proposals**

**3/2: Discussion of Research Proposals**

**3/15: Last day to drop course(s) without academic penalty**

**3/16: No Class -- Research**

**In the month of March, I expect to have at least one and preferably two conferences with each of you. Conferences can save you time and advance your research!**

**3/23: No Class -- Research**

**3/30: No Class -- Research**

**4/5: First Draft Due to Me and Your Peer Reviewer (at least 12 pages)**

This is almost 3 months from now, so no credit will be given to late drafts. What this means is that you will probably fail if you do not hand in something that length with some coherence, that makes sense and deserves constructive feedback.

**4/6: Discussion of First Drafts**

**4/13: No Class -- Research and Revision**

**4/20: Final Reports of Findings**

**4/27: Final Reports of Findings**

**5/4: Final Paper Due at 6:30 P.M., the Final Exam Period (Late Papers Penalized)**