

History 709-02 (Spring 2013)
Introductory Research Seminar in US History
“Public Culture in Twentieth-Century America”

Professor Thomas Jackson
Office: MHRA 2141
Office Phone: 334-4040; History Dept.: 334-5992
Office Hours: Monday, 2:00-3:00
Tuesday 4:00-5:30, and by appointment

Spring 201
MHRA 3204
W, 6:30-9:20
tjackson@uncg.edu

In this course you will be expected to research and write an article-length paper on a problem of your choosing. The first third of the course will be devoted to examining important questions in the history of 20th century US "public culture." As individuals and as a group you will survey historiographical terrain of personal and common interest, identifying “burning” questions among historians and public intellectuals. Then you will conduct and report on a set of primary source surveys. The class will have by week four an impressive collective bibliography of researchable issues and burning questions. As a group, we will also discuss methodologically innovative scholarly articles that might serve as models for your research.

I have strengths in political history, cultural history, social movement history, and the history of the African American freedom movement. If you have trouble narrowing a topic or identifying a burning research question or identifying primary sources, be prepared to accept some guidance. Or seek it out from a professor you have worked with in the past. By mid-February, students will be in possession of an important question and a body of sources likely to yield answers. Some of you may already have projects in mind. Others should be willing to be guided by me to a researchable problem that will draw upon rich primary source materials available through Jackson library, local collections, oral histories, or the Internet.

You will each learn how to select a topic, turn that topic into a focused research problem that will be compelling to readers, identify pertinent secondary and primary sources, present your hypotheses and findings both orally and in writing, and constructively criticize the work of your peers.

I have scheduled a step-by-step process: surveying relevant historiography; identifying primary sources; choosing a topic; compiling a bibliography; formulating working hypotheses; drawing up an early draft; peer-reviewing; and revising the final draft. Paper topics may vary widely, but you all face similar challenges of researching and writing a piece of original scholarship, so the effort will also be collaborative.

NB: Students in the past have proposed continuing research they began as undergraduates, even expanding their senior theses. In each case these projects proved frustrating, because I had to read the thesis, and judge just how much a student had expanded his or her work. Several came up severely short. Since most people will be arriving at fresh topics, I urge those of you with interests or foci developed as undergraduates to consider a fresh approach. It may be in the same field, but you will have to convince me that you have considered seriously the range of options this class affords you, and you will have to justify the originality and distinctiveness of your work.

Course Student Learning Outcomes:

A research project on this scale is very challenging, and my goal as instructor is to help you develop critical thinking and research skills that will serve you well at this University and beyond. By the end of the semester students will be able to:

Interpret and analyze primary source material and draw original conclusions relevant to an existing body of historical literature.

Critically evaluate various types of sources, while formulating an historical argument supported with evidence.

Conduct independent research and present the findings of research orally as well as in written form.

Constructively criticize the work of your peers while also utilizing feedback from others to revise their own projects.

Integrate writing into all phases of the research process, in order to break the undergraduate notion that writing only happens at the end!

Required Readings:

A series of journal articles on historiography and various topics. Search through Journal Finder or look on Google Docs for PDF files. Read these on your computer or print them out.

Kate L. Turabian, Wayne Booth, et. al., *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*, 7th Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). **OPTIONAL:** Purchase is **recommended** but not required. Two copies are available on one-day reserve in Jackson Library; two are available there for building use only, and two more are available at the music library. This book is also available for on Amazon.com.

Assessment and Evaluation

Process: 25%

This includes the quality and timeliness of your interim exercises toward production of the final draft: Blackboard posts on historiographical surveys, primary source surveys, and assigned readings; proposal with annotated bibliography and working hypotheses; early write-up, and first draft. These all incorporate proven principles into your research process: write, write, and write. Writing is not something you reserve for the end of "research," but is integral to the process of discovery, your research choices, and every stage up to the final draft.

Participation: 25 %

This includes your regular contributions to class discussion, presentations, and the quality of your peer reviews (which should be thorough and mix positive and critical assessment). By no means should you miss a class unless in the most dire emergencies.

I will ask you to give several 5 minute presentations on historiography and primary sources. (I will stop you at 5 minutes because we will want some discussion). Please clear your choice with me in advance. (See Turabian, Booth, et. al. *A Manual for Writers*, p. 26 on models and 122-127 on the rudiments of presentation).

Final Paper: 50% -- Approximately 25 pages formatted according to Chicago Manual of Style, 15e. This is due electronically and in hard copy the department on May 7 at 5:00 PM.

Discussion and Presentation Rubric

Rubric for discussing common scholarly articles and presenting your own choice (see also Turabian, 122-126 on presentations)

What are the major claims this scholar makes?

How does the author situate her claims in relation to the literature and articulate their larger implications (the all important "so what" question)?

How does the author reason from evidence to support his claims? Give one example. What analytical terms frame the analysis? What are the main sources yielding evidence?

Grading Scale: A+: 98-100; A: 93-97; 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: 59 and lower.

Schedule of Meetings and Deadlines (Or, The Scholar's Fishing Trip)

1/16: Introductions: The Wide Sea Whence They Came

Assignment, in the next 2 days: Informal Intellectual Autobiography on the Blackboard Discussion Board

On Blackboard please write 300-400 words about how you got here, what kind of history and scholars and history writers inspired you, and general or specific interests and topics you imagine you might like to focus on.

SEE: Jackson Library: Subject Guides-> History->Jackson 340, 332, 511A

1/23: Charting the Currents – Identifying Problems and Questions in Delimited Sub-Fields

Turabian, Booth, et. al. *A Manual for Writers*, 3-23 OPTIONAL. How does this mysterious process work: refining our "interests" into "topics" and "research problems" and beginning to generate "working hypotheses" about important questions?

Historiographical Review Assignment –Read 2-3 (at least) of the many historiographical articles I posted on Google Docs or in a bibliography of historiographical essays I emailed you. Define a common field and identify the most interesting questions that emerge from your survey. Then find a representative work of scholarship (a collection of articles or a book) that embodies the "burning questions" historians are now grappling with, and some of the methodological "best practices" we employ. Write and post on Blackboard 4-5 pages regarding the most interesting conceptual and methodological developments in your "field," loosely defined. NB: You don't have to commit yourself to this field. Many probably will pick up someone else's and run with it! If you bound yourself chronologically (i.e. "the Sixties") give us a broad sense of the interesting questions. But if you take up a theme or thread (i.e. mothers' aid and welfare, or black migrations) you will likely span several decades or chronological periods.

Speak for 5 minutes to try to persuade the entire class that your field is where the *action* is, where they ought to join you (even if you are only tentative about your first foray, try to "sell" us)!

Remember: usually if someone has written a well-received book, there is a scholarly article that preceded it, as a kind of "warm up."

1/30: Sounding the Depths and Casting the Nets -- Finding Sources and Imagining Results

Turabian, Booth, et. al. *A Manual for Writers*, 24-47. (Finding and engaging sources).

Primary source surveys (half the class will volunteer)

Assignment:

Survey a significant collection of sources accessible to us, either online, through microfilm, Proquest Digital, bound in the library, ProQuest Congressional, or anything found on the “709 Database Introductions” and related documents that survey primary sources in Google Docs. Just as is the historiography vast, so is the universe of sources. Our trick is in trying to find points of connection, so that we might bring original encounters with evidence to bear on burning questions in some identifiable conversation in the fields of academic history and/or public history.

Discussion -- Common Reading in Best Practices – Cultural and Social History and Visual Culture

Glickman, Lawrence B. "The "Cultural Turn"." In *American History Now*, edited by Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr. 221-40. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011. E-book and on Google Docs.

And One or Both (Students reporting next week must read both):

Gordon, Linda. "Dorothea Lange: Photographer as Agricultural Sociologist." *Journal of American History* 93, no. 3 (2006): 698-727. And optional very interesting companion site:
http://www.journalofamericanhistory.org/teaching/2006_12/

Hariman, Robert, and Louis Lucaites. "The Times Square Kiss: Iconic Photography and Civic Renewal in U.S. Public Culture." *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 1 (June 1, 2007 2007): 122-31.

Recommended for those Considering Visual Culture:

Roeder, George H. "Filling in the Picture: Visual Culture." *Reviews in American History* 26, no. 1, Special Issue: The Challenge of American History (1998): 275-93.

Natanson, Barbara Orbach. "Worth a Billion Words? Library of Congress Pictures Online." *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 1 (June 1, 2007 2007): 99-111.

Sandweiss, Martha A. "Image and Artifact: The Photograph as Evidence in the Digital Age." *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 1 (June 1, 2007 2007): 193-202.

2/6: Assaying the Shipwrecks and Avoiding the Sharks

Come prepared to discuss your progress toward identifying a topic and problem, its hypotheses and burning questions, historiographical context, primary sources you are locating. ???

Primary Source Surveys

Second half of the class's Reports Continued

Common Reading in Best Practices: TBA after survey of student needs and interests

2/11: Monday: "A Bite"!

Assignment: Preliminary Topic Description on the Way to a Proposal. Each of you should write up and post on Blackboard a brief description of a possible (non-binding) topic (300 words) with the following information: a) Tentative title of the proposed study. b) A brief description of the problem including its significance and the beginning and ending dates. c) Briefly list or describe several *accessible* primary sources that might be relevant for your study—e.g. newspapers, memoirs, archival material, oral histories, online sources. d) Identify influential secondary works on your topic and suggest how this study might add to the ongoing conversations among historians.

I will approve or urge clarification of these in the next week. Please respond to at least two of your classmates with brief constructive suggestions through "reply" on the Blackboard discussion board.

2/13: Trawling Together -- An Abundance of Marine Life

Turabian, Booth, et. al. *A Manual for Writers*, 48-61. (Good construction of arguments).

Common Readings Assignment TBA

2/18, Monday: The Proposal! With Annotated Bibliography and Working Hypotheses. Pose a focused, researchable, and significant question. Compile a list of at least 4-5 key secondary works (books or journal articles) on your topic and *briefly* summarize the authors' findings and sources (*only those findings pertinent to your question and methods, not a complete overview*). Add a list of the most important primary sources you intend to consult for your paper and briefly describe them, as well as any preliminary information from those sources. Are you confident yet that these sources will satisfy the burning questions you are asking? (Don't list individual news articles however, just the range of newspapers and magazines consulted, and don't include, please, long urls).

Formulate some working hypotheses that will help you gather relevant research notes, confirm or refute your "hunches" about the story or explanation you will offer.

2/20: Smooth Trawling or Snagged Lines and Beached Boats? Getting Unstuck and Back into the Deep Waters where the Big Fish Swim

Discussions of Common Readings and Peer Reviews in Groups

2/27: Deep Sea Diving in Teams – General Discussion and Conferences with Teammates -- TBA

Turabian, Booth, et. al. *A Manual for Writers*, 62-81, 98-130, passim.. (Sticking with a plan).

3/6: TBA

SPRING BREAK—RESEARCH!

3/18 Monday -- Four Weeks to First Draft!

Assignment: Early Write-up and Progress Report. Draft the first 3-4 pages of your paper, identify the following in a formal written form:

- a) The main historical problem you are addressing and your (preliminary) thesis statement
- b) A survey of the evidence you are gathering to solve your historical problem, with some discussion of on piece of key evidence.
- c) A reiteration of the most important scholarly literature on your topic as it has come more clearly into focus.

3/20: No Class – Conferences – Possible Gmail "Hangouts" with Peer Groups and the Professor—Possible Peer Group Discussion of Writing Challenges in Class

3/27: TBA, Conferences, Class Meetings, or Reports, Depending on Class Needs

4/3: No Class – Conferences

4/10: Discussions of Findings and Writing Challenges – Untangling Nets – Mind Mapping

4/15, Monday: FIRST DRAFTS DUE! Three Weeks to Final Draft!

Print out and turn in the first draft—as much as you have plus the remainder in outlined form if necessary—**hard copy and email word file to the instructor** and post on Blackboard by noon for your peer reviewers.

4/17: Peer Reviews in Teams

Read at least 2 other students' first drafts (as assigned in teams; feel free to read others) and write up a constructive one page single space critique of each of them; identify strengths of the essay but make sure that you concentrate on the aspects of the essay that need strengthening. Alternately, use "Review" in Word with "Track Changes" and "Comments" to communicate substantially the same thing, and email your reviews to the professor.

4/24: Diving Trophies -- Presentation of Key Findings

Turabian, Booth, et. al. *A Manual for Writers*, 122-128.

Please take no more than 8 minutes to highlight the most interesting and significant pieces of your argument and show some supportive illustrations. Believe it or not, the last class.

Tuesday May 7: Absolute Drop Dead Done Done Done No Bull No Excuses Deadline (Give the Big Fish Back, This Is Catch and Release!)

The final draft will be evaluated on its coherence, logical development, significance for history, relationship between interpretation and evidence, and its lucid compelling writing style! This is when I reap the rewards of all of our hard work. Please give them to me elegantly filleted and delicately cooked!