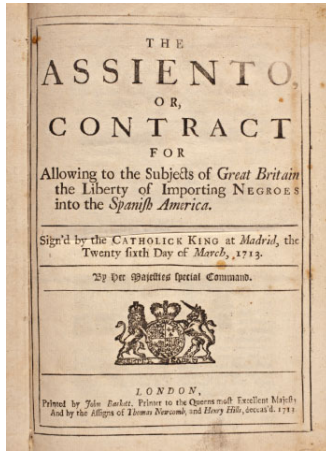


# HIS 709.01: Introductory Research Seminar (Spring 2020)

## The Transatlantic Slave Trade: Interrogating Sources

Tuesdays 3:30-6:20 pm  
MHRA 3207

Dr. Linda Rupert ([lmrupert@uncg.edu](mailto:lmrupert@uncg.edu); MHRA 2105)  
Office hours: Thursdays 10-12 & by appointment



### OVERVIEW

Historians of the transatlantic slave trade have access to an especially wide range of sources, encompassing over four hundred years and the entire Atlantic World. These include, among others, travel diaries, merchant accounts, ships' logs, abolitionist pamphlets, and autobiographies, many dating back hundreds of years, as well as the online databases of the twenty-first century. Yet none tells a complete story; all are plagued by serious silences. We will examine the strengths and limitations of the different types of documentation available, and their relationship to the development of the historiography. Each student will write an original research paper focused on a clearly-defined topic, based on a critical reading and analysis of a selection of suitable primary sources, and grounded in the relevant scholarship.

### STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Throughout this course students will develop significant skills in:

- locating, critically interpreting, and contextualizing primary sources
- parsing major historiographic discussions and debates
- identifying a viable research topic and developing an original argument
- effectively communicating their research results orally and in writing
- engaging in persuasive, thoughtful, and courteous discussion with their peers

### REQUIRED BOOKS

Brundage, Anthony. *Going to the Sources: A Guide to Historical Research and Writing*. Sixth Edition. Wiley Blackwell, 2018.

Klein, Herbert. *The Atlantic Slave Trade*. Second Edition. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

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

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition. Beacon Press, 2015.

Unsworth, Barry. *Sacred Hunger*. Anchor, 2017.

### ASSIGNMENTS

The major requirement for this course is to research, write, and revise a 20-25-page paper, based on close analysis of a corpus of primary sources, contextualized in the appropriate historical narrative, and engaging with pertinent historiographic issues. You will build the paper over the course of the first two units, in a series of carefully scaffolded assignments, and revise it throughout Unit 3. Detailed descriptions of the requirements for each assignment will be posted in Canvas; we will also discuss them in class.

**The final grade will be calculated as follows:**

Short writing assignments: 20%

Class participation and presentations: 20%

Draft paper: 30%

Final paper: 30%

As per the policies of the UNCG Graduate School, students must earn at least a B- to pass this course.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

(\*\*subject to modification)

### Unit 1: Getting Started (Weeks 1-5: January 14-February 11)

*The tasks for this unit are to:*

- master the basic narrative of the transatlantic slave trade
- hone proficiency in critically interrogating primary documents
- identify a research topic
- locate and begin to analyze primary sources on which to base a research paper

Throughout this unit we will have weekly class meetings and common readings. There will be weekly short writing assignments, which will help you develop and refine the necessary research, analytic, and writing skills. We will discuss the requirements for each assignment in class and they will also be posted to Canvas.

#### ***Week 1: Tuesday, January 14***

*Readings:* “ Brief Overview of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade” (11 short sections, Introduction-Notes), at <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/essay>; Philip D. Curtin, "The Slave Trade and the Numbers Game: A Review of the Literature," and "Major Trends," Chapters One and Nine, respectively, in the *Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (University of Wisconsin, 1969), pp. 3-13 and 265-273 (PDF in Canvas Files).

*Assignment due next week:* Identify 2-4 possible paper topics you would be interested in pursuing. For each one, briefly describe the topic; brainstorm the types of primary sources you would need; and reflect on possible difficulties in finding and analyzing these sources. You will probably find it easier to complete this assignment after you have read Klein.

#### ***Week 2: Tuesday, January 21***

*Readings:* Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*; Brundage, Chapter 1 (“The Ever-Changing Shape and Texture of the Past”)

*Assignment due next week:* Browse the volumes compiled by Donnan (on reserve at the library and also available electronically); identify several primary documents related to a research topic that interests you, and write a thoughtful analysis of them (3-5 pages), with appropriate contextualization from Klein.

#### ***Week 3: Tuesday, January 28***

*Readings:* Brundage, Chapters 2 & 3 (“The Nature and Variety of Historical Sources,” and “Finding Your Sources”)

Tutorial with UNCG libraries: online sources and Special Collections. Class will meet promptly at 3:30 pm at the CitiLab in Jackson Library (across from the Circulation Desk).

*Assignment due next week:* Continue to explore the library catalogues and databases and identify several primary sources that are related to your research interests. Write a short overview of each, briefly compare them, and discuss how you might build a research paper around them.

#### ***Week 4: Tuesday, February 4***

*Reading:* Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*

*Assignment due no later than 5 pm on Thursday, February 6:* Register at Duke’s Rubenstein Library, peruse the online catalogue, and order several documents that interest you. Send me the list of documents you have ordered. Also participate in the related Canvas Discussion before and after the visit.

#### ***Week 5: Tuesday, February 11***

*Readings:* Brundage, Chapters 4 & 5 (“Getting the Most out of History Books,” & “Beyond Textual Sources”)

***Visit to David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University (Durham, NC)***

Group meeting with archivists 4-4:30 pm. (Time to be confirmed.) Library is open 9am- 8pm.

*Assignment due next week:* Prepare a short draft abstract of your proposed research topic (one paragraph, no more than one page), with initial bibliographies of the sources you have located to date. Continue to participate in the Canvas Discussion about visiting archives.

## Unit 2: Getting it Down (Weeks 6-10: February 18- March 25)

### *The tasks for this unit are:*

- Critically analyze the primary source(s) on which you will base your paper
- Develop suitable research question(s) related to the material
- Identify and analyze a corpus of suitable secondary literature related to the paper topic, including both historical context and historiographic issues
- Write a 15-20 page draft research paper

This unit is composed of a series of carefully scaffolded assignments that build towards the draft paper. There will be a combination of regular class sessions; individual and small group meetings; and independent research time. Although there will be some common readings, most will be specific to each developing project. Assignments include a full annotated bibliography, paper abstract, outline, and the draft research paper. Each student will also present an overview of a major historiographic discussion that is germane to their research paper.

Descriptions of the requirements for each assignment, including the draft paper, will be posted in Canvas. We will also discuss them in detail in class. Make sure to carefully read and closely follow all the specifications for each assignment.

### ***Week 6: Tuesday, February 18***

*Reading:* Brundage, Chapter 8 (“Engaging with Primary Sources”), pp. 110-118

*Assignment due no later than 5 pm on Monday, February 24:* Write an in-depth description and analysis (minimum 6-8 pages) of the primary sources that are the foundation for your research paper. Delve deeply into the material and see how much you can get out of it. The stronger this is, the easier it will be to write the rest of your paper.

### ***Week 7: February 24-28***

No class; research and required individual meetings with Dr. Rupert.

*Assignment due on Tuesday, March 10 (after spring break):* Write an essay (minimum 6-8 pages) providing the historical narrative needed to contextualize your primary sources. The more complete this is, the easier it will be to write the rest of your paper.

\*\*\*\* No class on Tuesday, March 3 (spring break) \*\*\*\*

### ***Week 8: Tuesday, March 10***

*Reading:* Brundage, Chapter 7: “Exploring Changing Interpretations: The Historiographic Essay”

Oral presentations of historiographic issues (first of three opportunities).

*Assignment due next week:* Revised abstract, with focused research question(s) and full annotated bibliography.

### ***Week 9: Tuesday, March 17***

*Reading:* Brundage, Chapter 6 (“History’s Public(s) and Public History”)

Oral presentations of historiographic issues (second of three opportunities).

*Assignment due next week:* Frame one or more issues that historians have discussed/debated related to the slave trade, and clearly describe the relevance for your primary sources and paper topic (6-8 pages minimum). This can be the issue you are presenting to the class, or one or more others.

### ***Week 10: Tuesday, March 24***

*Reading:* Brundage, Chapter 8 (“Engaging with Primary Sources: The Research Paper”), pp. 118-129

Oral presentations of historiographic issues (final opportunity).

*Assignment due next week:* Draft research paper (15-20 pages).

Make sure to read and closely follow all the specifications for the draft paper.

### Unit 3: Fixing it Up (Weeks 11-15: March 31-April 28)

**The main task for this unit is to produce a polished 20-25-page final paper based on:**

- deep, original analysis of a suitable corpus of primary sources
- contextualization of these sources in a wider historical narrative
- engagement with pertinent historiography
- substantial rewrite of draft paper, incorporating all suggested changes, with demonstrably tighter writing, deeper analysis, and fuller engagement with the historiography

There will be a combination of regular class sessions, meetings with Dr. Rupert, and individualized research time. We will discuss the full specifications for the final paper in class, and they will also be posted to the relevant Canvas Assignment.

#### ***Week 11: Tuesday, March 31***

Draft research papers due in class. Bring two printouts to workshop.

#### ***Week 12: April 6-10***

No class; research and meetings with Dr. Rupert.

#### ***Week 13: April 13-17***

No class; research and meetings with Dr. Rupert.

#### ***Week 14: Tuesday, April 21***

*Reading:* Unsworth, *Sacred Hunger*

#### ***Week 15: Tuesday, April 28***

Research paper presentations.

Final papers due no later than Friday, May 1.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

***Writing:*** It is important that you complete each assignment on time so you can get feedback from me and move forward on your paper. All assignments should be written in standard format (Times New Roman 12" type or similar, double spaced, with one-inch margins), with a relevant title and a brief introduction and conclusion that frame your main point. Please number your pages. All written assignments are due in hard copy, with an identical copy uploaded to the corresponding Canvas Assignment. Both versions are required.

All written work should adhere to the conventions of historical writing, including providing full citations, as well as following rigorous standards of structure, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and style. Carefully edit and proofread everything you write. When in doubt, consult Rampolla, and/or the Appendices in Brundage. Also recommended: Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (University of Chicago Press, various editions).

***Readings:*** Always bring copies of readings to class and be prepared to cite specific page numbers. It is fine to have electronic rather than paper copies as long as you are able to cite specific page numbers, I would caution you, however, that sometimes it is not as easy to scroll through electronic documents to keep up with the discussion, or to toggle back and forth to make comparisons between different readings.

***Canvas Discussions:*** Doing research can be isolating and frustrating. There will be several ongoing discussion boards on Canvas where you can pose questions and share thoughts throughout the semester. This is also where we will have virtual classes if the university is closed. Make sure to subscribe to them and check them regularly.