

HIS 391.01: Historical Skills and Methods: In the Wake of Columbus

Tuesdays & Thursdays 12:30-1:45 pm via Zoom

Professor: Dr. Linda Rupert (lmrupert@uncg.edu)

Office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:00-3:00 pm & by appointment (via Zoom link in Canvas)

****THIS COURSE WILL BE TAUGHT SYNCHRONOUSLY VIA ZOOM. STUDENTS NEED ACCESS TO RELIABLE INTERNET AND COMPUTER WITH CAMERA, AND MUST PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY ON THE SCHEDULED DAYS AND TIMES. A SMART PHONE IS NOT SUFFICIENT.****



This course will be a hands-on journey through the craft of historical inquiry, using the early post-contact Caribbean as a backdrop. As we trace the major transformations that swept the region after 1492 students will sharpen their skills in research, analysis, and writing. We will delve deeply into a wide range of sources, carefully considering their strengths, limitations, and silences. We will also keep front and center three pillars of the historical approach: change over time, large scale historical processes and structures, and the lives of individual people and groups (human agency). Students will develop competencies in framing research topics; critically reading sources; posing appropriate questions; building interpretation based on evidence; identifying relevant historiography; and writing tight, clear prose.

REQUIRED BOOKS:

Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. **Tenth edition**. Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2021.

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

These are both available from the UNCG bookstore and from online sellers. Brundage is also available from Jackson Library as an e-book.

***Make sure you have the correct edition of both books.

Other readings and handouts will be posted in Canvas.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Analyze historical duration, succession, and change in terms of human agency and larger systems or structures.
2. Use historical thinking to contextualize and analyze primary and secondary sources representing different perspectives.
3. Locate and evaluate appropriate scholarly materials related to the course topic.
4. Use evidence-based reasoning to interpret the past coherently while developing and presenting an original written argument

GRADING

Attendance, class participation, & group work:	20%
Short writing assignments (Unit 1):	20%
Longer writing assignments (Unit 2):	30%
Scaffolded final project (Unit 3):	30%

Grading Scale:

A: 93-100%	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% or lower

Attendance, Participation & Group Work (20% of final grade; SLOs 1 & 2)

In this small seminar real-time attendance and active engagement is essential. We will be discussing and developing important skills every week. You are expected to be present for the entire class period, mentally and socially as well as physically; to be fully prepared; to have the assigned readings and handouts at hand; and to participate in discussions and group work.

Sometimes life happens, so you are allowed three absences without affecting your grade. Each absence after that will deduct 5 points from your final attendance and participation grade. Plan wisely, and save these absences for when you really need them! Repeatedly arriving late, leaving early; being distracted; or tuning out during class will be counted as absences.

Short Writing Assignments (20% of final grade; SLOs 1 & 2)

Throughout Unit 1 weekly short writing assignments (1-3 pages each) will help you review and develop basic skills. The specifications will be posted to Canvas and we will discuss them in class each week.

Longer Writing Assignments (30% of final grade; SLOs 1, 2, & 4)

In Unit 2 you will write two longer assignments (4-6 pages each) related to the sources available to study a topic of your choice in early Caribbean history. Each paper will be worth 15% of your final grade. We will discuss these in more detail in class and the specifications will be posted to Canvas.

Final Project (30% of final grade; SLOs 1, 2, 3, & 4)

In Unit 3 you will bring together the skills you have developed through the course into a short but comprehensive proposal for a research project, encompassing all the background work you would need to do if you were actually going to undertake the project. Some of this will build on revisions to your Unit 2 papers.

Components will include a clear description/overview of the topic, analysis of the problem or questions to be addressed, and an annotated bibliography of primary and secondary sources with full citations. You are required to submit a draft and then a revised proposal, incorporating my comments and suggestions. Each will be graded separately. We will discuss the project in more detail over several class periods and the specifications will be posted to Canvas.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Enrollment in this course and submission of each written assignment constitute students' acceptance of [UNCG's Academic Integrity Policy](#). Plagiarism—using someone else's words or ideas without giving them credit—is a serious academic offense that can result in failing the class or even expulsion from the university. Know the rules. When in doubt, ask.

EXPECTATIONS & REQUIREMENTS

Internet and computer access: You must have regular access to a laptop or desktop computer and reliable Internet to attend and participate in this class. A handheld mobile device such as a Smartphone is not sufficient. During class you will sometimes need to download handouts or visit Websites. You will be using the course Canvas site each week to download readings and handouts, and upload assignments.

Succeeding in a synchronous Zoom course: This course is very similar to one that is taught face to face in the classroom, except we are meeting via Zoom. It is not self-paced; there are strict deadlines. Distraction can be especially tempting in a virtual class. Create the necessary atmosphere to help you focus; imagine that you are arriving at and staying in a classroom during the entire class period.

Written work: This is a writing intensive course. You are expected to demonstrate steady improvement in the skills we are practicing. Correct punctuation, spelling, grammar and composition are expected for each assignment. Some of the longer assignments will require rewrites, which is an important part of the process.

Communications: We will communicate regularly in this course via Canvas and our UNCG e-mail accounts. Check both regularly. Feel free to e-mail me (lmrupert@uncg.edu) with any questions or concerns. You should expect to hear back within 24 hours, unless: 1) it is the weekend; 2) you receive an automatic “out of office” reply. I will hold virtual *office hours* on Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:00-3:00 pm and by appointment, beginning the second week of classes. A Zoom link in Canvas will take you to the waiting room.

IMPORTANT UNCG RESOURCES

We are very fortunate that UNCG has a wide array of excellent services to support students at every level. These are your go-to experts for specific problems and issues. While many standard university procedures have been modified in these pandemic times, and some offices may have restricted in-person visiting hours, all are fully open and available to help. The links will take you directly to their updated Websites.

[Shield our Spartans](#): Although this course will be conducted entirely online, please regularly review UNCG’s Covid-19 updates and strictly follow all required procedures. Show that you care about our community!

[History Department](#): Browse our [Website](#) and [Facebook page](#) to learn what your fellow history majors and professors are up to.

[Office of Accessibility Resources and Services \(OARS\)](#): The first stop for students who need accommodations for a documented disability. Make sure to send the required paperwork to Dr. Rupert the first week of classes. No accommodations can be made without this completed paperwork.

[Information Technology Services \(ITS\)](#): Your source for all tech problems, including computer malfunctions, issues with Canvas, Internet connectivity, etc. They know far more about all this than we do!

[Student Health Services](#): Provides free, confidential support for a variety of [mental](#) and [physical](#) health issues. Take good care of your body and your mind! Both are vital in these exceptionally stressful times.

[Students First Office](#): One-stop resource for a variety of support services to help ensure your academic success.

[Dean of Students](#): Provides information, guidelines, and practical information to support students in a wide range of situations, including crises and emergencies.

[Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#): Look here for information about university expectations and guidelines for student conduct, academic integrity, appeal procedures, due process, and more.

[The Writing Center](#): Provides useful resources for all types of writing assignments, no matter how large or small. You can schedule a meeting to discuss a specific assignment and also access a wide variety of information and tips to strengthen your writing.

[UNCG Libraries](#): All the resources you need for developing your research project.

COURSE OVERVIEW (Subject to adjustments)

In this methods course you will hone the skills necessary to successfully carry out your capstone research project in HIS 411. All readings (except chapters from the two assigned books) and assignments will be posted to Canvas. All assignments should be uploaded to Canvas. You will receive a detailed schedule of readings and assignments at the beginning of each unit.

Unit 1: The Historian's Toolbox

In this unit we will review the basic tools of the historian and the skills needed to conduct historical research.

Assignments: Short weekly writing assignments will help you review and develop basic skills. We will discuss these in class and the specifications will be posted to Canvas. Each assignment is due no later than Saturday night; you are welcome to submit it earlier.

Major weekly themes:

Week 1 (January 19 & 21): Course Introduction and Overview of Skills

Week 2 (January 26 & 28): Thinking Historically

Week 3 (February 2 & 4): Interrogating Sources

Week 4 (February 9 & 11): Reading Critically

Week 5 (February 16 & 18): Interpreting History

Unit 2: Delving into Sources

In this unit you will further develop and practice the skills we discussed in Unit 1, focusing on finding and interpreting different types of primary and secondary sources.

Assignments: Two longer papers (4-5 pages each) analyzing sources related to a specific topic in early Caribbean history. We will discuss these in more detail in class and the specifications will be posted to Canvas.

Major weekly themes:

Week 6 (February 23 & 25): Locating and evaluating sources

Week 7 (March 2 & 4): Critically reading and interpreting primary sources

***** Week 8 (March 9 & 11): No class or assignments this week. Take a break and refresh your brain! *****

Week 9 (March 16 & 18): Reading for argument

Week 10 (March 23 & 25): Historiography: Historians' interpretations

Unit 3: Developing a Research Project

In this unit you will develop the basic components of a research paper around a theme in early Caribbean history that interests you, building on the analysis of sources that you began in Unit 2.

Assignments: Draft and final research project, each graded separately.

Major weekly themes:

Week 11 (March 30 & April 1): Writing a project description

Week 12 (April 6 & 8): Developing historical questions

Week 13 (April 13 & 15): Preparing an annotated bibliography

Week 14 (April 20 & 22): Draft project due

Week 15: Tuesday, April 27: Summation: Bringing it all Together

Tuesday, May 4: Revised final project due. You are welcome to submit it earlier.