HISTORY 91
Senior Research Seminar

This senior research seminar is designed to assist you in conceptualizing, researching, and writing an original historical essay that draws on both secondary literature and a significant body of primary sources. Class assignments are designed to guide you through the process of researching and writing the paper over the course of the semester. If you read a language other than English and there is material in that language relevant to your topic, I strongly encourage you to use such material in your paper.

REQUIREMENTS:

Written Assignments:
--Brief description of topic and preliminary bibliography: DUE Monday, September 16
--Annotated bibliography: DUE Friday, October 4
--Research Proposal (prospectus): DUE Wednesday, October 9
--Document Analysis: DUE Wednesday, October 23
--Historiographical Essay: DUE Wednesday, October 30
--Rough draft of research paper: DUE Wednesday, November 13
--Revised draft of research paper: DUE Tuesday, December 3
--Peer Critique: DUE Friday, December 6
--Final draft of research paper: DUE Friday, December 20

Oral Presentations:
As noted in the syllabus, several oral presentations will be required over the course of the semester (one on September 27 and another on October 25). These assignments will often involve reading and discussing other students’ written work. They will provide each of you with critical readings of your work and help ensure that everyone turns in the best possible finished paper.

EVALUATION:
Your final papers will be evaluated according to the following criteria:
--articulation of a clear, strong, significant, and original thesis
--presentation of evidence that supports the thesis
--depth of the analysis (i.e., the questions you pose)
--creativity and rigor of the interpretation (e.g., the answers you propose)
--logical organization
--clear introduction that outlines the structure of the paper and the types of sources used
--clear conclusion that summarizes your major findings and their significance
--correct citations
--elegant, compelling writing style

The final paper should be about twenty-five (25) pages long or about 7,000 words. (NB: This word count does not include the footnotes and the bibliography.) Use a 12-point font, preferably Times or Times New Roman, and one-inch margins on all sides. A bibliography of primary and secondary sources must be attached to the paper.

All written assignments will be posted on Blackboard by the deadline listed in the syllabus. You must complete all written and oral assignments to pass this course.

Everyone must hand in all assignments on time. The seminar will not function properly if assignments are late. Late assignments will be graded down severely.

Seminar Participation:
Scholarship is not a solitary endeavor. At various times in the semester, students will be responsible for reading and discussing other students’ written assignments. This process is designed to provide students with critical readers of their writing and to encourage collective learning from each other’s efforts.

REQUIRED READING:
Available at the bookstore and on general reserve at McCabe Library

Recommended Reading:
Wayne C. Booth, et al., The Craft of Research 1995
On general reserve at McCabe Library

SCHEDULE:

Week 1  Sept. 6  INTRODUCTION

Week 2  Sept. 13  INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES WITH INSTRUCTOR
You MUST settle DEFINITIVELY on your topic by the end of this week.

Brief description of topic and preliminary bibliography DUE on Blackboard by noon, Monday, September 16.

Week 3  Sept. 20  LIBRARY RESOURCES & RESEARCH TOOLS
Guest speaker: Anne Garrison, Head of Reference Services and Humanities Librarian
Meet in McCabe Library
History 91, Senior Research Seminar, Autumn 2002

Anne Garrison will introduce us to library resources relevant to your specific topics. After the meeting, we will remain in the library so you can try out some of her suggestions to locate materials on your topic.

During the next two weeks you will assemble your annotated bibliography of secondary works and identify primary materials available in the library, via interlibrary loan, or in Philadelphia-area archives and libraries. Begin reading and taking careful notes on the materials you are assembling.

Readings:
MLA Handbook, chap. 1
Handout on research methods and note-taking

Week 4  Sept. 27  DOING RESEARCH
Class Presentation
Make use of the tools and resources that you learned during last week’s library session to locate a scholarly article that is absolutely central to your research topic. During class you will give a brief presentation on that article. In order to make a good presentation, you will have to have begun seriously to work on your bibliography, due next week.

Your presentation should cover the following points:
--Why did you choose this article?
--What are its main themes, arguments, methodologies?
--What types of primary sources did the author use?
--What questions or controversies does the study leave unanswered?
--How does the article contribute to larger historiographical, theoretical, or methodological debates on your topic?
--How do you expect your research to contribute to the issues this author has explored?
--Where do you position your own topic and thesis vis-à-vis this article?

During the seminar we will also discuss the makings of a good research project.

Readings:
MLA Handbook, chaps. 2, 3, 5
Handout on research proposals

NB All interlibrary loan requests must be submitted to McCabe by September 30.

Week 5  Oct. 4  INDEPENDENT RESEARCH
Written Assignment
Annotated bibliography DUE on Blackboard by 12 noon, Friday, Oct. 4.

Using resources and tools you learned in the library session, you must assemble a bibliography of important books, articles, and primary sources on your topic. The
bibliography must include at least four monographs, six to ten articles, and as much primary source material as possible.

The bibliography should be structured as follows:

Secondary Sources:
--Give complete bibliographical information (see MLA Handbook, chap. 4 for guidelines).
--Provide a brief annotation (3-4 lines) that very briefly summarizes the main themes, arguments, and sources used in the work.

Primary Sources:
--Give complete bibliographical information (see MLA Handbook, chap. 4 for guidelines).
--Provide a brief annotation for each source describing what kind of source it is (e.g., government document, newspaper or magazine article, letter, petition, manifesto, memoir, novel, published collection of documents, travel account, photograph, poster, mural, account book, probate inventory, etc.); where the source is located; and whose perspective the source provides.

Week 6 Oct. 11 RESEARCH PROPOSAL
Written Assignment
Research Proposal DUE on Blackboard by 4:00 p.m., Wednesday, October 9.
All seminar participants must read and be prepared to discuss all of the proposals on Friday, October 11.

Your research proposal should describe the topic you plan to research, explain what others have had to say about the topic, indicate how you expect your findings to fit into the existing literature, and describe your source materials. Convince your classmates (and me) that your topic is both important and fascinating. Show us that you will address an angle that has not been previously examined, or explain why you expect to draw conclusions different from those of other scholars. Wow us with your firm grasp of the existing literature. Dazzle us with your knowledge of the primary sources essential for your project. Convince us that those primary sources will allow you to answer the questions you’ve posed.

During this session, we will also discuss the strengths and weaknesses of a sample paper distributed the previous week.

Week 7 FALL BREAK

Week 8 Oct. 25 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS
Written Assignment
Document Analysis DUE on Blackboard by 4:00 p.m., Wednesday, 23 October
The two-page document analysis should tackle a particularly interesting or difficult document. The analysis should cover the following points:

--Who wrote the document, when, and for whose eyes?
--Who was likely to have seen it during the period you are discussing?
--What is the content of the document?
--Why was it written?
--How is this document relevant for your paper?

Bring photocopies of the document (or an excerpt if it’s long) for all members of the class, including the instructor.

Class Presentation
Your class presentation should report on your overall primary source base and place the particular document you analyzed in that larger context. You should explain the types of sources available to you; who produced them, why, and for whom; what types of information they include; what perspectives they provide (and do not provide). You should also identify and assess the gaps in the primary source material available to you. If you had unlimited time, sufficient funds for travel, and could read or speak all languages, what additional types of documents would you review? How would they make your paper stronger?

Readings:
Handout on questions to ask of texts

Week 9 Nov. 1 HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY
Written assignment
4-5 page essay DUE on Blackboard by 4:00 p.m., Wednesday, 30 October.
This essay should build on your presentation of the scholarly literature on your topic (Week 4) and annotated bibliography (Week 5). It will form an important section of your final paper. The essay should discuss the major works relevant to your research topic. Consider how the arguments, approaches, and ideas presented in the secondary literature have shaped and reshaped your own thinking on the topic. How do your ideas coincide with those presented by other scholars? Where/why/how do they diverge?

Readings:
Two historiographical essays distributed last week.

Week 10 Nov. 8 INDEPENDENT WRITING

Week 11 Nov. 15 INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES WITH INSTRUCTOR
Written assignment
Rough draft of research paper DUE on Blackboard by 2:00 p.m., Wednesday, 13 November

Week 12 Nov. 22 INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES WITH INSTRUCTOR

Week 13 THANKSGIVING BREAK
Week 14  Dec. 6  REVISED DRAFTS AND PEER CRITIQUES

Written assignment
Revised draft of paper DUE on Blackboard by 4:00 p.m., Tuesday, 3 December
Peer Critique DUE at the beginning of class on Friday, 6 December

I will assign partners for written critiques (2 pages). Your critique should discuss the strengths and weaknesses of your partner’s paper and make constructive suggestions for improvement.

Week 15  Dec. 13  REVISING

Final draft of research paper DUE on Blackboard by 4:00 p.m., Friday, 20 December

NO EXTENSIONS