

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
SWARTHMORE COLLEGE

HISTORY 91: SENIOR RESEARCH SEMINAR
FALL 2012

Bob Weinberg
Trotter 218; x8133
rweinbe1@swarthmore.edu
Office Hours:
M-T. 2-4; Tr 11-12

Marjorie Murphy
Trotter 211; x8091
mmurphy1@swarthmore.edu
Office Hours:
W 2-5

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. 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, the History Department strongly encourages you to use such material in your paper.

Due Dates of Written Assignments

Summary of meeting with faculty expert on your topic	Due Right After Meeting
Brief description of the topic and preliminary bibliography	Due Wednesday, September 19
Research proposal (prospectus)	Due Wednesday, October 3
Annotated bibliography	Due Monday, October 8
Historiographical essay	Due Tuesday, October 23
Post Document	Due Tuesday, October 30
Document analysis	Due Wednesday, October 31
First section of research paper	Due Wednesday, November 21
Draft of the entire research paper	Due Tuesday, December 4
Peer critique	Due Thur. or Fri., December 6 or 7
Final version of research paper (25 pages or 7,000 words)	Due Saturday, December 22

Students must complete all written and oral assignments to pass the course. All written assignments must be posted on Moodle by the deadline stated in the syllabus. The Department has a firm rule that extensions will not be granted. All assignments must be submitted on time; penalties are stiff. Any assignments received after the due date and time will be graded down severely. Please note that the Department does not grant Incompletes, which means you must submit the paper by the end of the Fall semester. Failure to do so will mean that you will receive an NC in the course and you will not graduate in the spring.

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 analysis (i.e., the questions posed).
Creativity and rigor of interpretation (i.e., the answers proposed).
Logical organization with clear introduction and conclusion.

Accurate citations in the correct form.
Elegant and compelling writing style.

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. All assignments of this type will be considered in the final grade. Students should familiarize themselves with the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th ed. (2011), which is available at the reference desk at McCabe Library and as an e-book on Tripod. This book will serve as the ultimate arbiter of matters of form and style. We have also placed the following book on general reserve in McCabe (also available as an e-book on Tripod): Wayne C. Booth, et al., *The Craft of Research* (3rd ed., 2008). It offers good insight into and guidance with the writing of a research paper.

SEMINAR SCHEDULE

******We Will Meet as a Group the Following Weeks: 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, and 13******

WEEK ONE: September 6-7: Introduction: You Should Have a Paper Topic

Read for September 6-7: Michael Kwass, "Big Hair: A Wig History of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century France," *American Historical Review* 111 (June 2006), 631-659.
Access via Tripod/History Cooperative

Come to class with a written outline that breaks down the article into its constituent parts. It does not matter if this article is not in your area of study or expertise. The point of this exercise is to identify the following aspects of a history essay: statement of problem, thesis, and premises; discussion of sources; methods or strategies for research; treatment of historiography; development of narrative; comparative dimensions; suggestions for further research. Print and bring the article to class. We will discuss the structure of this essay and focus on the building blocks of a good historical essay. **In addition, please submit your proposed paper topic at the end of your written outline.**

Approving a Topic

By the end of Week 2 you must meet with a faculty member who is knowledgeable about the topic of your paper and discuss bibliographical and other matters relevant to your research. Immediately after the meeting, both you and the faculty member will send us an email summarizing what was said during the meeting. Your proposal will not be considered accepted until we have received both emails.

Criteria for Topic Selection

You should ideally draw inspiration from other history courses and reading you have done at Swarthmore. Think about the kinds of topics and kind of history that intrigue you and that you would like to study in greater detail. Be sure to consider whether knowledge of a language other than English is necessary for conducting research and whether you can feasibly complete the

project in one semester. You will be living with your project for the entire semester, and so definitely select a topic that will sustain your interest and enthusiasm for the next several months.

Selecting a Topic: What Not to Do

What you don't want to do is select a topic that possesses one or more of the following characteristics:

Addresses issues that are settled, trivial, and banal. For example, "Did Antisemitism Play a Role in Hitler's Thinking?" or "Lawn-Bowling in Rhodesia: Unanswered Questions"

Focuses on matters that are too narrowly conceived or excessively specific. For example, "Class Formation in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, in July 1947" or "Religious Practice among Nineteenth-Century vaNhowe Communities of Pre-Colonial Zimbabwe."

Similarly, focuses on issues that are too broadly conceived. For example, "The Meaning of 'Democracy' in US History" or "What role does fear play in human societies?"

Requires linguistic skills and travel that are logistically impossible and impractical. For example, "Creation of Reindeer Collective Farms in the Yakutsk Region of the Soviet Union in 1932 According to Archival Documents Found Only in Tomsk."

Centers on your personal and family life. For example, "An Oral History of My Dad's Baking Brownies for My Third-Grade Class."

Requires making comparisons spanning many centuries: For example, "A Comparative History of Canoe-Building Among the Cree and Chukchi, 1450 to 1950."

Shaping Your Topic

Once you settle upon a topic, you may find that you will need to fine-tune it for a variety of reasons.

If the topic is not feasible or practical in the form it first occurs to you, then:

- Pare it down if it's too big.
- Deal with accessible perceptions of a distant event or social history.
- Focus on historiography rather than primary history.
- Shift the topic to some other geographical area or time period.

Is the topic too specific, convoluted, or trivial? Then consider the doing the following:

- Broaden it out some.
- Clarify the topic: what are you really interested in?

Or check that you are not:

- Substituting the conclusion or a specific argument for the topic?
- Letting a clever literary device or metaphor drive your idea?

WEEK TWO: September 13-14: Library Resources and Research Tools and Strategies Meet at McCabe Library, Electronic Reference Room (Top Floor)

Guest Speakers: Sarah Elichko, Social Sciences Librarian; Chris Densmore, Curator of Friends Historical Library

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. In particular, be sure to write complete citations of the materials. Doing so now will save you a lot of headaches later in the semester when you draw up your final bibliography and notes.

In addition, read the brief essays on notetaking that we have posted on Moodle.

You MUST DEFINITELY settle Your Topic by the End of This Week. Remember to Consult with the Appropriate Faculty Member and Send Us an E-Mail So We Can Give Final Approval of Your Topic.

WEEK THREE: September 20-21: Descriptions of Topic and Preliminary Bibliography

Written Assignment Due on Wednesday, September 19 by 5 PM on Moodle: Brief Description of the Topic and Preliminary Bibliography.

Five-Minute Class Presentation on September 20 or 21.

Make use of the tools and resources that you learned during our library session to locate a scholarly article that is central to your research topic. During class you will give a brief presentation on that article. For a good presentation, you will need to have begun seriously to work on your bibliography and read several articles. The article you select is a vehicle for discussing the historical significance of your topic.

Your presentation should cover the following points:

Why did you choose this article?

What are its main themes, arguments, and methodologies?

What types of primary sources did the author use?

What questions or controversies does it leave unanswered?

How does the article contribute to historiographical, theoretical, or methodological debates on your topic?

How do you expect your research to contribute to the issues raised by this article?

Note: Special Majors in History and Educational Studies will meet with both department advisors this week.

WEEK FOUR: September 27-28: Individual Research

You are **encouraged** to meet with Professor Murphy or Professor Weinberg during this week. We will schedule **required** meetings for some students whose projects need further consultation.

WEEK FIVE: October 4-5: Research Proposal

Written Assignment Due on Monday, October 1 by 5 PM on Moodle: Research Proposal

Five-Minute Class Presentation on October 4-5

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. You will give a brief presentation of your proposal in class. In it, you should persuade your classmates (and the professor) that your topic is both important and fascinating. Show us 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 have posed.

How does the article contribute to historiographical, theoretical, or methodological debates on your topic?

How do you expect your research to contribute to the issues raised by this article?

What are the article's main themes, arguments, and methodologies?

An effective oral presentation requires you to be concise and focused. Five minutes pass very, very quickly, and so it is imperative that you come to class with a well-formulated presentation that does not stray from the questions presented above. The purpose of the presentation is to force you to organize your thoughts about your topic and communicate what you believe to be historically significant about the topic to others.

Read a sample research proposal posted on Moodle. You are also encouraged to read the proposals that you all have posted before class.

WEEK SIX: October 11-12: Annotated Bibliography and Individual Conferences

Written Assignment Due on Monday, October 8 by Noon on Moodle: Annotated Bibliography

Read the Sample Annotated Bibliography on Moodle

You must assemble a bibliography of important books, articles, and primary sources on your topic. The bibliography should include at least four books, close to ten articles, and as many primary sources as possible.

The bibliography should be structured in two sections, Primary Sources and Secondary Sources. In each section, provide complete bibliographical information **in the correct form** (see *MLA Handbook*, chap. 5). **STUDENTS WHO SUBMIT A BIBLIOGRAPHY IN THE INCORRECT FORM WILL BE REQUIRED TO RESUBMIT THEIR BIBLIOGRAPHY (WITH APPROPRIATE GRADE PENALTIES)**. For primary sources, provide a brief annotation (2-4 lines) describing the kind of source it is, where the source is located, and whose perspective(s) the source provides. For secondary sources, provide a brief annotation (2-4 lines) that summarizes the main themes, arguments, and sources used in the work cited. See James L. Harner, *On Compiling an Annotated Bibliography* (McCabe Reference Call Number: Z 1001 H 33 2000).

You are **REQUIRED** to meet with Professor Murphy or Professor Weinberg during this week. Failure to do so will be reflected in the final grade.

FALL BREAK: October 13-21

WEEK SEVEN: October 25-26: Historiographical Essay and Individual Conferences

Written Assignment Due on Tuesday, October 23 by 5 PM on Moodle: Historiographical Essay

You are **REQUIRED** to meet with Professor Murphy or Professor Weinberg between **Wednesday, October 24** and **Monday, October 29**. Failure to do so will be reflected in the final grade.

Read one of the following historiographical essays we have posted on Blackboard:

Ronald Suny, "Revising the Old Story: The 1917 Revolution in Light of New Sources"

or

Nancy Hewitt, "On Their Own Terms: A Historiographical Essay"

Historians engage in the business of interpreting the past. Not surprisingly, historians do not always agree with the interpretations and analyses of their colleagues. This exercise is designed to have you explore the various interpretations historians have had about your research topic. The essay is a review of historians' approaches and interpretations of your project and pays attention to how each work on the subject occupies a particular place within that body of scholarship.

A successful historiographical essay will explore the strengths and weaknesses of the respective positions in terms of evidence, methodology and argumentation. You do not need to try to deal with every book/article on your subject. Focus on those works you believe are the most central to your project: you may want to select those texts that are representative (good examples of typical work on the subject) of the historiography and/or those that are central (texts that have influenced other works on the subject) to the historiography.

Your essay should introduce the reader to the historical significance of the problem under examination and indicate how the materials you have selected help shed light on this issue. You will also need to provide an overview, analysis and critical evaluation of the books and articles you have chosen. We do not want or expect a blow-by-blow description of each chapter and

paragraph. Instead, you should strive to integrate your analyses of the books and articles into a cohesive, integrated synthesis that examines the issues raised in common by the work under review and also compares and contrasts their respective arguments, conclusions, methodologies, etc. What are the relationships among the works under examination, and what kinds of questions are missing from the historiography? Consider how the arguments, approaches, and ideas presented in the secondary literature have influenced your own thinking on the topic. Finally, you should conclude your essay with your own assessment and judgment of the controversy. How do your ideas coincide with those presented by other scholars? How and why do they diverge? An historiographical essay is usually about three-to-five pages.

WEEK EIGHT: November 1-2: Document Analysis

Written Assignment: Scan and Post your Document on Tuesday, October 30; The Document Analysis is Due on Wednesday, October 31 by 5 PM on Moodle.

The document should be one or two pages.

Please bring a hard copy of the document for each person in the class.

The two-to-three-page document analysis should be an interpretation of a particularly important, fascinating, or difficult document. Your class presentation on **November 1-2** will summarize the document analysis. The presentation is a critical part of the assignment and should be limited to seven minutes.

The purpose of the assignment is to allow you to practice and showcase your skills in original historical interpretation. Think of this as the first draft of one small part of your larger research paper. The meaning and significance of a text can be lost on your readers if you forget to tell them the basic information they need to know about that document. So remember to include somewhere in your document analysis essay the following important information: Who wrote the document? When? Why? For whom? How is this document relevant for your research paper?

The evidence that historians rely on consists largely of written documents. There are many different ways to interpret such primary sources, and a multitude of ways to be creative in the process. In some instances, you may want to tell a story; in others, you might comment on the language employed in the document; while in yet other cases your interpretation might emerge from an attempt to assess motivation, intent, or purpose. *Simply describing what happened will never be sufficient* as a historical interpretation of a document.

Interpretation involves two analytic processes because historians are always trying to discover both the meaning and the significance of any piece of historical evidence. Thus your document analysis paper should seek to expose the meaning of the document you have chosen and uncover its significance. By *meaning*, we are trying to reconstruct how a document may have been understood by the historical actors in the era in which it was composed; by *significance*, we attempt to relate how that evidence contributes to a particular interpretation of the past. A good document analysis paper will therefore focus upon both the text itself (with attention to the specifics and nuances of language used) and the context (the broader history of the period that informs the document).

Analyzing Primary Sources

Based on Mark Kishlansky, “How to Read a Document” in *Sources of the West* (1995).

Documents can be analyzed on many levels and asked to answer a number of questions. Not all of what follows will be useful with every document, but in general the following questions are useful and will cover virtually all of what you can get out of a document. In what follows, I am using the word “document” in the broadest possible sense. In some circumstances, a painting or a piece of music might be a document, and so might a gun or a coffee cup.

Level One Questions: These are questions for which there are normally concrete answers. The document itself might answer these questions in a straightforward way, but the answers might also

require some deeper thinking.

Who created this document? This doesn't mean just knowing the *name* of the author, though that is important. It also means knowing something about the author, since who that person is will influence the content and meaning of the document. Think about what the author's identity might reveal about the deeper meaning of the source.

Who is the intended audience? Audience shapes what we expect from a source, and knowing the relationship between the author and the intended audience can tell us a great deal about the source because it determines a whole set of rhetorical conventions that might have an impact on the credibility of the text and/or the need to look for hidden meanings.

What is the story line? The story line may be a narrative, but it may also be details that don't form a story in the conventional sense. A diary entry may offer a conventional linear narrative, while a will does not – but the will still has a “story.”

Level Two Questions: Now, you will probe beneath the surface. These questions still have essentially direct answers, and ones that can be ascertained in a fairly “objective” way. They are, however, questions that take you deeper into the source and sometimes between the lines.

When and Why was the document created? Every source you will encounter was created for a purpose. What is it? Some possibilities (not an exhaustive list!) are: to persuade, to inform, to intimidate, to make something legal.

What type of document is this? Genres have conventions – i.e., certain things that always appear (like beginning a letter “Dear — ”). Knowing these is necessary for a secure understanding of the source.

What are the basic assumptions of this source? All documents make assumptions that are connected to their intended audience – things that the creators know the audience will know without having to be told as well as things that have to be stated because they are central to the argument.

Level Three Questions: In these questions, you exercise your critical imagination – the exercise of thinking *historically* about your sources. These questions don't have definite answers and may produce answers from you that others will dispute.

Can I believe this document? Do the assumptions, the rhetoric, etc. of this source undermine its credibility? Are there things that are believable even if other things seem not to be? What questions do I need to answer in order to feel comfortable trusting this source? Can there be more than one interpretation of the story or details within the document?

What can I learn about the society that created it? This may be the most important question for historians. Every source reveals things that its creators never intended to reveal. It's not necessarily the case that it reveals things they didn't *want* us to know – merely that we can see things with hindsight and a different perspective that they didn't realize they were telling us about them.

What does the source mean for my research topic? This is the great “So what?” question. Now that you have decoded this source, what difference does it make? Have you learned anything useful from it? What will you (or *could* you) do with what you have learned? Finally, you should think about what the document does **not reveal** and how you might go about trying to find out what this document fails to tell you.

Physical Appearance of Sources: If you are working with a facsimile, photocopy or microfilm of the *original* source, think about what the physical appearance and lay-out of the source reveals about it. For example: If it is a handwritten source, is the text “letter perfect” or are there corrections, erasures, interlinear notes, etc.? If it is a printed work, is it produced in a way that can give clues about the potential audience?

WEEK NINE: November 8-9: Independent Writing

WEEK TEN: November 15-16: Individual Writing and Conferences

You are **REQUIRED** to meet with Professor Murphy or Professor Weinberg during this week. Failure to do so will be reflected in the final grade.

WEEK ELEVEN: Thanksgiving Week, Nov 22-23: Individual Writing and Revising

Written Assignment Due Wednesday, November 21 by 5 PM on Moodle: First Section of Research Paper

You will submit a draft of a major section or portion of the research paper, including notation (footnotes or endnotes) **in the correct form** (see *MLA Handbook*, Appendix B) and a (non-annotated) bibliography. All drafts should be double-spaced and paginated.

WEEK TWELVE: November 29 and 30: Individual Conferences **Keep writing so a full draft of the paper is ready by Week Thirteen.**

You are **REQUIRED** to meet with Professor Murphy or Professor Weinberg. Failure to do so will be reflected in the final grade.

WEEK THIRTEEN: December 6-7: Revision, Draft of the Paper, and Peer Critiques **Written Assignment Due on Moodle by 5 PM on Tuesday, December 4: Draft of the Research Paper**

You will submit a draft of the entire research paper. It should include revisions of your first section as well as the remaining sections. This first draft of the paper should incorporate your historiographical essay into body of the paper. The draft should also include notation (footnotes or endnotes) **in the correct form** (see *MLA Handbook*, Appendix B) and a (non-annotated) bibliography. PLEASE NOTE: THE FORM FOR FOOTNOTES IS NOT IDENTICAL TO

THE FORM FOR A BIBLIOGRAPHY. LEARN AND EXECUTE THE DIFFERENT FORMS.
All drafts should be double-spaced and paginated.

**Written Assignment Due at Beginning of Class on Thursday, December 6 or Friday,
December 7: Peer Critique**

Students will be assigned partners for written critiques. Critiques should discuss the strengths and weaknesses of your partner's paper and make constructive suggestions for improvement. Bring a copy to class and post on Moodle.

**WEEK FOURTEEN: December 12-14: Individual Meetings with Professor Weinberg or
Professor Murphy; Revising and Rewriting**

Final Version of Research Paper Due on Saturday, December 22 by Noon on Moodle

The final version of the research paper should include complete notation (endnotes or footnotes) **in the correct form** (see *MLA Handbook*, Appendix B), a bibliography **in the correct form**, and an abstract. The abstract is a 1-3 sentence summary of the subject and argument of the paper, to be used for cataloging in the Swarthmore archives. Place the abstract before your introduction in the paper.