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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Summary of meeting with faculty expert on your topic</td>
<td>Due Right After Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brief description of the topic and preliminary bibliography</td>
<td>Due Wednesday, September 17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research proposal (prospectus)</td>
<td>Due Monday, September 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotated bibliography</td>
<td>Due Monday, October 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post Document</td>
<td>Due Tuesday, October 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Document analysis</td>
<td>Due Wednesday, October 22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historiographical Essay</td>
<td>Due Tuesday, October 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>First section of research paper</td>
<td>Due Friday, November 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Draft of the entire research paper</td>
<td>Due Tuesday, December 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer critique</td>
<td>Due Thur. or Fri., December 4 or 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final draft of research paper (25 pages or 7,000 words)</td>
<td>Due Saturday, December 20</td>
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**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. 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.

We have posted on Moodle a style sheet that serves as the ultimate arbiter of matters regarding citations. It is from Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Eighth edition). 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, 7, and 13****

**WEEK ONE: September 4-5: Introduction  (You Should Have a Paper Topic)**


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 proposed topic 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.

The flip side of a topic is a question. The best papers start with the best questions. A good question has no obvious answer, but something about it compels you to find that answer and it keeps your reader’s attention focused. A good question is insurance against the uncertainties of the archive. It can always be refined and reframed, especially in response to what your sources reveal. (See Wayne Booth, *The Craft of Research*, for more on the relationship between topics and questions.)

**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, “How many coins did the British issue in India in the 1790s?” There is nothing wrong with being specific, as long as you can identify an historically significant question.

Similarly, focuses on issues that are too broadly conceived. For example, “The history of Civil Rights in Washington, D.C. since World War II” or “The problem of crime in London in the nineteenth century.” There’s nothing wrong with thinking about big problems or questions, but you need to consider it a step toward a final topic not the end product.

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.”

Replicates or extends the argument of an inspiring work of scholarship. It’s great to be inspired, but there is a difference between being inspired by a style or method of interpretation and replicating the same kind of study in a different locale.

**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.
- 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 11-12: Library Resources and Research Tools and Strategies
Meet in Trotter 201 [NOTE THE DIFFERENT MEETING LOCATION]

Guest Speaker: Sarah Elichko, Social Sciences Librarian; plus smaller groups meetings with librarians at the Friends Historical Library or Swarthmore Peace Collection (if necessary).

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 note taking that we have posted on Moodle

You MUST DEFINITELY Settle on 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 18-19: Descriptions of Topic and Preliminary Bibliography

Written Assignment Due on Wednesday, September 17 by 5 PM on Moodle: Brief Description of the Topic and Preliminary Bibliography.
(Add one sentence at the end of your bibliography stating which library resources from last week’s class were most useful in preparing your bibliography.)

Five-Minute Class Presentation on September 18 or 19.

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 have 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 is the question that propels the study? How did the question get reframed and refined as the scholar engages with his or her sources?
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 25-26: 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. The first day of Rosh Hashanah is Thursday, September 25, and Professor Weinberg will not be available for meetings.

WEEK FIVE: October 2-3: Research Proposal

Written Assignment Due on Monday, September 29 by 5 PM on Moodle: Research Proposal

Five-Minute Class Presentation on Thursday, October 2 or Friday, October 3.

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 professors) that your topic is both important and fascinating. How have you moved from your original topic to a compelling question? 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. Keep us riveted by the historical significance or the complexity of your project’s central question.

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 9-10: Annotated Bibliography and Individual Conferences

Written Assignment Due on Monday, October 6 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. 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.


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 13-17

WEEK SEVEN: October 23-24: Document Analysis

Written Assignment: Scan and Post your Document on Tuesday, October 21; The Document Analysis is Due on Wednesday, October 22 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 Thursday, October 23 or Friday, October 24 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. It’s an opportunity to test the quality of your question against the nature of your sources. You may come away from this assignment with a new or sharpened focus for the question you wish to pose.

There are many different ways to interpret 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. However, 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). 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?
Analyzing Primary Sources


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 is changing in this society? What is the conflict that this document is describing or dramatizing? How does this conflict reveal the sources of change and the causes of tension in this society?

**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 EIGHT: October 30-31: Historiographical Essay and Individual Conferences**

**Written Assignment Due on Tuesday, October 28 by 5 PM on Moodle: Historiographical Essay**

You are REQUIRED to meet with Professor Murphy or Professor Weinberg between Wednesday, October 22 and Monday, October 27. Failure to do so will be reflected in the final grade.

**Read one of the following historiographical essays we have posted on Moodle as an example (of course, no one will stop you if you want to read both examples):**

Jonathan Saha, “Histories of Everyday Violence in British India”

or


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 historiographical 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.

Think of this as an analysis of a dialogue, conversation, or debate among scholars. Your task is to describe and analyze the contours and directions of this scholarly dialogue. What question(s) are they engaging with and debating? How has it changed over time? 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. 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. What are
you trying to accomplish in the essay? How do the debates among historians link to your paper? How do your ideas coincide with those presented by other scholars? How does your thinking contribute to or move beyond the debate or dialogue you have analyzed? How does your analysis refine the central question propelling your research project? An historiographical essay is about four to five pages.

An historiographical essay is not a personal reflection. It offers you the opportunity to take a stance regarding how your subject has been studied by others and allows you to tell the reader the value (or lack of) of what others have written. In short, how does the historiography intersect with your project. Enter into the discussion that other historians have been conducting.

WEEK NINE: November 6-7: Independent Writing

WEEK TEN: November 13-14: Independent 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.

Written Assignment Due Friday, November 14 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 and a (non-annotated) bibliography. All drafts should be double-spaced and paginated. You should reread the article about Robespierre we discussed earlier in the semester in order to see how the author constructed his essay in terms of introduction, historiography, narrative, and analysis.

WEEK ELEVEN: November 20-21: Individual Writing and Revising

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 before you leave for Thanksgiving. Failure to do so will be reflected in the final grade. Professor Weinberg will be unavailable from between November 19 and November 23.

WEEK TWELVE: Thanksgiving Week, November 27-28: Independent Writing

WEEK THIRTEEN: December 4-5: Revision, Draft of the Paper, and Peer Critiques

Written Assignment Due on Tuesday, December 2 by 5 PM on Moodle: 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. The first draft of the paper should incorporate your historiographical essay into the body of the paper. The draft should also include notation (footnotes or endnotes) in the correct form and a (non-annotated) bibliography. PLEASE NOTE: THE FORM FOR FOOTNOTES IS NOT IDENTICAL TO THE FORM FOR A BIBLIOGRAPHY. LEARN TO EXECUTE THE DIFFERENT FORMS. All drafts should be double-spaced and paginated.
Written Assignment Due at Beginning of Class on Thursday, December 4 or Friday, December 5: 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 copy to class and post on Moodle.

WEEK FOURTEEN: December 11-12: Individual Conferences; Revising and Rewriting

Final Version of Research Paper Due on Saturday, December 20 by Noon on Moodle

The final version of the research paper should include complete notation (endnotes or footnotes) in the correct form 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.