01:506:495, Honors Program in History  
Fall Semester 2009

Professor James Masschaele  
Van Dyck Hall 109  
732-932-8250  
massch@rci.rutgers.edu

One section of the seminar will meet on Fridays from 11:30-12:50 and a second section will meet on Fridays from 1:10-2:30. All meetings will be held in Van Dyck 301 unless otherwise notified.

Seminar Description: Most of the work you do in the History Honors Program is done individually, researching your projects and developing written theses on the basis of your research. Each of you will be working in close consultation with faculty advisors and second readers with whom you should meet regularly to discuss your progress. The standard timetable for completing an honors thesis requires you to do most of your research during the fall semester and use the winter break for preparing the first draft of the thesis. During the spring semester, you will be busy revising your drafts, filling in holes in your research, preparing for the defense of the thesis, and working on your oral presentation at the Honors Conference.

In addition to working on your individual project, you are required to participate in the Honors Seminar. The seminar is designed to develop research skills and to help you organize the writing and formal presentation of your thesis. It will give you a chance to discuss general problems and strategies with other students engaged in honors research in History.

September 4th:  
Introductions; discussion of program requirements; support from the Aresty Center; tips on developing research strategies.
Purchase Kate L. Turabian, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, Wayne C. Booth, Wayne C. Booth, Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 7th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). Be sure to buy the seventh edition of this book; older editions do not cover internet sources very effectively and are out-of-date in key areas. This is the standard guidebook used by historians for help with formatting footnotes and bibliographies. It is also full of good advice about how to organize a research paper, how to improve the quality of your prose, and how to research effectively. I did not place an order for the book with any of the usual bookstores in New Brunswick, but you will be able to purchase copies at most major bookstores or from amazon.com or barnesandnoble.com.

September 11th:  
Presentation by a recent History graduate who wrote an honors thesis last year (only in period 4 class). Short paper (2-3 pages) due outlining the general parameters of your thesis, your research strategy, and what you have done to date.

September 18th:  
Meeting with research librarians Jim Niessen and Tom Glynn for discussion of Alexander Library resources, particularly electronic resources.
Meet in the lobby of Alexander.

September 25th:  
Short paper (2-3 pages) due on a major primary source you intend to use in your research. Your paper should address the following topics: What is the format of the primary source (e.g. book, manuscript, private correspondence, etc.)? Who was the author? What was the source’s original purpose and how did it come to be preserved? How do you expect to use it in your research? Those of you who are working with unusual or non-traditional sources can modify the questions if need be. Please write your paper as a formal essay but with a target audience of fellow students who do not necessarily know anything about the source or its context. Come to class prepared to discuss your source and paper with the other students in the seminar.
October 2nd:
Short paper (2-3 pages) due on a major secondary source (book or article) related to your thesis topic. Your paper should summarize the main argument of the work and discuss the primary sources the author used to construct the argument. Come to class prepared to discuss the work and its relationship to your thesis project with the other students in the seminar.

October 9th:
Read Turabian et al., A Manual for Writers, pp. 5-23. We will discuss the issues it deals with in class. Think about how the general points made there might shape the way you approach your thesis.

October 16th:
Reports on progress to date. Each of you should make a short presentation (5 or so minutes) explaining the progress you have made to date on your project and what you expect to accomplish in the remainder of the semester. Each of you will be required to summarize the discussions you have had with your advisors thus far (how many times you have met; on what dates; what advice s/he gave you; and so on). To do this effectively, you should all make sure that you have met your advisor at least once since October 5th.

October 23rd –November 13th:
No class meetings. You should devote these weeks to research. I will be available for individual consultations or to help deal with unexpected problems that crop up in your research. You should plan to meet your advisor at least once during this period.

November 20th:
Small group discussions about the structure and organization of your thesis. Topics to discuss might include: how your vision of the thesis has changed since September; the status of your research notes; how you are planning to divide your material up into chapters; what order you plan to write the chapters in; and how you plan to organize your time so that you can have a first draft completed by the end of January.

November 27th: No class due to Thanksgiving break

December 4th:
Detailed outline of your thesis is due at the start of class. Your outline should be approximately 5-7 pages in length, double-spaced. It should include on a separate page a formal Table of Contents for your thesis (i.e. what you expect the final Table of Contents of your thesis will look like). Your outline should give a chapter-by-chapter synopsis of what you expect to write about and should also indicate clearly how the chapters are related to each other. Your thinking about the chapter structure may change later on, but by this stage of your research you should have a fairly clear idea of how the different parts of the thesis will fit together.

WINTER BREAK
You should use this month of free time to complete most of the primary source research and prepare the first draft of your paper.