

**01:506:495, Honors Program in History  
Fall Semester 2014**

**Professor Mark Wasserman**

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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 read extensively in the history of your topic during the summer of 2014, to do intensive research during the fall semester, and to use December and January for preparing the first draft of the thesis. During the spring semester, you will revise your drafts, fill in holes in your research, prepare for the defense of the thesis, and work on your oral presentation for 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 to organize the writing and the 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 5:**

**What is research? What are primary sources? Where to begin? How to get organized? The frustrations of historians. Where does one get support? (Aresty)**

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, *Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). Be sure to buy the eighth edition of this book; earlier editions do not cover internet sources very effectively and are out-of-date in key areas.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.

**September 12:**

Short paper (2-3 pages) due, outlining the general parameters of your thesis, your research strategy, and what you have done to date. Be prepared to give a short presentation (4-5 minutes) about your topic to the other students in the seminar. 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.

**September 19:**

You will meet with research librarians Jim Niessen and Tom Glynn and Special Collections librarians Ron Becker and Fernanda Pellone for discussion of Alexander Library resources.

**September 26:** You will meet with Shaun Illingworth and Molly Graham of the Rutgers Oral History Archive to learn about Oral History.

**Oct. 3:**

Short paper (2-3 pages) due on major secondary sources (at least two books or articles) related to your thesis topic. Your paper should summarize the main argument of the works and discuss the primary sources the authors used to construct their arguments. Be prepared to place your work within the context of the historiography of the topic. You will also prepare a short oral presentation of these findings.

PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU SHOULD BE MEETING WITH YOUR ADVISERS ON A WEEKLY BASIS.

**October 10:**

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. manuscript, private correspondence, newspapers, 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 17: No class. Research.**

**October 24:** Reports on progress to date. Each of you should make a short presentation (4-5 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 4<sup>th</sup>. (Preferably weekly.)

**October 31, November 7, 14, 21, 28**(Thanksgiving):

No class meetings. You should devote these weeks to research. Students should schedule individual meetings with Professor Wasserman .You must meet with your advisor during this period.

**December 5:**

We will discuss the structure and organization of your thesis. Topics 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.

Please bring with you samples of your notes taken from primary and secondary sources. Bring your laptop if necessary.

December 12

An essay giving an overview of the structure of your thesis is due at the start of class. Your essay should be 5-7 pages long (double spaced) and should be accompanied by a formal Table of Contents for your thesis (i.e. with the titles of chapters). It should provide a chapter-by- chapter summary of what you plan 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, which will be due in early February, shortly after we return from Winter Break.