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## **Honors Completion Thesis Writing Seminar S17**

History Honors Program

Professor Barbara Cooper

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Tuesday 11:30 – 12: 50 VD 301 [occasionally in VD 308]

Core requirements fulfilled: WCd and WCr

Key dates to bear in mind:

- Oral exam completed by: April 14, 2017
- Deposit copyedited thesis of record and signed paperwork on your oral: April 20, 2017
- Honors conference: April 28, 2017

You will not have completed the requirements of the Honors program until you have passed an oral exam, turned in your approved final Thesis, and presented your findings at the annual History department Honors Conference. The conference is open to the public and you are welcome to invite your family. Be prepared to spend the entire day at the conference, which will be held on a Friday.

Week 1 January 17

Oral updates on status of research and first draft

Week 2 Jan 24

Read selection from *Bird by Bird* and come prepared to discuss it in class.

Week 3 Jan 31 [No Meeting]

Send a copy of your first “chunk” to everyone. Read your classmates’ writing and write your observations on the following:

- 1) In three sentences what is the piece of writing you have been given “about”?
- 2) What would you say is the strength of the piece?
- 3) What is the evidence the author is drawing upon? Why is it either convincing or unconvincing?
- 4) What is the logic shaping the structure of the piece you have been given? Does it make sense—how could it be improved?
- 5) What are the three writing problems you would advise the author to address?

Week 4 Feb. 7

Come to class with a printed copy of your observations of the papers you have read.

Week 5 Feb. 14 [No Meeting]

Send a copy of your second “chunk” to everyone. Read your classmates’ writing and write your observations on the following:

- 1) In three sentences what is the piece of writing you have been given “about”?
- 2) What would you say is the strength of the piece?
- 3) Describe in three sentences how the author uses the evidence he or she uses. What could be done to make the argument stronger by using better evidence or by using the available evidence differently? Or is the argument simply not supported by the evidence? Explain.
- 4) Where do you find the text confusing and why?
- 5) What specifically could the author do to strengthen the structure of the piece?

Week 6 Feb. 21

Come to class with a printed copy of your comments on each of the pieces you read.

Week 7 Feb 28 [No Meeting]

By now you should have a rough full draft. Make sure your adviser and you are discussing how to pull it into something more like a finished paper.

Send a copy of your final “chunk” to everyone. Read your classmates’ writing and write your observations on the following:

- 1) In three sentences what is the piece of writing you have been given “about”?
- 2) What would you say is the strength of the piece?
- 3) See if you can imagine three different objections or counter-arguments a reader (not necessarily you) might formulate in response to the argument being presented.
- 4) How might the author go about anticipating to and responding to those imaginable critiques?
- 5) What could the author do to improve the voice or tone of the writing?

Week 8 March 7

Come to class with a printed copy of your comments on each of the pieces you read.

Spring Break FINISH AND POLISH YOUR THESIS

REMINDER:

You will not have completed the requirements of the Honors program until you have passed an oral exam, turned in your approved final Thesis, and presented your findings at the annual History department Honors Conference. You will receive a temporary grade for the course until you have finished the requirements.

The degree of honors will not be determined before the Honors Conference and should not be discussed at the oral.

Week 9 March 21 [No Meeting]

Send your completed full thesis to everyone in the class. Read your classmates’ writing and then take some time to think about the questions below. When you have some clear thoughts mark up the text using track-changes to improve the writing:

- 1) In three sentences what is the argument of the thesis? Does the title of the paper capture something of the potential excitement of the argument? Could it be better?
- 2) What would you say is the greatest insight you gained by reading this thesis? Is that gem as clearly conveyed as it could be? How could it be brought out better?
- 3) How do the sections of the thesis flow from one to the next? Are there places where a connecting sentence or idea is missing, or where the documentation feels inadequate to support the claims?
- 4) What about the precision of the language used—are there places where a better word or phrase would improve the text? Does the writer use passive voice where active voice would be better?
- 5) Are the citations and bibliography in order? Or do they distract the reader?

Week 10 March 28

If you have not already scheduled your oral you should do so.

Send your comments and tracked versions of your classmates’ papers to me and to them by email.

We will meet to discuss the difference between an introduction and a conclusion.

Week 11 April 4 [No Meeting]  
Oral Exams should be occurring

Week 12 April 11  
Mock Conference presentations  
Prepare a talk of no longer than 20 minutes that conveys the nature of your project, your argument in light of the primary source evidence, and a conclusion that makes clear why it matters. Images can be useful.

**April 14**—you should have **completed your oral exam and turned in your paperwork.**

Week 13 April 18  
Mock conferences

**April 20**—you must have passed your oral **and submitted your final thesis of record** by this date in order to participate in the Honors Conference.

Week 14 April 25 [we may not need to meet if we have all done our presentations]  
Mock Honors Conference presentations.

April 28 ALL DAY  
HONORS CONFERENCE