

History 398-002: Junior Honors Colloquium  
Dr. Derek Peterson

Thursdays, 1:00-4:00 pm  
1135 North Quad

### **Writing a Thesis Methods of Historical Research**

Email: drpeters@umich.edu

Tel: (734) 615-3608

Office hours: Tuesdays 11:30 to 12:30 pm (in 1634 Haven Hall), and by prior arrangement

History 398 is designed to prepare students to write an honors thesis. As the first course in a three-semester sequence, it will focus on the craft of historical research and writing, combining analysis of models for doing history with practical, nuts-and-bolts training in the skills necessary to define and produce a thesis. We will be especially attentive to the ways in which historians work: how they define topics, identify and analyze primary sources, and fashion arguments. The goal of the course assignments is to help students identify a topic, formulate a research strategy, and develop a prospectus for the senior thesis. The class will also serve as a collective in which to develop research and writing skills. Because writing is critical to the process of creating knowledge about the past, the seminar is a writing-intensive course, demanding about 50 pages in all. By the end of the semester, students will have chosen a research topic and a faculty advisor, and written a 10 to 12 page thesis prospectus.

#### **Required Books** (available at Ulrich's and also on Reserve)

Wayne Booth, et al., *The Craft of Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008)

Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010)

Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (New York: Norton, 2000)

Jonathan D. Spence, *The Death of Woman Wang* (New York: Penguin, 1998)

Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre: And Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 1984)

Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984)

#### **Course Requirements**

Attendance and participation: History 398 meets once a week for three hours. Regular attendance is mandatory, as students will be expected to participate actively in discussions. Please come to each class session prepared with comments on what you found most intriguing, important, or problematic in the assigned texts and with specific ideas you would like us all to discuss. Your participation grade will be based on an assessment at each session of how much and how well you engaged with the readings in a serious and thoughtful manner. Please also be

sure to arrive at class on time, turn off all cell phones, beepers, iPods, and laptops, and put away all non-course related materials.

Reading: The reading assignments vary greatly. They include both primary and secondary sources, some chosen by the instructor, others by you to fit your own research needs. Emphasis will be placed both on close, critical readings of the texts and on practical craft of doing historical research and making historical arguments. You are expected to complete all the readings and come to class prepared to discuss them.

Seminar Partner: Since a crucial dimension of writing good history involves learning how to give and receive feedback, each student will be given a seminar partner from the class with whom to brainstorm and exchange papers for mutual peer review.

Library Trips: At various times during the semester we will meet in one of the university libraries or archives (including on North Campus) to receive an introduction to their holdings and to research tools that can aid historians in their investigations.

Writing: The writing in this seminar will be directed toward work relevant to your own thesis topic. Reading responses should be submitted to the Drop Box section of the CTools site by 9 am on the day for which they are assigned. Other writing assignments should be handed in as hard copy in class. When your seminar partner is expected to provide comments, a second copy of the paper should be given to him/her. Comments on a partner's written work, which can include suggestions in the margins of the paper, should be returned directly to your partner, with a copy handed in to me during class.

- 12 Jan Review of an honors thesis (2-4 pages)
- 19 Jan Comments on seminar partner's thesis review (1-2 paragraphs)  
Response on CTools to assigned reading (1-2 pages)
- 26 Jan Analysis of a secondary book relevant to thesis and 2 reviews of it (3-5 pages)
- 2 Feb Comments on seminar partner's book analysis (1-2 paragraphs)
- 9 Feb Analysis of five secondary articles relevant to thesis (3-5 pages)  
Response on CTools to assigned reading (1-2 pages)
- 16 Feb Preliminary thesis proposal (2-4 pages)  
Rewrite of secondary book paper
- 23 Feb Annotated bibliography on thesis materials (minimum 12 sources, at least four primary  
and at least four secondary)  
Response on CTools to assigned reading (1-2 pages)
- 8 Mar Choice of thesis advisor
- 15 Mar Essay interpreting a cluster of primary sources related to thesis (4-6 pages)  
Response on CTools to assigned reading (1-2 pages)
- 22 Mar Comments on seminar partner's primary source essay (1-2 pages)  
Response on CTools to assigned reading (1-2 pages)

- 29 Mar Draft of thesis prospectus (8-12 pages)  
 5 Ap Abstract of thesis prospectus for oral presentation (3-4 pages)  
 Rewrite of primary source essay  
 12 Ap Comments on first draft of seminar partner's thesis prospectus (2-4 pages)  
 23 Ap Final revised version of thesis prospectus (10-12 pages)

Every essay should meet the normal standards of appropriate citation and reference. For all papers, make use of the resources provided by the Sweetland Writing Center (<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/swc/>).

Detailed instructions for each of the writing assignments is given in "Explanation of Paper Writing Requirements for History 398", which will be distributed in class and is available on CTools [CTools Resources-History Writing Guides].

### Marking scheme

Marks in the course will be determined as follows:

- Papers on honors thesis, secondary book, & secondary articles: 30%
- Paper on primary sources: 15%
- Three stages of the thesis prospectus + annotated bibliography: 30%
- Participation in class discussion + responses to course readings: 25%

**Note:** *Late papers will be penalized one-third of a grade per calendar day without prior approval of the instructor. Talk with the instructor in advance if you think you may need extra time with a particular assignment.*

### Academic Integrity

*Plagiarism and cheating will **not** be tolerated.* LS&A policy prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, cheating, double submission of papers, and fabrication. Any piece of work found to have violated these rules will automatically receive a zero (not simply an F). Violations will also be reported to the Assistant Dean. Depending on the severity of the infraction, the university will impose additional penalties.

*When in doubt, be sure to cite carefully and completely all sources from which information is obtained.* This includes books, articles, documents, internet sites, encyclopedias, and periodicals. You must provide a citation if you exactly quote a source, paraphrase it, or extract information from it. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, feel free to speak to the course instructor or the staff at the Sweetland Writing Center.

## Schedule

### 5 January: Introduction: What is a Topic?

In-class: Introduce self and project; select honors thesis to review

### 12 January: What is a Thesis? (Meet in 1014 Tisch Hall)

Reading: Selected recent honors thesis  
Booth, et al., *The Craft of Research*, chs. 1-2 (pp. 9-27)  
Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, ch. 4 (pp. 39-65)

In-class: Discussion about thesis process with panel of current H399 students

Due: Review of selected honors thesis (2 copies; 2-4 pages)

### 19 January: Narrative and the Elusive Subject

Reading: Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*  
Robert Finlay, 'The Refashioning of Martin Guerre', *American Historical Review* 93 (3) (June 1988), 553-71 [CTools Resources-Supplementary Readings]  
Natalie Zemon Davis, 'On the Lame', *American Historical Review* 93 (3) (June 1988), 572-603 [CTools Resources-Supplementary Readings]  
Deborah E. Harkness, 'Finding the Story', *Perspectives on History* (January 2009) [CTools Resources-Supplementary Readings]  
Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, ch. 2 (pp. 6-19)

In-class: Discuss ways to construct a historical narrative  
Discuss seminar partner's comments on thesis review

Due: Response on CTools to assigned reading (1-2 pages)  
Comments on seminar partner's thesis review (2 copies; 1-2 paragraphs)

### 26 January: Research Tools I (Meet at Bentley Historical Library, North Campus)

Reading: An important secondary work relevant to thesis topic  
Two scholarly reviews of the selected secondary work (one from the *American Historical Review*, if possible)  
Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, ch. 3 (pp. 20-34)

In-class: Visit to Bentley Historical Library (<http://www.umich.edu/~bhl/>) and Gerald R. Ford Library (<http://www.ford.utexas.edu>)

Due: Analysis of selected secondary work and its reviews (2 copies; 3-5 pages)

## **2 February: Individual Meetings to Discuss Research Projects**

Reading: Five important secondary articles relevant to thesis topic  
List of UM History Faculty Research Interests from Department website

In-class: Meet with instructor individually to discuss topic, potential advisor, etc.

Due: Comments on seminar partner's book analysis (2 copies; 1-2 paragraphs)

## **9 February: What is History?**

Reading: Booth, et al., *The Craft of Research*, chs. 3-6 (pp. 31-101)  
Richard Evans, *In Defence of History*

In-class: Discussion of use of archival and oral sources in research

Due: Analysis of selected secondary articles (3-5 pages)  
Response on CTools to assigned reading (1-2 pages)

## **16 February: Research Tools II (Meet at Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library)**

Reading: Booth, et al, *The Craft of Research*, chs. 7-10 (pp. 105-151)  
Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, ch. 5 (pp. 66-85)

In-class: Class visit to Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library (<http://www.lib.umich.edu>)

Due: Preliminary thesis proposal, describing thesis topic, questions to be investigated, sources that might be used (2-4 pages)  
Rewrite of secondary book paper

## **23 February: Interpreting Evidence**

Reading: Excerpts from *Mwigwithania* ('The Reconciller') [CTools Resources-Supplementary Readings]  
'Sample Annotated Bibliography' [CTools Resources-Samples]  
Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, ch. 7 (pp. 94-132)

In-class: Discuss how to assess primary sources and to use them as evidence

Due: Annotated bibliography on thesis materials (minimum 12 sources, at least 4 primary and at least 4 secondary)  
Response on CTools to assigned reading (1-2 pages)

### **1 March: Winter Break**

### **8 March: Traces in the Archive, and Visit to the Clements Library**

Reading: Jonathan D. Spence, *The Death of Woman Wang*.  
Robert Entenmann, 'Review of *The Death of Woman Wang*', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* (40) (June 1980), 268-72 [CTools Resources-Supplementary Readings]  
Carlo Ginzburg, 'Checking the Evidence: The Judge and the Historian', *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1991), 79-92 [CTools Resources-Supplementary Readings]

In-class: Discuss finding evidence about those that leave few records  
In the second half of class: visit to William L. Clements Library  
(<http://www.clements.umich.edu/>)

Due: Response on CTools to assigned reading (1-2 pages)  
Confirmed choice of thesis advisor

### **15 March: Individual Meetings to Discuss Research Projects**

Reading: Cluster of primary sources (at least three) related to thesis  
Booth, et al, *The Craft of Research*, chs.12-13 (pp. 173-202)  
'Writing a History Paper' [CTools Resources-History Writing Guides]  
'Writing a Prospectus' [CTools Resources-History Writing Guides]

In-class: Meet with instructor individually to discuss progress, research strategy, and prospectus (bring thesis statement and annotated bibliography)

Due: Essay interpreting cluster of primary sources related to thesis (2 copies, 4-6 pages)

### **22 March: Doing Cultural History**

Reading: Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre: And Other Episodes in French Cultural History*.  
Roger Chartier, 'Text, Symbols, and Frenchness', *Journal of Modern History* 57 (1985), 682-95.

Robert Darnton, 'The Symbolic Element in History', *Journal of Modern History* 58 (1986), 218-34.

- In-class: Discuss potential and pitfalls in doing history of popular culture  
Discuss with seminar partner comments on primary source essay
- Due: Response on CTools to assigned reading (1-2 pages)  
Comments on partner's primary source essay (2 copies; 1-2 pages)

### **29 March: Research Tools III (Visit to the Kelsey Museum and the Museum of Anthropology)**

- Reading: Jules David Prown, 'The Truth of Material Culture: History of Fiction?' in Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery (eds.), *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 1-19.  
Peirce Lewis, 'Common Landscapes as Historic Documents', in Lubar and Kingery (eds.), *History from Things*, 115-39.  
'Writing a Prospectus' [CTools Resources-History Writing Guides]  
'Endnote-Footnote format' [CTools Resources-History Writing Guides]  
At least one sample prospectus [CTools Resources-Samples]
- In-class: Discuss doing research on material culture  
In the second half of class: visit to the Kelsey (<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/kelsey/>) and the Museum of Anthropology (<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/umma/>)
- Due: First draft of thesis prospectus (2 copies, 8-12 pages)

### **5 April: Presentation of Thesis Prospectuses I**

- Reading: Booth, et al, *The Craft of Research*, chs.14-17 (pp. 203-69)
- In-class: Presentation of thesis prospectuses (10 min + 10 min of questions)
- Due: Abstract of thesis prospectus for oral presentation (3-4 pages)  
Rewrite of primary source essay

### **12 April: Presentation of Thesis Prospectuses II**

- In-class: Presentation of thesis prospectuses (10 min + 10 min of questions)  
Discuss with seminar partner comments on prospectus draft

Due: Comments on first draft of seminar partner's prospectus (2-4 pages)

**23 April (Monday): THESIS PROSPECTUS DUE (by 3 pm)**