History 300  
The Historian’s Craft:  
Methods and Approaches in the Study of History

Description: This course introduces prospective history majors and minors to the experience of how historians perform their craft. Each seminar will address research methods, historical writing, and interpretive analysis. Students will be introduced to historiography, the use of primary sources, and ethical issues in writing history. Course work will culminate in an original research paper. An oral presentation will also be required of all students.

Books to Purchase:
- Additional readings will be available in my faculty folder in the Academic Volume

Assignments:

Oral Presentations:
- **Database Presentation:** Each student will make a 10 minute presentation for his or her colleagues about a database which historians may use to conduct research on a variety of topics. Presentations should (1) provide a summary of the database, (2) explain how to use it in step-by-step terms, (3) discuss how historians might find it useful, (4) explain the strengths and weaknesses of the database, including what kinds of material is included and what is excluded, (5) and demonstrate a sample research query to illustrate how others in the course might be able to use it in their research.

- **Research Presentation:** Each student will make a 10 minute research presentation to his or her colleagues about his or her findings for the final research paper. This presentation should (1) briefly state the research question, (2) articulate the argument in one sentence, and (3) provide five direct quotations from primary sources or images and demonstrate how they support the argument. Students should use a Powerpoint presentation with images (where appropriate).

- **Group Presentation:** Each student will participate in a group presentation about his or her research for the second writing assignment. See the description of the assignment for more information.
Writing Assignments:

- **Research Process Essay:** Students will write a 1,500 word essay describing and analyzing the research process they followed in researching the Elizabeth Poulos plaque in Memphis. Essays should indicate which archives the student visited, how he or she used that archive, what relevant documents he or she found, and how he or she analyzed those documents. The essay should walk the reader step-by-step through the student’s research process, explaining how and why he or she proceeded in that way and what the outcomes were.

- **Article 1: Journalistic Sources:** Students will write a 1,500 word essay analyzing a historical event as discussed in journalistic sources. See handout for additional details.

- **Article 2: “Autopsies Project”:** Students will write a 1,500 word essay analyzing the historical significance of an obsolete object. What does this object tell us about the past, and why has it become obsolete? Essays should contextualize the object within its historical moment in order to make sense of it. This assignment is based on the Autopsies Project at University College London; for more information, including ideas about obsolete objects, see http://www.autopsiesgroup.com/.

- **Research Article:** Students will write a 3,000 word essay based on documents from one of the databases presented in the course. Students must (1) formulate a research question to guide their investigation of the archive, (2) create an argument based on the information they find in the archive, and (3) demonstrate that argument using evidence from the archive.

**General Writing Guidelines:** Each essay must conform to the following guidelines to be accepted. All essays must include:

1. A signed honor code pledge;
2. An engaging title which captures the main thrust of your argument. I will not accept papers with titles like “Paper #1.” You must also include your name and the date;
3. A final word count of the body of your essay (not including footnotes, endnotes, bibliography, or title). This word count must be indicated on your first page of your essay;
4. Appropriate citations, either footnotes or endnotes, which follow the Chicago Manual of Style. Copies of this style manual are in the library and the history department office. The style manual commonly known as “Turabian” (i.e. Kate Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations) is a shortened version of the Chicago style guide and is acceptable;
5. Appropriate American-style punctuation and general formatting as indicated in the Chicago Manual of Style;
6. Sequential page numbers at the bottom of each page beginning with page 1. All notes should also use numbers, not symbols or letters;
(7) An introductory paragraph which clearly states your interpretive claim (i.e. thesis) and answers all of the following questions: (a) what is the paper about, (b) what is the reader going to find out, (c) why is this paper worth reading — i.e. the “so what” question.

Grades will be determined in the following way:

- Research Process Essay 10%
- Journalistic Sources Article/Group Presentation 20%
- Autopsies Article 20%
- Original Research Article 20%
- Database Presentation 10%
- Research Presentation 10%
- Participation 10%

An Important Definition: What is “analysis?”

When historians analyze something, they do not repeat information that everyone already knows about events or documents. Nor do they simply state obvious conclusions based on a quick set of observations. Analysis — the heart of the historians’ craft — means taking something apart, looking at it from the inside-out, subjecting it to an intense investigation from many facets, juxtaposing it with other issues or facts that are both similar and different, identifying patterns and processes that are not necessarily easily seen or obvious, and arriving at original conclusions that will inform, enlighten, and educate the reader of your essay. Analysis is not easy, and it does not happen quickly. It requires a serious commitment to critical thinking that only comes when a scholar devotes time and energy to finding out something new rather than simply repeating what others have said. Please follow this definition of “analysis” throughout this syllabus and this course.

Participation:

This class will function as a seminar, which means that each student is responsible for doing all the reading and coming to class prepared to engage critically with that reading. The successful functioning of this class depends on the willingness of each student to participate in the ongoing conversation. Listening is not enough; each student is expected to make a reasonable contribution to the discussion so that others may benefit from their insight.

Discussion: I define “participation” as active engagement with the ideas, readings, and conversations that are an integral part of this course. Class attendance is necessary for class participation, since you cannot participate if you are not here. However, you do not earn your participation grade simply by showing up to class. Rather, you must actually participate by joining in the class discussion, posing questions, sharing ideas, and interpreting the readings with your classmates in a thoughtful and reflective way.
I reserve the right to call on any member of the class so that they might contribute to our discussion. I recommend bringing questions that you have about reading assignments or about the previous class meeting if what we discussed is not entirely clear to you. I also recommend bringing a list of comments that you wish to make during class discussion so that you will be ready to contribute. *If you are someone who has difficulty speaking in class for whatever reason, please speak to me about alternative ways of participating.*

**Our Schedule for the Semester**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings and Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>8/23</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Finding Elizabeth Poulos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| T   | 8/28 | Research 101: The Process of Research | Davidson and Lytle, “The Strange Death of Silas Deane” and “Contact”  
Turabian, chapters 1, 2, and 1+ |
| R   | 8/30 | Analyzing Sources: Asking Questions of Sources | Davidson and Lytle, “Serving Time in Virginia”  
Keith C. Barton, “Primary Sources in History: Breaking Through the Myths”  
Turabian, chapter 3  
Database Presentation: America: History and Life / Historical Abstracts |
| T   | 9/4  | The Problem of Sources | Daniel Boorstin, “A Wrestler with the Angel” and  
Leszek Kolakowski, “The Emperor Kennedy Legend”  
In Class Activity: Interpreting Firsthand Accounts -- 1910 Paris flood  
Database Presentation: America’s Historical Newspapers |
| R   | 9/6  | Writing Workshop 1: Formulating a Research Question and Making an Argument | Introduce Article #1: Journalistic Sources  
Davidson and Lytle, “From Rosie to Lucy”  
Turabian, chapters 4 and 5  
In Class Activity: Duke University Advertising Archive |
| T   | 9/11 | Writing Workshop 2: Ethics and Plagiarism | Updates on Elizabeth Poulos Research |
| R   | 9/13 | Historians’ Debates | Davidson and Lytle, “Jackson’s Frontier -- and Turner’s”  
Politico, “Robert Caro Revives Kennedy-Johnson Feud”  
Database Presentation: Cornell Making of America  
Database Presentation: Eyewitness to History |
| T   | 9/18 | Writing Workshop 3: The Rule of One and Chicago Manual of Style | Turabian, chapter 6, 15  
Database Presentation: American Civil War Letters and Diaries |
Database Presentation: In the First Person

R 9/20 Close Textual Reading
Davidson and Lytle, “Declaring Independence”
Database Presentation: American Memory (Library of Congress)
Database Presentation: Black Thought and Culture: African Americans from Colonial Times to the Present

T 9/25 Group Reports on Article #1

R 9/27 History and Film
Davidson and Lytle, “Where Trouble Comes”
Film: Stepping: Beyond the Line (on Moodle)
Special Guest: Prof. Dee Garceau

M 10/1 Article #1 Due

T 10/2 History from Objects
Introduce Article #2: Autopsies
Davidson and Lytle, “Material Witness”
Video: Objects of Memory (on Moodle)
In Class Activity: Object Analysis
Database Presentation: Victoria and Albert Museum, London

R 10/4 NO CLASS

T 10/9 Visual Evidence
Davidson and Lytle, “The Mirror with a Memory”
In Class Activity: Interpreting Photographs of the 1910 Paris flood
Database Presentation: George Eastman House International Museum of Film and Photography

R 10/11 Library Tour -- Essay on Elizabeth Poulos Research Due

T 10/16 FALL BREAK

R 10/18 Recovering Lost Voices and Oral History
Davidson and Lytle, “The View from the Bottom Rail” and “Sitting-In”
Database Presentation: Rhodes Crossroads to Freedom
Database Presentation: North American Women’s Letters and Diaries

Special Guest: Prof. Charles McKinney

R 10/25 History, Memory, and Commemoration
Court Carney, “The Contested Image of Nathan Bedford Forrest”
Sarah Farmer, “Oradour-sur-Glane: Memory in a Preserved Landscape” and
Film: *The Nasty Girl*
Database Presentation: Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive
Database Presentation: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**T 10/30** **Writing Workshop #4**
Bring Rough Draft of Article #2 to class for peer review

**R 11/1** **Environmental History**
Tait Keller, “The Mountains Roar: The Alps during the Great War”
Special Guest: Prof. Tait Keller

**M 11/5** Article #2 Due

**T 11/6** **Big Picture/Small Picture**
Davidson and Lytle, “Dust Bowl Odyssey”
In Class Activity: Using US Census Records
Database Presentation: US Census

**R 11/8** **New Media, New Sources**
Davidson and Lytle, “Breaking Into Watergate”
Database Presentation: Vanderbilt University Television News Archive
Database Presentation: Sound Recordings (Library of Congress)

**T 11/13** Research Presentations
**R 11/15** Research Presentations

**T 11/20** THANKSGIVING
**R 11/22** THANKSGIVING

**T 11/27** Visiting Scholar, Prof. Amy Singer -- Joint session with Prof. Terem’s class

**T 11/27** **PUBLIC LECTURE -- MANDATORY ATTENDANCE**
Prof. Amy Singer, Tel Aviv University
“The Ottoman Conquest of Jerusalem”
5:30 PM in Blount Auditorium

**R 11/29** Research Presentations

**T 12/4** Research Presentations

Research Article due TBA
Journalistic Sources Article

Research:

1. Choose one of the following historical episodes as the subject of your article:
   - Woodstock Music and Art Fair, 1969
   - Assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1968
   - March on the Pentagon, 1967
   - Stonewall Riots, 1969

2. Find at least four different journalistic accounts of the event, one from each of the following sources:
   - The New York Times
   - The Nation
   - Time, Life, or Newsweek
   - The Tri-State Defender or New York Amsterdam News

3. In addition, use one additional primary source from the database “The Sixties: Primary Documents and Personal Narratives 1960 - 1974.”

Your research question: How do media accounts of a particular event differ and why? What impact do those differences have on the way in which we remember the event? What is the significance of the way media depicted this particular event?

Your argument must answer the research questions and provide evidence for how you came to that analysis.

Analyze each journalistic source to determine its particular point of view. Is the event sensationalized or minimized? How and why? How would you describe the writer’s tone? For example, does the piece sound sympathetic to, skeptical towards, or critical of an event or group? Is the piece patronizing or respectful? Does it discredit or demonize the subject? Does it elevate the subject or signal approval? Did different newspapers appeal to different audiences? Did the story change from newspaper to newspaper or from newspaper to magazine? If so, how and why? You should demonstrate your analysis with direct quotations.

Note the placement of the article. Is it on the front page above the fold or in the back section? What is the size of the headline? How much information is provided?

Group Presentation:

Each student will be a member of a small group which will meet together and share ideas and arrive at a common analysis. Answer the research question with an argument which you can demonstrate with evidence.

Each group will make a 10 minute presentation in which students will:
   - articulate an argument which answers the research question
• provides specific, concrete examples in the form of direct quotations from the newspapers
• explain why the media representation matters to how the event was perceived at the time
• explain why the media representation matters to how we remember the event today
Prof. Jackson
Department of History
Rhodes College

Philosophy

I believe that we are a community of scholars actively working together to discover something new about our world and ourselves. To achieve those goals, we must struggle together, asking questions about what we don’t yet know and challenging our assumptions about what we think we know and believe. Teaching is also a team effort. I am asking each of you to accept a certain amount of responsibility in this class for contributing to our intellectual commonwealth by being willing to question, to challenge, and to propose new ideas and interpretations. In other words, I am asking you to be a good citizen of Rhodes College and of this classroom by contributing to the success of everyone in it.

History is not a list of facts and events, but an ongoing series of debates about what those facts and events mean. In taking this class, you are joining in a world-wide discussion that continually asks about the ongoing meaning and significance of life’s events both past and present.

But while teaching and historical debates are group activities, learning is, in the end, an individual act. No one can make another person learn something if they do not want to, and only you can choose to receive something from your time in this class. To that end, think carefully about how you prepare each day for class, how you study for exams, and how seriously you approach your essays. Your grades will reflect your individual performance, and the amount of effort you apply will directly effect your outcomes.

My personal goals for all my classes are: (1) that everyone succeeds to the best of their abilities, (2) that everyone improves in their capability to think analytically and creatively, and (3) that everyone grows in their capacity to express themselves, to create knowledge, and to engage with their world.

Class Policies and Procedures

General

1. I expect you to come to each class prepared to listen, ask questions, discuss readings, and take notes. You should bring all necessary materials to class including all reading assignments for the day, your reading notes, notes from previous classes, and materials that I may ask you to prepare for a particular class session.

2. I expect each of you to be actively engaged in the functioning of this class, and you should come prepared to participate in our ongoing class discussion. I reserve the right to call on any member of the class so that they might contribute to our discussion. I recommend bringing
questions that you have about reading assignments or about the previous class meeting if what we discussed is not entirely clear to you. I also recommend bringing a list of comments that you wish to make during class discussion so that you will be ready to contribute. If you are someone who has difficulty speaking in class for whatever reason, please speak to me about alternative ways of participating.

3. You should come to every class session. There is no such thing as an “excused absence” (with the possible exception of a medical leave that is officially approved by the College administration). Absences for athletics or other extra-curricular activities are not “excused” even if they are officially announced. Therefore, you are allowed to miss the equivalent of one week’s worth of class time (for Monday/Wednesday/Friday classes, three (3) class periods; for Tuesday/Thursday classes, two (2) class periods; for classes which meet once a week, one (1) class period) for any reason. Additional absences will adversely effect your grade for the course since you cannot participate in our community of scholars if you are not here.

If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to talk to me and to fellow classmates to find out what you have missed. I frequently distribute handouts or make additional assignments in class, so you need to check with me to find out if I have done so for the day of your absence. You are still responsible for all material covered in each class period regardless of whether you attended it.

I will take attendance at the beginning of every class meeting to establish your presence. If you are not present when attendance is taken, you may be counted absent, so please arrive to class early or on-time.

4. Each of you is bound by the Honor Code as elaborated in the Student Handbook, and no violation will be tolerated. Please review the Student Handbook if you are unclear about the details of the Honor Code, particularly the definitions in Article I, Section 3. If you are unfamiliar with the definition of “plagiarism,” you can find it there. On every assignment, you should reaffirm the Honor Code by writing the entire honor pledge and signing your name. No work will be accepted without an Honor Code pledge. Studying together and reading one another’s papers is always a good idea, but make sure that your work is your own. Collaboration on an assignment that results in remarkably similar results, whether intentional or accidental, is a violation of the honor code.

5. I reserve the right to make changes in the syllabus as the semester progresses, but I will always make changes known to you as soon as possible, and I will make reasonable accommodations for assignment due dates should the schedule changes warrant. I also reserve the right to give unannounced quizzes in class or to make short assignments for the next class period with no advance notice.
6. All assignments must be turned in to be eligible for a passing grade in this course. No student will be allowed to pass without having turned in every assignment.

**Essays**

7. Essays are due in class as indicated on the syllabus. No papers will be accepted under my door, in my mailbox, under my office door, or electronically except in the event of extreme circumstances which must be approved by me in advance of the due date. I will accept papers only from students who are present in class on the date on which the paper is due; I will not accept papers submitted by proxy. Late papers will not be accepted except in extreme circumstances which must also be approved by me in advance of the due date on which the paper is due.

You are responsible for keeping a backup copy of each writing assignment for the course. In the unlikely event that I misplace your essay, I will ask you for another copy as soon as I realize that I need it. If you cannot provide a copy of any assignment to me upon request, you will forfeit your entire grade for that assignment.

**Courtesy**

8. Turn off all cell phones during class time unless I have approved their continued activation in advance. If you leave the classroom to answer a cell phone call, do not return.

9. Learning happens when done in an environment in which everyone feels free to express themselves openly without fear of ridicule or recrimination. I will not tolerate any disrespect of other students or their viewpoints during class.

**Disabilities**

10. I am happy to make reasonable accommodations to people with *documented* disabilities. Please consult the appropriate College administrators before coming to see me. Once you have done so, please discuss your particular needs with me as soon as possible.

revised 11/2008