The Historian’s Craft:  
Methods and Approaches to Historical Investigation

This course will introduce you to the ways in which professional historians practice their craft. Throughout the semester we will address the basics of historical analysis, argumentation, and critical thinking, as well as writing and presentation skills. In addition, we will explore different methods of historical investigation using a range of primary sources. Workshops are placed throughout the semester, to provide practice in all of these areas. The end product of this course will be an original work of historical scholarship.

**Readings:**


Coursepack: A xeroxed collection of journal articles and primary sources.

**Attendance and Deadlines:**
Attendance is mandatory at all class meetings. More than two absences will adversely affect your grade in this course. You should make all travel and holiday plans in accordance with the schedule outlined in this syllabus. Airline or carpool arrangements are no excuse for missing classes, deadlines, or exams. Late papers will be penalized one grade for each calendar day late.

**Academic Integrity:**
All work for this course should be done in accordance with Rhodes’ Honor Code. Plagiarism is grounds for an F in the course. Ignorance will not be treated as innocence. Plagiarism is the use of someone else’s information or ideas without proper citation. If you wonder whether something should be cited, it probably should. We will review how to do footnotes in the Chicago style, in class. If you have questions about the correct use or citation of materials outside of class, consult Marius.

Information from the internet is extremely variable. Some sites provide excellent online archives of primary sources. Others offer homogenized information that reads like third-rate encyclopedia entries. Therefore, all internet sources must be cleared with me before using them in your research paper or workshop assignments.
**Expectations:**

This course is a seminar, which means your participation is vital. Come to class, read the assignments, think about the material, and participate in discussions. Be prepared to discuss the assigned readings on the day they are listed.

Begin the practice of questioning your sources: Did the author make a convincing argument? Is there credible evidence to support the argument? Is the writing clear or confusing? Is the piece dull, or too wordy? Is the author’s thinking innovative?

**Assignments:**

- History Detectives: 5%
- Workshop # 1: 5%
- Workshop # 2: 5%
- Workshop # 3: 5%
- Workshop # 4: 5%
- Research Paper: 25%
- Oral Presentation: 25%
- Class Participation: 25%

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**COURSE OUTLINE**

**Th Aug 23**  Introduction to the Course

Assignment: History Detectives

**Tu Aug 28**  Public Spaces and the Construction of Memory

Student Reports on History Detective assignments.


**Th Aug 30**  Library Research Orientation

Bill Short: Online tour of databases & other research resources
Tu Sept 4    Primary Sources: The Raw Material of History


**Workshop #1:** Census Manuscripts  (Butte, Montana, 1900, 1910, 1920).

Th Sept 6    Framing Questions and Presenting Evidence

Reading: Marius, “Description” and “Narrative,” *A Short Guide*, 54-64.

Discussion: Census Evidence: What it Can and Cannot Tell

**Workshop Assignment:** Census manuscripts in the Memphis Public Library Archives

Tu Sept 11   Reading Photographs: Edward S. Curtis and the American Indian

Reading: Gertrude Metcalfe, “The Indian as Revealed in the Curtis Pictures” (1905): 13-19 [Coursepack].

E.S. Curtis, “A Plea for Haste in making Documentary Records of the American Indian,” 163-65. [Coursepack]

Class time today will be spent in the Barret Library Archives, with reproductions of the Curtis photographs. **Meet at Barret Library.**

Th Sept 13   Researching Photographs: The Rest of the Story

Reading: Linda Peavy and Ursula Smith, “Unlikely Champion: Emma Rose Sansaver, 1884-1925,” 179-207. [Coursepack].


Sally Jenkins, “The Team That Invented Football,” 60-74. [Coursepack]

Peter Iverson, “When Indians Became Cowboys,” 16-34. [Coursepack]
Tu Sept 18  **Workshop #2: Writing Style**


* Research paper prospectus due.

Th Sept 20  Traditional Frontier History: Assumptions and Omissions

[Coursepack]

Rosemary and Joseph Agonito, “Resurrecting History’s Forgotten Women: A Case Study from the Cheyenne Indians,” 8-16. [Coursepack]

Tu Sept 25  Investigating Land Plats and Mineral Claims


**Workshop 3:** Mineral Claims of Florence McAdow [in-class handouts].

Th Sept 27  Reading Firsthand Narratives: Letters, Diaries, Autobiographies & Memoirs

Reading: Marius, “Primary Sources,” *A Short Guide*, 92-98.

Letters from the California Goldrush, 1-21. [Coursepack].

Journals of Henry Bigler, 172-80; and George Cannon, 218-40. [Coursepack].

Memoir of Bethenia Owens Adair, 173-87. [Coursepack]
Letters of Pauline Williamson, 114-21. [Coursepack]

Tu Oct 2  Group Presentations on the Firsthand Narratives

Th Oct 4  No Class. Professor Garceau-Hagen at WHA Conference in Tulsa.

Tu Oct 9  Controversies in the History Profession

    Reading: Peter Hoffer, “Falsification: The Case of Michael Belleisle,” 141-71. [Coursepack]

    Peter Hoffer, “Plagiarism: The Cases of Stephen Ambrose and Doris Kearns Godwin,” 172-207. [Coursepack]

Th Oct 11  Anthropologist Clifford Geertz and “Thick Description”


Tu Oct 16  Fall Break

Th Oct 18  Newspaper Reports: “Just the Facts”?


    Helena Daily Herald, “Custer’s Disaster on the Little Bighorn,” by James Bradley (July 15, 1876): 362-63. [Coursepack]


    Kate Bighead, “She Watched Custer’s Last Battle,” 363-78. [Coursepack]

    Workshop #4: Analysis of a Newspaper Account/Firsthand Narrative of one Event. [Memphis Room at Memphis Public Library]

Tu Oct 23  Group Presentations on Newspaper Reports as Evidence
On your own, view film, “Dances With Wolves” before Thursday.

Th Oct 25  Critiquing ‘History’ Films: The Case of “Dances With Wolves”


Tu Oct 30  Individual Consultations on Research Papers


Tu Nov 6  Government Documents

Reading: “The Treaty of Fort Laramie, 1851” [Coursepack].

Raymond DeMallie, “Touching the Pen: Plains Indian Treaty Councils in Ethnohistorical Perspective,” 344-55. [Coursepack]

Th Nov 8  Student Presentations of Original Research

Tu Nov 13  Student Presentations of Original Research

Th Nov 15  Student Presentations of Original Research

Tu Nov 20  Student Presentations of Original Research

Tu Nov 27  Controlled Speculation


Th Nov 29  Finding the Dramatic Core

Reading: Bunny McBride, Women of the Dawn, Chapters 3 and 4, pp.69-134; and “Methodology and References,” 135-44.

Tu Dec 4  Guest Presentation: Amy Oakes, Office of Career Services: “What Can You Do with a History Degree?”