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HIST 300-01, The Historian's Craft, Fall 2009

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Fall 2009
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History 300
The Historian's Craft

Course Description:

This course introduces prospective history majors and minors to the experience of how historians perform their craft. We will study the basic skills of research, historical writing, and historical analysis. Students will be introduced to historiography, the use of primary sources, and ethical issues in history. Written work (including a research project) will be emphasized, and oral presentations will be required of all students.

Books to Purchase:

Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*
Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*
Sarah Farmer, *Martyred Village: Commemorating the 1944 Massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane*
Sanford Levinson, *Written In Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies*

Additional readings can be found in my faculty folder on the Acad_Dept_Pgm volume on the College server.

Writing:

General Guidelines: No essay which fails to conform to the following guidelines will 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.

Assignments:

A. In this course you will write 6 essays of varying length:

1. Encyclopedia of Memphis Entry

In this assignment, you will write a **750 word essay** which will outline the history of a local monument. As with any encyclopedia entry, the goal is to provide factual information as well as context in which to understand those facts. This essay is less about your interpretation of the facts, but in choosing which facts to include and how to contextualize them, you are automatically bringing an interpretive point of view to the essay. Before doing this assignment, you should consult Kenneth Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York* to get a sense of how your entry might read.

Audience for this essay: A member of the general public who wants to know more about Memphis.

2. Film Review of *The Nasty Girl* for *The New Yorker*

After watching *The Nasty Girl*, you will write a **1,000 word review** of this film in which you specifically address the question of how the film confronts difficult historical facts and why those facts would prove to be controversial. Consider how the director chooses to tell the story and what kinds of conclusion the film reaches. A review does not summarize but rather analyzes. Doing so requires you to bring a particular point of view and interpretation to your essay.

Audience for this essay: A reader of *The New Yorker* magazine.

3. Museum Review

You will visit a local museum and write a **1,000 word essay** in which you review the display or collection, commenting on the way in which this museum has chosen to tell a particular story (or to impose a particular narrative) onto the materials. Your review should discuss that narrative and assess whether it is appropriate. You should also discuss why you think the museum has chosen to tell the story in that way and how successful it is in achieving the goals it has set for itself. A review does not summarize but rather analyzes. Doing so requires you to bring a particular point of view and interpretation to your essay.

Audience for this essay: A reader of *The New Yorker* magazine.

4. Proposal to the City of Memphis

In a **1,250 word essay**, you will make a proposal to the city of Memphis about how to treat the Nathan Bedford Forrest monument on Union Avenue. You should describe and analyze all

sides of the controversy surrounding the monument and use that to inform your decision. Your recommendation must take into consideration the monument's location and the various constituencies in the Memphis community.

Audience for this essay: Memphis City Council (and the entire city community)

5. Museum Catalogue Essay (plus Museum Pamphlet)

This **1,500 word essay** will accompany your in-class Powerpoint presentation (see below).

Our shared holidays have helped to create a national identity for Americans of all social strata. Certain days are set aside by a society to commemorate or to celebrate particular moments or themes in our common life -- they create what is "holy," or special, to a particular group of people (hence the origins of the word: "holy day" = "holiday").

Holidays are particularly interesting for the historian because they are intended to remind us of important moments in history, and they always involve interpretation.

National holidays are created to emphasize the importance of certain historical issues over others. For instance, there is a Veterans' Day (November 11, the day of the Armistice ending World War I) but no day commemorating dropping the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (although the Japanese do have a day to remember these events). Holidays are also constructed by leaders in order to place a certain historical interpretation on events in the past: Thanksgiving is supposed to remind Americans of the arrival of settlers in colonial New England, not the destruction of Native American lands, societies, and cultures (although some would argue that such an interpretation may have some validity too).

Choose a holiday from the list below (or propose another one to me). Research and write the history of that holiday in order to answer the questions: (1) Why was this holiday created and by whom? (2) How did it contribute to a particular understanding of American national identity at the moment of its inception? (3) How does that holiday makes use of history and for what purposes?

Possible Holidays:

Martin Luther King Day	Labor Day
President's Day	Mothers'/Fathers' Day
Memorial Day	Thanksgiving Day
Veterans' Day	Columbus Day
St. Patrick's Day	Kwanzaa
Halloween	Mardi Gras

This assignment challenges you to go to the library, to find out information about a general topic, and then to tell a coherent story using what you've learned. Based on the research you have done in the library, provide a narrative account of your subject. What was the order of events? What were the issues at stake? What were the consequences? You should also frame your narrative around a central, unifying argument that suggests why the issue you have re-

searched was important in a larger historical context. In other words, what did it matter to anyone that these events happened?

This paper emphasizes research using primary sources. You will need to cite at least twelve (12) primary sources in your essay in order to receive credit.

Audience for this essay: Museum-goers who wish to know more about your museum display.

Before you turn in your essay, you will produce a pamphlet which will provide museum-goers with a brief **(250 word)** summary of the main point of your museum display as well as suggestions for additional reading.

Audience for this pamphlet: Museum-goers who wish to know more about your museum display.

6. Response to Prof. Lisa Leff's public lecture and visit to our classroom

Prof. Lisa Leff of American University will deliver a public lecture on Monday, October 26, 2009, and she will visit our class on Tuesday, October 27, 2009. Attendance at the public lecture is mandatory. Write a **500 word** response to Prof. Leff's talk in which you connect the themes discussed in Sarah Farmer's *Martyred Village* to the issues which Prof. Leff discusses. Why is the construction and preservation of memory so complicated and fraught with difficulty in the two cases (Leff's and Farmer's)?

B. Museum Display Assignment (accompanied by Museum Catalogue Essay above)

You will create a museum display (presented orally to the class as a Powerpoint presentation) in which you describe and analyze the history of a particular holiday. This display should be organized just as a museum display would and will walk the visitor through the exhibit step-by-step.

A display such as this should be primarily visual with some accompanying text. But as in a good museum exhibition, the text should not overwhelm the viewer. Anyone who wants to know more about the history of the holiday will read your accompanying museum pamphlet (see above assignment). Instead, you should present images and objects (or images of objects) which will show readers the history of the holiday which you are narrating. In the process, you are also analyzing and interpreting, both with the visuals you use and the way in which you contextualize them using the wall text.

You have been allotted a small gallery with limited wall space in which to install your display. That means that you must tell your story in **no more than 10 Powerpoint slides**.

Discussion Leadership and 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 conversa-

tion. 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.*

Blog: In addition, at the end of class, I will ask one student to write a summary of our class discussion and e-mail it to me. I will then post the summary to a blog I have created for this class. You should subscribe to this blog and read the discussion summaries that I post; this will be especially useful if you must miss class. If you have any comments to add, please respond to the blog entry online so that everyone can read your further thoughts. This is a particularly good way for those of you who do not feel particularly comfortable speaking in class can get your ideas on the table and earn your participation grade. I hope that the blog will allow all of us to continue our classroom discussion. This activity counts as a portion of your class participation grade.

In addition, I may occasionally post blog comments relating to further issues in the reading that I want to bring to your attention.

Grades:

Grades for this class will be based on the following formula:

Encyclopedia of Memphis Entry	5%
Film Review of <i>The Nasty Girl</i>	10%
Museum Review	15%
Proposal to the City of Memphis	15%
Museum Catalogue Essay (including Museum Pamphlet)	20%
Museum Display Assignment	20%
Response to Leff lecture and class visit	5%
Discussion Leadership and Participation (including blog writing)	10%

Our Schedule for the Semester

R 8/27 Introduction to the Course
Introduction to the Encyclopedia of Memphis Research Project

Into the Archives

T 9/1 Daniel Boorstin, "A Wrestler with the Angel"
Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, Chapters 1-2

R 9/3 David Lowenthal, "How We Know the Past"
Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, Chapter 3

T 9/8 James W. Loewen, *Lies Across America*
Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, Chapters 15-17

R 9/10 Encyclopedia of Memphis Presentations / Draft Due
Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, Chapters 20, 21, 25 and Appendix A.1

The Uses of History

T 9/15 Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*
Introduction, Chapters 1-3

R 9/17 Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*
Chapters 4-6 and Afterthoughts

T 9/22 Discussion of Film: *The Nasty Girl* (on Moodle)
Encyclopedia of Memphis Entry Due
Does your paper pass the Chicago Style test?

R 9/24 Writing Discussion I: Making an Argument
Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, Chapters 4-6, 14

M 9/28 **Film Review Due**

Making History Public

T 9/29 James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*
Video: *Objects and Memory* (on Moodle)

R 10/1 Sarah Farmer, *Martyred Village*, Preface, Introduction, Chapters 1-3

T 10/6 Sarah Farmer, *Martyred Village*, Chapters 4-6

R 10/8 Ethics / Plagiarism
Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, Chapters 6, 7, 9, 10, 11

T	10/13	Ethics / Plagiarism / Writing Discussion II Ellen M. Litwicky, <i>America's Public Holidays, 1865-1920</i> Introduction to Research Project
R	10/15	Special Guest: Prof. Ety Terem Jo McCormack's "Memory in History, Nation Building, and Identity: Teaching About the Algerian War in France" Museum Review Due in Class
T	10/20	Fall Break
R	10/22	NO CLASS -- JACKSON AT CONFERENCE
M	10/26	REQUIRED EVENING LECTURE ATTENDANCE Prof. Lisa Leff, "Rescue or Theft? The Postwar Transfer of French-Jewish Archives to the US" @ 7:00 PM, Blount Auditorium
T	10/27	Visit by Prof. Lisa Leff, American University
		The Practice of Museums
R	10/29	Svetlana Alpers, "The Museum as a Way of Seeing" Richard Handler, <i>The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg</i> Edward Linenthal, <i>Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum</i>
T	11/3	Patricia West, "Inventing a House Undivided: Antebellum Cultural Politics and the Enshrinement of Mount Vernon" Karal Ann Marling, "Elvis Presley's Graceland, or the Aesthetics of Rock 'n' Roll Heaven" Mabel O. Wilson, "Between Rooms 307: Spaces of Memory at the National Civil Rights Museum"
R	11/5	Museum Pamphlet Due (list of illustrations, sources)
		The Politics of History and Memory
T	11/10	Sanford Levinson, <i>Written In Stone</i>
R	11/12	Court Carney, "The Contested Image of Nathan Bedford Forrest"
T	11/17	Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, <i>History Wars</i>
R	11/19	Special Guest, Prof. Clayton Brown Reading: TBA

T	11/24	James Cuno, <i>Who Owns Antiquity?: Museums and the Battle over Our Ancient Heritage</i> Christopher Hitchens, articles/interviews on Elgin Marbles Ellen Herscher, "Many Happy Returns? New Contributions to the Repatriation Debate"
W	11/25	Proposal to the City of Memphis Due
R	11/26	Thanksgiving
T	12/1	Presentations / Museum Powerpoint Due
R	12/3	Presentations
T	12/8	Presentations

Museum Catalogue Essay TBA

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 affect 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 affect 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 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