

HISTORICAL METHODS
Preliminary Syllabus
HISTORY 2004

Spring 2008

Linda Arnold, redtape@vt.edu

Hours: TTH 2:00-3:15

Major Bill 404

Major Williams 434

TTH 12:30, after class, and by appointment, x15670

Welcome apprentice historians! Your professor is a practiced professional with more than thirty years of research experience in foreign and domestic libraries and archives. She designs this course to assist novice scholars apply the sources, methods, and skills of the professional historian. These include the ability read, write, speak, and think in the grand tradition of critical, rational Western thought. Each student will have the opportunity to develop and write a research paper based on original research and original thought. Each student will be expected to become familiar with the craft of the historian while enhancing written communication, oral communication, and analytical skills.

The course will be conducted as a pro-seminar in which students will converse with one another and the professor. Each student will prepare and submit: (1) three reflective critiques of articles and documentary films; (2) a preliminary thesis statement, a preliminary outline, and a preliminary bibliography; (3) a final thesis statement, a final outline, and a final bibliography; (4) two 500-1000 word critiques or reviews, one on each of two groups of presentations; (5) a 15-18 page original research paper based on primary and secondary sources, complete with formal footnotes or endnotes. Each student will present in class a 15 minute preliminary and a final dialogue on the research paper; and each student will participate in lively discussions about the three films and about the several topics.

Your final grade depends greatly on patient persistence throughout the semester. You are encouraged to use a word processor. Notes will be of value in preparing the critiques, reviews, and essays. Second and third drafts usually get better results than first drafts; this is most assuredly true of a research paper. The professor admires hard work, organization, clarity of expression, reflective thought, and a sense of humor.

You can find substantial advice on how to read, write, critique, and prepare an oral presentation on the web at: <http://www.history.vt.edu/undergraduate/links.htm>

GRADING

Written work and bibliographies will be graded on content, organization, style, grammar, clarity of thought and expression, and an appreciation for the dynamic of time. A = 93 and above, A = 90 92, B+=89 88, B=83 87; B =80 82 , C+=79 78, C=77 73, C =72 70, D+=69 68, D=67 63, D =62 60, F=59 or lower.

The Honor Code will be strictly enforced in this course in so far as it does not interfere with collaborative development and mutual learning. All assignments submitted shall be considered graded work, unless otherwise noted. All aspects of your coursework are covered by the Honor System. Any suspected violations of the Honor Code will be promptly reported to the Honor System.

REQUIRED TEXT

Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th ed.

REQUIREMENTS

(15% [3 @ 5% each]): Three 500-750 word (2-3 pages) comparative critiques. Due: **Jan 17, 22, and 24.**

(21% [7 @ 3% each]): Required lively discussions

(9%): A preliminary thesis statement, preliminary outline, and preliminary bibliography of primary and secondary sources. **DUE Feb 7.**

(5%): A final thesis statement, final outline, and final bibliography of primary and secondary sources. **DUE on or before APR 22.**

(10% [2 @ 5% each]) Two 500 1000 word critiques or reviews, one on each of the other two groups of presentations. These critiques will be due on the day of class discussion of the topic.

(20%) One 15-18 page research paper, complete with a formal bibliography and formal footnotes or endnotes, as illustrated by Kate Turabian, on any aspect of the history of the Vietnam War, Civil Rights, or Latin America **DUE IN CLASS WHEN CLASS BEGINS, Apr 29.**

(10%) One fifteen minute preliminary presentation.

(10%) One fifteen minute final presentation.

ON RESEARCH and PRELIMINARY AND FINAL PRESENTATIONS

Your job is to write a research paper. While doing that job, remember that history is not the past but the study and analysis of the past: historians ask questions; search for evidence that will help them answer questions; develop theses; and report, interpret, and analyze on the basis of the historical evidence and their own considered opinions. Historians use a wide variety of sources.

The most practical suggestions that I can offer you as you develop your presentations are:

1. Ask a good question.

2 Create an outline in which you identify your topic, its chronological parameters, and periodization. (Hint: If there were a book on your topic that responded to your question, what would be covered in five or six chapters?)

3. Develop a thesis statement the simple one sentence response to your question.

4 Identify your primary and secondary sources. (Books, articles, newspapers, professional journals, magazines, documentary or commercial films, newsreels, letters, reports, public documents, fiction or nonfiction literature, music, photographs, etc.)

5. Identify the origin/author and dates of the sources you have reviewed.

6. In your dialogues you might consider answering the following questions:

a) What is the subject matter of principle sources?

b) What can we learn about the subject from these sources?

c) If a professor who knew nothing about your topic were to ask you why these sources are important, what would you say to convince him/her to consult them?

d) What from your perspective as an apprentice historian are the main strengths and weaknesses of the sources you reviewed?

e) Might these sources be useful for one of the other topics being researched in this class?

7. Remember, because you have done the research for your paper, you know more about your subject than do your fellow students. Therefore, if everyone approaches the presentations in a similar fashion, all will gain a much clearer and deeper understanding of these topics and the available sources.

Students are encouraged to seek the aid and advice of reference librarians, their professor, and others with knowledge of their research question.

Finally, students in this course have blanket permission to consult a tutor in the Writing Center; all students are encouraged to seek the advice of a tutor.

THE PRELIMINARY CALENDAR

Jan 15: Introduction and Documentary: **Americas in Transition**

Reading: Max Holland, "Private Sources of U.S. Foreign Policy: William Pawley and the 1954 Coup d'État in Guatemala," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 7, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 36-73. Project Muse

Jan 17: Documentary: **Vietnam: A Television History. America Takes Charge!**

First critique due

Reading: David Milne, "'Our equivalent of guerrilla warfare': Walt Rostow and the Bombing of North Vietnam, 1961-1968," *The Journal of Military History* 71 (January 2007): 169-203. Project Muse.

Jan 22: Documentary: **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: An Amazing Grace**

Second critique due

Reading: Akinyele O. Umoja, "1964: The Beginning of the End of Nonviolence in the Mississippi Freedom Movement," *Radical History Review* 85 (Winter 2003): 201-26. Project Muse.

Jan 24: **DISCUSSION** of documentaries and research questions

Third critique due

Jan 29: **Newman Library:** Electronic Resources

Jan 31: **Newman Library:** Finding Aids, meet at ground floor entrance, across from Bookstore.

Feb 5: **DISCUSSION: The Basics:** How to write a research paper and format bibliographies and footnotes and how to make an oral presentation. **Bring to class Turabian, A Manual for Writer's**

Feb 7: **DISCUSSION; Preliminary thesis statement, outlines and bibliographies DUE**

Feb 12: Preliminary Presentations Civil Rights

Feb 14: Preliminary Presentations Civil Rights

Feb 19: Preliminary Presentations Vietnam

Feb 21: Preliminary Presentations – Vietnam

Feb 26: Preliminary Presentations Latin America

Feb 28: Preliminary Presentations Latin America

Mar 6-8: Spring Break

Mar 11: Final Presentations – Civil Rights

Mar 13: Final Presentations – Civil Rights

Mar 18: **Civil Rights, Review Essay Due & Discussion**

Mar 20: Final Presentations: Vietnam

Mar 25: Final Presentations: Vietnam

Mar 27: Final Presentations: Vietnam

Apr 1: **Vietnam, Review Essay Due & Discussion**

Apr 3: Final Presentations – Latin America

Apr 8: Library Day

Apr 10: Final Presentations – Latin America

Apr 15: Library Day

Apr 17: **Latin America, Review Essay Due & Discussion**

Apr 22: **Final thesis statement, outlines and bibliographies due**

Apr 24: Writing Day

Apr 29: **Final Discussion, final paper due**