

History 2004
HISTORICAL METHODS
Spring 2007

Tues, Thurs: 11:00-12:15
Major Williams 532

Instructor: Dr. Marian Mollin

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12:30-1:30 p.m., Wednesdays 10-11 a.m., and by appointment

Class Webpage – access via the Blackboard portal at <http://learn.vt.edu/>

Description of the Course

Historical Methods is a “how to” course – the equivalent of a “lab” course in History. Through a variety of in-class assignments, homework assignments, readings, and research projects, you will learn the fundamentals of:

- **Research** – What is the process of gathering historical data? What do we look for? Where can we find it?
- **Interpretation** – What do we do with our research data once we’ve gathered it? How do we make sense of found artifacts of the past? How do we analyze a body of evidence to come up with a coherent story about the past?
- **Presentation** – How do we present our historical data and interpretations in written and oral formats?

In other words, over the course of the semester, you will learn the basics of how to actually “do” history yourself

Required Books and readings

There are three books required for this class:

- C Conal Furay and Michael J. Salevouris, The Methods and Skills of History, 2nd edition (new copies only!) – hereafter cited as F/S
- C Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz and Kathy Peiss, eds., Love Across the Color Line: The Letters of Alice Hanley to Channing Lewis
- C Mary Lynn Rampolla, A Pocket Guide to Writing in History – hereafter cited as PG

These books are available at the University Bookstore, Volume Two Bookstore, and the Tech Bookstore. The Methods and Skills of History and Love Across the Color Line are also on reserve at Newman Library. Rampolla’s A Pocket Guide to Writing in History is an important reference guide that you should most definitely own.

Goals and Expectations

My goals for you are as follows:

First, to learn how to conduct historical research. This will involve using the physical resources of the library and special collections, as well as online resources and databases.

Second, to learn how to develop a research methodology. This includes learning how to frame a research question, how to look for sources to answer your research questions, and how to analyze the material that you find.

Third, to gain practice articulating your conclusions, most importantly in writing, since this is the primary way that historians communicate with each other and with the public, but also in oral presentations.

Just as important, I want you to have fun! I'm a historian because I love the process of historical research. Yes, I enjoy reading books and watching documentaries (what history professor doesn't?). But there is something incredibly exciting about moving beyond the process of "consuming" history to actually "producing" history by working with primary source materials and using them to uncover hidden pieces of the past. My hope is that, through your various projects, you will gain that sense of pleasure and excitement that engaging with history in this very direct way provides

Finally, I'd like you to gain a sense of accomplishment. With that, I'd like to give you a final caveat: as much as I love doing research, I often find writing to be as enjoyable a process as going to the dentist. Nevertheless, I always feel great when I have a finished piece behind me (an article, an essay, a book), and I'm always amazed by what I learn about the material by working through the writing process itself. An added benefit: the more I write, the better my writing becomes. I hope that these things will be true for you as well.

That said, trust that I understand that writing is not fun and easy for everyone – which should only make your sense of accomplishment at completing the requirements of this course that much greater. Indeed, by the end of the semester, you will have the satisfaction of mastering some of the "tools of the trade" – in terms of honing both your research and your writing skills – and of having made your own contribution to historical knowledge.

My expectations of you:

- regular attendance and participation in class discussions and in-class assignments
- to complete readings on time (by the date that they're scheduled for discussion in class)
- to meet deadlines for ALL written work (homeworks, short papers, and the various stages of your own research projects)

- to spend the necessary time on these projects and assignments. In general, you should expect to spend an average of 6 hours per week on work for this class, in addition to the time spent in class. Some weeks will require less out-of-class time, but that simply means that others may require more.
- to come see me if you need help, assistance, guidance, or encouragement. My office door is open during my regularly scheduled office hours (no appointments are necessary. In fact, I welcome drop in visits), and I'm available at other times by appointment. If you e-mail me with a complicated problem or query, I will probably ask you to come talk with me in person. Some things are simply easiest to handle face-to-face.

The Nitty-Gritty Details

Attendance and Participation

In order to accomplish all of these things, you will need to come to class ready and willing to roll up your sleeves and work!

What that means, more specifically, is that you arrive each day prepared to discuss reading and homework assignments, participate in small-group exercises (both in the classroom and the library), and make periodic presentations to the class. Class formats will vary, but my high expectations regarding your active involvement will not. Luckily for us, the small size of this class means that everyone will have a voice and everyone will have a chance to be heard. Take advantage of this great opportunity.

Attendance and Participation will account for 100 points (or 10%) of your final grade. Absences will count against you (at the rate of 4 points per missed class) since if you're not present, you can't participate, and then we all miss out.

Communication

Assignments, resources, and notices will be posted on Blackboard as well as distributed and announced in class. Make a habit of checking the course web page on a regular basis.

I also will communicate with you regularly via e-mail. If you check your e-mail through an account other than your Virginia Tech account (ie: Hotmail or Yahoo), make sure you configure your Virginia Tech e-mail account to forward your mail. Otherwise you will miss out on important announcements.

If you wish to communicate with me via e-mail, please be sure to type "Hist 2004" in the subject header line. Otherwise, I may delete the message without reading it since I get too much spam and virus-laden e-mails these days to open up messages that I don't immediately recognize.

Finally, some things are best discussed in person rather than electronically. If you have a complicated or sensitive problem to discuss, please feel free to come and introduce yourself to me. I am always available during my office hours as well as after class.

Assignments

Reading

There are almost daily reading assignments for the class through the end of March. Make sure you complete the designated readings BEFORE attending the class for which the reading is assigned, since that reading will provide the basis for much of our work and discussion. (As an example, you will need to read pages 1-40 in *Love Across the Color Line* by the time you come to class on Thurs, Jan. 18.)

Homework

There are 9 short Homework assignments due over the course of the semester. Most are workbook exercise sets based on the reading in Furay and Salevouris, although there are some variations. The specifics of each homework assignment will be announced in class, distributed by e-mail, and posted on Blackboard at least one class period before the assignment is due.

Homeworks are due in class on the designated days. You may turn in the actual workbook sheets, photocopies of the workbook sheets (if you don't like tearing pages out of books), or a typed set of answers (especially important if you don't think that I can read your handwriting).

Each Homework will be worth 20 points, for a total of 180 points or 18% of your final grade. Late homeworks will be penalized by 5 points/day for each day they are late.

Short "Lab" Papers

There will be three short papers due during the first half of the semester. Each of these papers, 3-4 pages in length, will revolve around a short research "lab" project.

Short "Lab" Paper Schedule

- The first paper, due Thurs, Jan 25, will be based on *Love Across the Color Line*.
- The second short paper, due Tues, Feb 13, will involve research into the historical meaning of a political cartoon.
- The final short paper will require using census records to research the particulars and context of an oral history narrative. This third paper will be due on Thurs, March 1.

Details on each short paper will be distributed 3-4 classes before the paper's due date. Each paper will be worth 100 points, for a total of 300 points (or 30% of your final grade).

Research Paper

Your research paper, which you will work on throughout the entire semester and focus primarily on during the semester's second half, is a project of many parts. The final product will be a 10-12 page polished research paper on any topic of your choice within the parameters of 19th and 20th century U.S. history, making use of sources at Virginia Tech or an instructor-approved online resource.

During the first half of the semester, as I introduce you to research methods and the historical sources available at Virginia Tech, you will need to choose a research topic (based on a combination of personal interest and available sources), gather your primary and secondary

sources, and begin thinking about how you plan to go about conducting your research. This preliminary phase of work will culminate in the submission of your formal research proposal just before Spring Break.

The second half of the semester will be devoted to bringing this project to fruition by analyzing your resources, writing your paper, and presenting your results to the class at large. All of these tasks will be done in conjunction with classroom exercises on scholarly interpretation and the mechanics of writing and oral presentation.

Research Paper Schedule

- Inventory of Primary and Secondary Sources (20 points): due in class, Tues, Feb 20
- Research Proposal (50 points): due in class, Thurs, March 1
- Primary Source Analysis (50 points): due in class, Thurs, March 22
- First Version of Paper (100 points): due in class, Tues, April 3
- Oral Presentation of Research (50 points): scheduled for class, Apr 12-26
- Final Version of Paper (150 points): due in class, Tues, May 1

Added together, all of the components of the Research Project will count for 420 points, or 42% of your final grade.

Grades and Grade Breakdown (by points)

Attendance/Participation	100 points
Homework (9 x 20 pts)	180
Short Papers (3 x 100 pts)	300
<i>Research Project</i>	
Inventory of Sources	20
Proposal	50
Primary Source Analysis	50
First Version	100
Oral Presentation	50
Final Version	150
 TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE	 1000

Letter grades will be calculated as follows:

- A = 940 points or higher
- A- = 900-939
- B+ = 870-899
- B = 840-869 and so on ...

I will post your grades on Blackboard so you can keep track of the assignments you've completed and the points that you've received so far.

The Virginia Tech Honor Code

You are expected to familiarize yourself with and adhere to the Virginia Tech Honor Code on all assignments for this course, particularly those aspects of the Honor Code related to plagiarism.

<http://www.honorsystem.vt.edu>

As the Virginia Tech Department of History explains on its website –

<http://www.history.vt.edu/UDGHowToWriteEss.htm> – plagiarism is “the use of the writing and/or ideas of another without proper acknowledgment.” If you use the exact words of another person, no matter how long or short the quote, you *must* put those words into quotation marks and include a citation to indicate their source. If you use someone else’s ideas or paraphrase someone’s words, you must cite that as well.

Failure to do any of the above constitutes plagiarism and will result in the automatic filing of a report to the Virginia Tech Honor Court. There is no room for negotiation on this point. If you’re unsure about whether an idea or words are yours or somebody else’s, err on the side of caution and include a citation.

Be forewarned: I read published book reviews (both online and in printed format) and am quite adept with online search tools. Please don’t become one of the several people that I report each year to the University for Honor Code violations.

COURSE SCHEDULE

(subject to periodic adjustments and changes – be prepared to be flexible!)

NOTE: Make sure to bring the specified books to class on they days they are assigned.

Part I: Fundamentals of Research and Interpretation

1. Introduction to Historical Research

Jan 16 *Introduction to the Class*

2. Thinking Like a Detective: An introduction to the layers of historical research and interpretation

Jan 18 *Playing with Documents: Primary and Secondary Sources*

Reading #1: F/S (Furay and Salevouris) Chap 9 (Evidence)

Reading #2: PG (Pocket Guide ...), 1-13

Reading #3: *Love Across the Color Line*, 1-40 (do NOT read any further)

HW #1 due in class

Jan 23 *Acting Like a Detective: Where does one look for evidence of the past?*

Reading #1: F/S Chap 2 (History as Reconstruction)

Reading #2: *Love Across the Color Line*, 41-54 (do NOT read any further)

HW #2 due in class

Jan 25 *Putting the Pieces Together*

Reading #1: *Love Across the Color Line*, 55-117

Reading #2: PG, 14-24 and 47-49

Short Paper #1 due in class

Jan 30 *Working in the Newman Library: Online Resources*

Reading: PG, 139-151

MEET IN NEWMAN LIBRARY, ROOM TBA

Preliminary Research Topic due in class

Feb 1 *Working in the Newman Library: Print and Bound Resources*

Reading: F/S Chap 6 (Libraries: Real and Virtual)

MEET IN NEWMAN LIBRARY LOBBY

HW #3 due at my office no later than Monday, Feb 5th, 10 a.m.

3. Reconstructing the Past through Images and Text

- Feb 6 *Reading History with a Critical Eye*
 Reading #1: F/S Chap 7 (Reading History)
 Reading #2: PG, 25-29

 HW #4 due in class
- Feb 8 *Research Strategies: Creating a Road Map and Leaving a Trail*
 Reading: PG, 96-133
- Feb 13 *Accessing Microforms and Online Resources*
 MEET IN NEWMAN LIBRARY, ROOM TBA
 Short Paper #2 due in class
- Feb 15 *Accessing Manuscript Collections: A Visit to Special Collections*
 MEET IN NEWMAN LIBRARY LOBBY

4. Census Records Two Ways

- Feb 20 *Telling Stories with Census Records*
 Inventory of Primary and Secondary Sources for Research Project due in
 class
- Feb 22 *Verifying the Particulars: Oral Histories and Census Records*
 Reading #1: F/S Chap 10 (Oral History and Statistics, pp. 169-173) and
 Appendix B
 Reading #2: "Weevils in the Wheat" handouts and online readings
- Feb 27 *Library Work Session*
- Mar 1 *Plagiarism*
 Reading: PG, 88-95

 Short Paper #3 due in class
 Research Proposal due in class

**** SPRING BREAK ****

Part II: Generating Our Own Research and Analysis

1. Analysis

- Mar 13 *Frameworks for Analyzing the Past: Continuity and Change*
Reading: F/S Chap 3 (Continuity and Change)

HW #5 due in class
- Mar 15 *Frameworks for Analyzing the Past: Causality, Multiple-Causality, and the Art of Asking Questions*
Reading #1: F/S Chap 4 (It's Never That Simple: Multiple-Causality in History)
Reading #2: PG, 49-52 (top)

HW #6 due in class
- Mar 16 REQUIRED ATTENDANCE: Talk by Dr. Stephanie McCurry of the University of Pennsylvania, "*Wives of Confederate Soldiers and Wartime Confederate Politics*"
Friday, March 31st, 7PM
The Inn at Virginia Tech, room TBA
- Mar 20 *Putting the Past into Context*
Reading: F/S Chap 5 (Context)

HW #7 due in class
- Mar 22 *Interpreting History through Our Own Primary Sources*
Reading: F/S Chap 11 (Interpretation)

HW #8 due in class
Primary Source Analysis due in class
- ### **2. Mechanics**
- Mar 27 *Constructing a Paper*
Reading #1: F/S Chap 12 (Writing the History Paper)
Reading #2: PG, 52-61

HW #9 due in class
- Mar 30 *Writing and Research Consultations (no class – meetings by appointment)*
- Apr 3 *Self-Evaluation of Research Process*
First Version of Research Paper due in class

Apr 5 *Making Oral Presentations*

Apr 10 *Documentary Films*
 Reading: F/S Chap 8 (History on Film)

3. Finished (and unfinished) Results

Apr 12 *Student Presentations of Research*

Apr 17 *Student Presentations of Research*

Apr 19 *Student Presentations of Research*

Apr 24 *Student Presentations of Research*

Apr 26 *Student Presentations of Research*

May 1 *Why Be a Historian?*
 Final Version of Research Paper due in class