

Hist. 84900: Seminar in American History II

Professor Jonathan D. Sassi | Ph.D. Program in History, CUNY Graduate Center | Spring 2017

Class time: Tuesday, 2:00-4:00 p.m., room TBD

Office hour: Tuesday, 4:15-5:15 p.m., and by appointment in room 5107

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Course Description: This five-credit course is for first-year U.S. history majors and is the continuation of the fall semester's Seminar in American History I. Having framed research projects in the fall, students will now complete the research and writing of an article-length paper. The course is designed to assist students in that process and contribute toward their professional development. They will be responsible for circulating drafts of their works-in-progress and preparing written responses to others' papers. Timely completion of the assignments and collegial participation in the seminar are essential requirements.

Learning Goals: Students successfully completing this course will demonstrate their abilities to:

1. Write an article-length paper, based substantially on primary-source research, that makes an original argument and advances the scholarly literature on its topic. The paper will conform to our discipline's conventions of style and citation.
2. Apply constructive feedback about one's own work-in-progress and critique the writing of other students in the class.
3. Convey the results of one's research in the style of an academic conference presentation.

Assignments:

1. Research paper (60%): Students will complete an article-length paper (30-40 double-spaced pages plus bibliography) that makes a cogent, original argument, is based substantially on primary-source research, and advances the relevant secondary literature on its topic. Papers will conform to the citation guidelines of the *Chicago Manual of Style*. **Papers are due no later than 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 23** (during finals week).
 2. Book review (10%): Students will analyze a major secondary work about their topic for how it contributes to the field and how they, in turn, intend to engage with the book.
 3. Participation and critiques (20%): This course is a workshop, in which students will circulate their works-in-progress ahead of class and constructively critique the writings of others. On two occasions during the semester, students will provide classmates with written feedback.
 4. Conference-style presentation (10%): At the end of the semester, students will deliver a twenty-minute presentation about their findings, which will include a slide show.
- There are no assigned books in this course, but students may want to consult portions of Booth, Colomb, and Williams, *The Craft of Research*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, 2008).
 - You should keep in touch with your advisor and draw upon his or her expertise.

Schedule of Meetings, Topics, and Assignments:

Week 1, Jan. 31: Students will present a brief update of progress made since they submitted their final proposals in December and what their anticipated next steps are.

Week 2, Feb. 7: Half of the students will present a key primary source from their research and discuss what it contributes to their knowledge and what further questions or problems it raises.

Week 3, Feb. 14: The rest of the students will make their primary source presentations.

Week 4, Feb. 21: Students will write a three-page review essay of the most important secondary source book on their topic, focusing especially on that book's intervention in the scholarly field and how the student's research will engage further with that book. Essays are to be circulated to the class no later than 9:00 a.m. on Mon., 2/20.

Week 5, Feb. 28: We will discuss constructing an argument and organizing the paper. In preparation for the class, we will read in common a journal article or two (TBA).

Week 6, Mar. 7: Students will circulate a one-page précis of their emerging argument and a brief outline (no more than one page) of the proposed article by 9:00 a.m. on Mon., 3/6.

Week 7, Mar. 14: We will discuss the elements that go into writing a good introduction.

Week 8, Mar. 21: **No class meeting**—enjoy some uninterrupted writing time.

Week 9, Mar. 28: Half of the students will circulate in advance of our meeting a substantial piece (8-12 pages) of their work-in-progress, and the other half will write critiques thereof. Papers are to be circulated no later than 9:00 a.m. on Fri., 3/24, and critiques by 9:00 a.m. on Tues., 3/28.

Week 10, Apr. 4: Same as week 9 with the roles reversed. Papers are to be circulated no later than 9:00 a.m. on Fri., 3/31, and critiques by 9:00 a.m. on Tues., 4/4.

Week 11, Apr. 11: **No class meeting**—Spring Break.

Week 12, Apr. 18: **No class meeting**—Spring Break.

Week 13, Apr. 25: **No class meeting**, but complete drafts due today.

Week 14, May 2: Discussion of the complete drafts. Critiques to be circulated no later than 9:00 a.m. on Mon., 5/1.

Week 15, May 9: Conference-style presentations.

Week 16, May 16: Conference-style presentations.

Finals Week, May 23: Final draft of papers due by 5:00 p.m.