History 80900
Seminar in European and non-American History I
Monday, 6:30-8:30pm
Prof. Timothy Alborn

This seminar provides an introduction to the nuts and bolts of historical research as well as an introduction to a number of electronic databases and professional organizations, a tour of the New York Public Library, tips on revising and providing feedback, and a behind-the-scenes look at submitting articles for publication. In the context of this seminar students will be expected to formulate their own research paper topics and produce a paper prospectus, which they will have the opportunity to present to their peers for feedback and constructive criticism.

Learning objectives: The objective of the Seminar is to enable each student to produce a refined project prospectus. It is the expectation of the Program that each student will complete a project prospectus (12-15 pages) by the end of the semester, and that each student will also constructively engage and read the work of their peers.

All readings will be available on Blackboard. My office hours will be Mondays from 5:00 to 6:30. I will also be free to meet with students after class or by appointment. The best way to reach me is by email, at timothy.alborn@lehman.cuny.edu. My office is in room 5102 (down the hall from the History Department lounge).

Recommended reading: William Storey, Writing History: A Guide for Students (4th ed.). We will not be discussing this in class, but it is a useful resource (although geared toward upper-level undergraduates) for conceiving and writing a research paper.

Grade breakdown:

Referee report (see below): 25% (due via email October 12)
Annotated bibliography of secondary sources: 15% (due via email October 25)
Prospectus: 35% (due December 15)
Participation: 25%

General Requirements:

1) Attendance/Participation: everyone should regularly attend class and come prepared to discuss peer-authored work.

2) Collegiality: to maintain a supportive atmosphere in the seminar, all students should promote our conversation by carefully listening to one another and exchanging ideas in a respectful, collegial manner. Although all prospectuses should be intelligible and accessible, students should bear in mind that certain assumptions of prior knowledge might be appropriate to a specialist subfield.
Class Assignments

1 *Referee Report*: Using Digital Dissertations and EThOS (Electronic Thesis Online Service, available through the British Library), find a chapter from a recent Ph.D. thesis on European history. Pretend it was submitted to a journal for publication, and that the journal asked you to be a referee, and submit your referee report. **Due via email October 12.** Worth 25% of final grade.

2 (in class, **November 3**; ungraded): Each student will be responsible for an oral presentation on two different professional organizations, to be assigned by the instructor. Comment on:
   • Stated scope and mission of the organization
   • Activities sponsored by the organization (conferences, fellowships, etc)
   • Topics covered by articles in its associated journal from the past year or two

3) **Annotated bibliography of secondary sources** (minimum 20 sources. Please provide a short summary of each source, with enough information to make it clear why it will be useful for helping you with your research paper. Sources should provide historical context, theoretical perspectives for framing your research question, or a comparative case to help clarify your contribution. **Due via email October 25**; this will be the basis for our one-on-one discussion on October 26. Worth 15% of final grade

4) **Oral Presentations**: Students will have the opportunity to workshop their prospectus-in-progress on multiple occasions during the semester. In their first oral presentation to the class, students will have around ten minutes to present their topic to the group. In their initial presentation, students may wish to explain: 1) why they chose their topic; 2) what have been the biggest challenges and rewards to date in their research. In each subsequent presentation, each student will have around 40 minutes to engage in a dialogue about their drafts with the class. These presentations, and the accompanying discussions, will be the primary component of the participation grade for the course.

5) **Prospectus**: The specific topics of the work for this class will be formulated by the individual students in consultation with their mentors. By the end of the semester it is expected each student will complete a prospectus from 12-15 pages in length. The prospectus should identify and discuss, and preferably in this order: a topic, or question; its contribution to a diverse body of secondary sources; and the primary sources that will suggest answers to this question. **Due December 14**. Worth 35% of final grade.

In your prospectus, please follow the Chicago Style, use footnotes throughout, and provide a bibliography at the end of your paper. For further tips on proper bibliographical form, please consult the reference manual by Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Chicago, 1996). A quick list of sample citations is available here: [http://www.lehman.edu/academics/arts-humanities/history/historyfootnotes.php](http://www.lehman.edu/academics/arts-humanities/history/historyfootnotes.php).
Course outline

**August 31**: Introduction to course and student research projects. Presentation by instructor: reverse-engineering a research paper.

**September 10 (Thursday)**: Discussion of online databases. Please spend some time (if you haven’t previously) with Google Books and the following databases (all are available via the Grad Center library), plus any others your adviser recommends as suited to your topic: Academic Search Complete, Cambridge Histories Online, Digital Dissertations, Historical Abstracts, JSTOR, Oxford Bibliographies, Web of Science.

**September 14**: No class

**September 21**: How to write an academic history article
Read the following articles (all are on Blackboard).


Read these for content, but especially focus on the following:
• Argument: how do the authors situate their contribution in conversation with other scholars?
• Evidence: what primary sources did the authors use to support their conclusions?
• Quantitative data: what sort of work (if any) went into gathering and arranging this information? How does it contribute to the author’s argument?
• Style: how do the authors use and present quotations; how and when do they paraphrase instead of quoting? Consider and compare their introductions and conclusions.
• Documentation: how do the authors cite their sources?

**September 28**: Revising based on constructive criticism
**Week of October 5:** Visit to New York Public Library (time TBA); no class at regular time

**October 12:** No class (Columbus Day)
Due via email: dissertation chapter assignment (see above).

**October 19:** Oral presentations on initial research discoveries, including databases used.

**October 26:** Annotated bibliographies due via email by October 25.
No class: sign up for meetings with instructor in Room 5102, 2pm-8pm

**November 2:** Discussion of professional organizations
See assignment 2, above

**November 9:** Topics due
2-page project proposals stating topic and question; circulate via email by November 6, to be discussed in class

**November 16:** Historiography
4-6 page discussion of historiography (first three students), circulate via email by November 13.

**November 23:** Historiography
4-6 page discussion of historiography (second four students), circulate via email by November 20.

**November 30:** Sources and methodology
4-6 page discussion of primary sources and methodology (first three students), circulate via email by November 27.

**December 7:** Sources and methodology
4-6 page discussion of primary sources and methodology (second four students), circulate via email by December 4.

**December 14:** Final prospectuses due in class