History 84900: Seminar in American History II

Tuesday, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Professor Michael Rawson
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This course is the continuation of the Seminar in American History I. Students will complete the projects they outlined in the fall, producing article-length research papers of publishable quality. The course is designed as a workshop, so students will not only spend time developing their own work but also constructively criticizing the work of their classmates. Please keep in touch with your advisor throughout the semester and draw upon his or her expertise.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to: (1) develop an original historical argument; (2) locate, analyze, and interpret primary sources in support of an argument; (3) situate a historical argument relative to those of other scholars in a way that advances an appropriate historiographical literature; (4) craft a sophisticated and well-written scholarly article that conforms to the discipline’s conventions of style and citation; and (5) analyze and constructively critique the work of others.

Required Materials

The course contains only a few common readings, all of which are available electronically as indicated below.

Assignments and Grading

Students will be required to:
- Complete five written assignments (10%).
- Participate in class discussion and constructively critique the work of their peers (20%).
- Give a conference-style presentation (10%).
- Complete a 30-40-page final paper of publishable quality and meet all of the deadlines leading up to it (60%).

Important Course Policies

- Class attendance and your prompt arrival in class are mandatory. Unexcused absences and lateness will hurt your grade.
- I will not accept late assignments.
- Missing deadlines for paper excerpts, the full draft, etc., will hurt your grade.
- I will not give course grades of INC except in dire and documentable circumstances.
- Please put away all cell phones and other handheld electronic devices while in class.
Schedule of Topics and Readings

January 30  Introduction.
  - Come prepared to talk about what you see as the major challenges you face going forward with your project, particularly in light of the comments you received on your final proposal.

February 6  Anatomy of a journal article.
  - Assignment 1: Use these selections to think through the structure of an academic article, paying particular attention to the introductions (what kind of work does an introduction do, and how does it do it?). In no less than 750 words (single-spaced), discuss the characteristics of these articles that you would most like to emulate (or avoid) in your paper.

February 13 Historical narrative.
  - Assignment 2: In no less than 750 words (single-spaced), discuss how you might apply some of the ideas in these pieces to your own project. What, for example, are some possible stories that you might tell through your paper?

February 20  NO CLASS MEETING (conversion day).

February 27 Historiography.
  - Assignment 3: Write 1-2 paragraphs that explain your project’s historiographical contribution (think back to the articles we read in the second week and pretend you are writing the “historiography paragraphs” of your introduction). Print sufficient copies for everyone in class, including me.
March 6  The art of writing.
• **Read:** Helen Sword, *Stylish Academic Writing* (2012) (available as an e-book through the library website).
• **Assignment 4:** In no less than 750 words (single-spaced), discuss the tips from Sword’s book that you would most like to apply to the writing in your project and how you plan to accomplish that.

March 13  Discussion of outlines and excerpts (Group 1).
• **By the end of the day on March 9,** the members of Group 1 should distribute 8-10-page excerpts from their projects. The excerpts should engage primary sources (no introductions or conclusions) and begin with an outline of no more than one page that explains the organization of the project and indicates what section the excerpt comes from.
• All members of the class will read all of the excerpts and come to class with at least half a page (single-spaced) of comments on each one (bring two copies).

March 20  Discussion of outlines and excerpts (Group 2).
• **By the end of the day on March 16,** the members of Group 2 should distribute their excerpts as above.
• All members of the class will read all of the excerpts and come to class with at least half a page (single-spaced) of comments on each one (bring two copies).

March 27  NO CLASS MEETING (work on your full drafts).

April 3  NO CLASS MEETING (spring break).

April 10  Professional practice.
• **Assignment 5:** Identify at least two journals that would be appropriate publishing venues for your final paper (other than the *AHR* or *JAH*). Come to class with at least half a page (single-spaced) of reflections on why your work would be a good fit for these journals and what the manuscript submission processes would be like.

April 17  Discussion of full drafts (Group 1).
• **By the end of the day on April 13,** the members of Group 1 should distribute complete drafts of their projects.
• All members of the class will read all of the excerpts and come to class with at least half a page (single-spaced) of comments on each one (bring two copies).

April 24  Discussion of full drafts (Group 2).
• **By the end of the day on April 20,** the members of Group 2 should distribute complete drafts of their projects.
• All members of the class will read all of the excerpts and come to class with at least half a page (single-spaced) of comments on each one (bring two copies).

May 1  NO CLASS MEETING (work on your full drafts).

May 8  Conference-style paper presentations (Group 1).
  • By the end of the day on May 4, the members of Group 1 will send a copy of their written remarks to the class member who will serve as commentator (selected by me). In class, the members of Group 1 will give PowerPoint presentations of no more than 15 minutes that review their research questions, arguments, evidence, and historiographical contributions.
  • Each commentator for the day’s presentations will provide no more than 5 minutes of commentary on the presentation assigned to them.

May 15 Conference-style paper presentations (Group 2).
  • By the end of the day on May 11, the members of Group 2 will send a copy of their written remarks to their commentators as above. In class, they will deliver presentations in the format described above.
  • Each commentator for the day’s presentations will provide no more than 5 minutes of commentary on the presentation assigned to them.

May 22 Final papers are due no later than 5:00 p.m. Papers should be set in Times New Roman 12 pt.; contain citations and a bibliography formatted in Chicago Style; and be completely free of typographical and grammatical errors.