CUNY Graduate Center – Fall 2019

History 80900 – Seminar in European & Non-U.S. History I
Weds. 4:15-6:15 PM

Prof. Julia Sneeringer
Office hours at GC (room 5112): Mondays 10:30-11:30 or by appointment
Email: Julia.Sneeringer@qc.cuny.edu [Please note that I do not use a GC email address!]

Learning Objectives: This is the first semester of a year-long seminar that culminates in the production of a substantial, research-based first-year paper, as required by the History program. We will discuss methodology, writing, and research. This includes:
- formulating a research topic
- preparing a bibliography of secondary works
- writing a historiographical essay
- preparing a detailed research prospectus by semester’s end [see attached guidelines]

To assist you in this process, we will discuss examples of and approaches to historical writing, as well as the past and current state of history as a discipline. We will also visit several research libraries. Finally, we will workshop as a group each of your prospectuses. The first-year paper is a key requirement of the History program - helping you craft it is a main goal of this course. Our activities will also help you get to know each other’s work and (hopefully) create a community of readers and researchers – another important aspect of working as a historian.

A note about attendance and grades: Since we only meet once a week, I expect you to be present, barring medical or family emergency. Written assignments must be submitted on time – points will be deducted for lateness and non-submission counts as a zero. Failure to submit a prospectus draft in November-early December is not acceptable. Your grade for the course will be determined by:
- regular attendance and participation (15%)
- short assignments (5% each = 20%): essays on Hett, Eley, Williams; preliminary bibliography
- historiographic essay (25%) this 10-12 page paper is the first step in preparing your first-year research paper. It must contain a working title, description of your research question, discussion of the historiography on your topic, and a preliminary bibliography. It must demonstrate that you understand the key debates and works relevant to your topic. You may focus on 3-4 books and articles, though you should also relate these to other works in the field.
- final prospectus (40%): c. 15-page prospectus detailing the research plan for your first-year paper to be undertaken next Spring. Must have a working title, detailed description of research question, discussion of key secondary works on the topic, detailed discussion of primary sources to be used, and bibliography.

The following books are required:


* Other materials will be on the course Blackboard page (Bb) under Content, or available through GC Library databases as noted.

**PROPOSED COURSE SCHEDULE:**

**Aug. 28**  
Introduction & Library Tour

**Sept. 4**  
Why Historians become Historians  
**READING:** Eley, *A Crooked Line*  
**ASSIGNMENT:** a 500-word essay reflecting on Eley’s motivations for becoming a historian as compared with your own. **Due in class**

**Sept. 11**  
Library Session @ New York Public Library, main building: meet at **4:00** in main hall, first floor (Fifth Ave. entrance)

**Sept. 18**  
The Stakes of Writing History: The Reichstag Fire. **We will be joined in class by Prof. Ben Hett.**  
**READING:** Benjamin Carter Hett, “‘This Story is about Something Fundamental’: Nazi Criminals, History, Memory, and the Reichstag Fire,” *Central European History* 48 (2015) – on JSTOR; Hett, *Burning the Reichstag*  
**ASSIGNMENT:** a 750-1000 word essay summarizing the Reichstag fire controversy and its broader implications for the writing of history. **Due in class.**

**Sept. 25**  
Historiography & the Nature of the Discipline  
**READINGS:** Richard Evans, *In Defense of History* ch. 1; Joan Wallach Scott, “History-Writing as Critique,” in Keith Jenkins (eds.), *Manifestos for History* - Bb  
* Preliminary bibliography of at least 20 secondary works for your final project due

**Oct. 2**  
Coming to Terms: What Are We Talking About?  
**READING:** Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (esp. entries on Bourgeois, Class, Culture, Family, Hegemony, History, Imperialism, Liberal, Modern, Popular, Progressive, Sex, Society, Western); E.P. Thompson, “Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism” – on Bb; Alf Lüdtke, “What is the History of Everyday Life & Who are its Practitioners?” – on Bb  
**ASSIGNMENT:** select any 3 keywords from the readings and discuss in a 500-word essay how each fits into your research project. **Due in class.**

**Oct. 9**  
**NO CLASS** – CUNY closed (Yom Kippur)

**Oct. 16**  
**NO CLASS** – CUNY is on a Monday schedule

**Oct. 23**  
**NO CLASS**

**Nov. 6**  
**NO CLASS**

**Nov. 9**  
**NO CLASS**

**Nov. 16**  
**NO CLASS**

**Dec. 3**  
**FINAL PROJECT DUE**

**Dec. 10**  
**FINAL EXAM: 8:00AM–11:00AM**
Oct. 23  Historiographic essay due in class

Oct. 30  Analysis of a Carefully Crafted Article
ASSIGNMENT: select one of these articles & be prepared to co-lead discussion on the mechanics of how the piece is constructed

Nov. 6  Some Key Concepts in Current History Writing: Gender, Post-Colonialism, Citizenship, Human Rights, Trauma

The final segment of the course will focus on workshopping your prospectuses. Class will be divided into 2 groups. Students in Group 1 must circulate by e-mail a prospectus draft to Prof. Sneeringer and the class no later than 8pm on Monday, Nov. 11. Everyone must read each other’s drafts and be prepared to discuss them in class. Mark up the draft with comments either on paper or electronically; pass these on to the author at the end of discussion.

Nov. 13  Discussion of Prospectuses – Group 1, 1st draft

** Group 2 prospectuses due by 8pm, Monday Nov. 18 **

Nov. 20  Discussion of Prospectuses – Group 2, 1st draft

** Group 1 prospectuses due by 8pm, Monday Nov. 25 **

Nov. 27  Discussion of Prospectuses – Group 1, 2nd draft

** Group 2 prospectuses due by 8pm, Monday Dec. 2 **

Dec. 4  Discussion of Prospectuses – Group 2, 2nd draft

Dec. 11  FINAL PROSPECTUS DUE, revels to follow.
GUIDELINES FOR THE PROSPECTUS

This is a rough guide to the prospectus you will write this semester in preparation for next semester’s research paper. (It can also serve as a model for your dissertation proposal down the road.) Keep in mind that not all provisions will apply to all projects. Remember too that prospectuses change as your research progresses. Your prospectus should be c. 15 pages in length, and include citations and a bibliography in Chicago Manual format (see Kate Turabian’s *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* if you are not familiar with this format; models also exist online).

1. **Title**: Devise a title that is both accurate and memorable. A typical title might consist of a unique phrase from a cited source, followed by a descriptive phrase after the colon.

2. **Statement of the question you are going to answer**: Describe up front in a paragraph (or more) the historical phenomenon you are investigating – an unexplored event, an issue of (re)interpretation, whatever. Sometimes a new crop of primary sources will drive your project (see #6 below).

3. **Relevant background**: Contextualize the problem. What does the reader need to know in order to understand the question you have posed? Assume an educated reader who knows a fair amount of history but is not a specialist in the area in which you’re working.

4. **Brief outline**: What will be the main sections of your paper? In addition to an introduction and conclusion, a 30-page paper might have 3-5 sections that may or may not have subheadings. Breaks and section headings keep your material from becoming unwieldy. Also think carefully about the order in which you’ll present your material.

5. **Historiographical analysis**: Your paper must address the key historiographical debates surrounding your topic: what are the main ways historians have framed your topic in the past? What are the competing schools of thought, and how does your work stand in relation to them? If your topic has been ignored, you must still show what has been written so far about your topic in the broadest sense. E.g., how has the topic been handled for groups other than those you’re studying, or in other national contexts?

6. **Primary sources**: What sources have you found to help illuminate the question you’ve posed? Or perhaps you’ve found a new batch of unexplored sources that will generate a historical question. What are the limitations inherent in your sources and how do you propose to work around them?

7. **Bibliography of works consulted**: Err on the side of including all works consulted, even if they aren’t quoted in the text (except for basic textbooks or reference works). Divide your bibliography into primary and secondary sources, in that order. You may subdivide these headings if you have a lot of material. For example: (1) Primary Sources: (a) Newspapers and Periodicals, (b) Archival Collections, (c) Interviews/Oral Histories.