

First-Year Seminar in History (HIST 84900)
Thursday, 4:15-6:15
Sarah Covington

As a continuation of the first-year seminar in history, this class will further develop and refine students' focus on the mechanics of historical research, including the interpretation and analysis of sources in the service of creating an original and substantive piece of scholarship. In establishing writing and research routines and holding each other accountable to a timetable, the seminar will also emphasize the importance of developing habits that will lead to a productive academic career. Equally important, students will develop the skills to constructively critique and even collaborate with each others' writing processes, and to apply those critiques to their own work. Finally, we will devote some time to general topics that may be of help to students on a scholarly and professional level, from situating one's work in a given approach or utilizing theory (or other disciplines), to learning the nature of academic journals and readers' reports. Ideally, students will finish the class with a fully comprehensive, original and significant draft of an article that can be submitted to one of those scholarly journals.

Learning goals:

- Further and deepen research skills and analytical and interpretive expertise around one's primary sources
- Gain mastery over secondary sources, new and classic
- Develop and practice writing skills and habit that will prove enduring over a hopefully productive writing career
- Expand one's historical outlook by thinking about less traditional approaches to the subject
- Develop skills in public presentation of one's research findings
- Continue to hone critical skills when approaching others' work—and to take criticism as well
- Understand the nature of academic publishing and article writing

Course Expectations and Requirements

- Students will be expected to offer regular and active participation during the weekly sessions. This means that they have to absorb the reading and be prepared with a list of questions and comments which can then be shared with others.
- The short writing assignments will be evaluated by peers and the instructor, all of whom will offer constructive feedback to improve the quality of the piece. The suggestions offered are intended to sharpen skills and practice, all of which will help students with their own work and provide experience for when they have to write readers' reports or offer critiques in the future.

- Timesheets will be required each week to hold each other accountable—but please send them on just to me alone. Hours spent on the project can include both research and writing; in other words, you’re not expected to rigidly write for a given number of hours a day. Please keep in mind that it’s perfectly okay not to have much of the timesheet filled out, and it’s okay if you don’t do any writing for a given week. This is not a shame exercise, and I will not be grading on the basis of how many hours every week you put in.
- I would like to meet with you individually at least one time this semester, in early April.
- The final project is intended to be an article draft and not necessarily a finished copy, which you should work on further with your advisor. But the goal is certainly to publish the piece at some point, and to offer a significant contribution to the field.

Breakdown of Grade

1. Class participation, engagement with and evaluation of others’ work: 20%
2. Weekly assignments: 30%
3. Final paper 50%

SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Assignment (note: all of these will be analyzed by peers; please post to Blackboard by noon on Wednesday, the day before)	Recommended Reading
2/3	Introductions	Students will present a brief summary of their research topics and of the main suggestions for improvement and from their individual advisers on the work written last term – as well as of their own sense of what next steps they need to take to develop their projects.	
2/10	Approaches, Theories, Interdisciplinarity	<u>Assignment 1</u> : Presentations on the readings: Key points of the essays How theory and interdisciplinarity can inform your own field and project	*Required by all: Michel Rolphe-Troillet, “The Power of the Story,” <i>Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History</i>

		<p><u>Assignment 2</u>: timesheet</p>	<p>(chapter 1). Available on Blackboard.</p> <p>Ethan Kleinberg, Joan Wallach Scott and Gary Wilder, <i>Theses on Theory and History</i> (pdf available on Blackboard)</p> <p>Supplement with:</p> <p>Jonathan Caitlin, “Theory Revolt and Historical Consciousness”: https://jhiblog.org/2018/10/08/theory-revolt-and-historical-commitment/</p> <p>“Theory in Revolt Now Thunders” (pdf on Blackboard)</p>
2/17	The Process: Design, Outline, Structure	<p><u>Assignment 1</u>: 2-page double-spaced outline draft, broken into sections, followed by a brief list of revised research questions to be workshopped</p> <p><u>Assignment 2</u>: Oral presentation on related article of your choice, discussing its structure</p> <p><u>Assignment 3</u>: timesheets</p>	<p>Deborah Harkness, “Finding the Story.” https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/january-2009/finding-the-story</p> <p>Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Crafting Histories: For Whom Does One Write?” https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/march-2010/crafting-histories-for-whom-does-one-write</p>

2/24	Literature (1): Revisiting your primary sources	<p><u>Assignment 1</u>: oral presentation of your primary sources: archives, databases, old texts and new editions, new findings and new questions about those sources</p> <p><u>Assignment 2</u>: timesheets</p>	<p>Judith Walkowitz, “On Taking Notes”: https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/january-2009/on-taking-notes</p>
3/3	Literature (2): Refining works cited and locating your approach	<p><u>Assignment 1</u>: presentation on review of the literature, your discoveries since last semester, the arguments of the literature in question and the place of your work in the field</p> <p><u>Assignment 2</u>: timesheets</p>	<p>Ion Georgiou, “The Literature Review as an Exercise in Historical Thinking,” available as pdf on Blackboard</p>
3/10	Argument and Method	<p><u>Assignment 1</u>: presentation on your argument (distill, distill, distill—and clarify, clarify, clarify); discussion of your methodology – the “how”</p> <p><u>Assignment 2</u>: timesheets</p>	<p>C. Behan McCullagh, “What Do Historians Argue About?” pdf available on Blackboard</p> <p>Susan Grigg, “Archival Practice and the Foundations of Historical Method,” pdf available on Blackboard</p> <p>(Suggested): Lune and Berg, <i>Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences</i>, esp. chapter 2: http://law.gtu.ge/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Berg-B.-Lune-H.-2012.-Qualitative-Research-Methods-for-the-Social-Sciences.pdf</p>

3/17	Points of significance; the so what question	<p><u>Assignment 1</u>: one paragraph on the project's significance, its unique intervention into the field; the "so what" question, to be workshopped/discussed</p> <p><u>Assignment 2</u>: timesheets</p>	<p>Teresa MacPhail, "The 'So What' Question," pdf on Blackboard</p> <p>Jean-Pierre V. M. Hérubel, "Significance of Scholarly Journal Articles and Academic Historians: Discussion, and a Necessary Tension?," pdf on Blackboard</p>
3/24	Analyzing and interpreting your evidence	<p><u>Assignment 1</u>: oral presentation on your sources and how your interpretation is new or different, and what approaches you'll be bringing to them</p> <p><u>Assignment 2</u>: timesheets</p>	<p>Kipping , Wadhvani , and Bucheli, "Analyzing and Interpreting Historical Sources: A Basic Methodology," esp. pp. 320-324; pdf on Blackboard</p>
3/31	No class (conference)		
4/7	Navigating journals and the dreaded reader's report	<p><u>Assignment 1</u>: Bring in and discuss three to five top journals that would fit with your article, including their contributors' page</p> <p><u>Assignment 2</u>: list scholars or colleagues who would offer good feedback and who you could acknowledge</p> <p><u>Assignment 3</u>: Draft of the cover letter</p> <p><u>Assignment 4</u>: timesheets</p>	<p>Guest speakers (journal editors)</p> <p>Examples of reader's reports good and bad</p> <p>Laura Moss, "25 Ways to Increase Your Chances at Publication," pdf available on Blackboard</p>
4/14	Progress Reports	<p><u>Assignment 1</u>: Bring in and discuss draft copies of your article as it currently stands; discuss challenges and breakthroughs and how your project answers research questions</p>	

		<u>Assignment 2</u> : timesheets	
4/21	No class (spring break)		
4/28	Editing your work	<u>Assignment 1</u> : Bring in and discuss your current draft and discuss places that need cutting and expanding <u>Assignment 2</u> : timesheets	(Suggested): John P. Bartkowski, Carma S. Deem and Christopher G. Ellison, "Publishing in Academic Journals: Strategic Advice for Doctoral Students and Academic Mentors" (note: this is addressed to sociologists but it's still useful. Pdf on Blackboard.
5/5	Presentations	<u>Assignment 1</u> : Bring in final draft, abstract and keywords for discussion, presenting the paper through the prism of the previous class topics (methodology, sources, significance etc). <u>Assignment 2</u> : timesheets	
5/12	Presentations	See above	

Policies

Attendance is absolutely mandatory; absences will be excused with medical documentation.

There may be instances where we go online and hold our class via Zoom.

The University's policy on academic integrity: The faculty and administration of CUNY support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity policy can be found at <http://www2.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/legal-affairs/policies-procedures>

If I have determined that you have committed plagiarism, you will receive a failing grade for the course.

Counseling Services: The Wellness Center Student Counseling Services offers short-term individual and group counseling and psychotherapy, couples counseling, consultation and referral services, and a variety of programs and workshops relevant to graduate student life. These services are confidential and available free of charge to matriculated students registered at the GC. For more information: <https://www.gc.cuny.edu/Prospective-Current-Students/Student-Life/HealthWellness/Counseling-Services>