Spring, 2018 History 84901 - Advanced Research Seminar Prof. Thomas Kessner
Tuesdays, 11:45 am-1:45 pm, 5 credits

The objective of this Seminar is for students to expand and refine their skills in historical research and writing by carrying out a research project and completing an article length historical paper of 30-40 pages. The required paper must be a piece of original work on American history, substantially based on primary sources and informed by current historiography.

Students should come to the first session with a research topic in mind and a preliminary bibliography.

The first few sessions will focus on issues of methodology, conceptualization and interpretation. By the third week of class students will submit a formal proposal (4-6 pgs) describing the topic to be researched, the methodology to be utilized in carrying out the research, the sources to be used, how the proposed work engages the available historical literature, the significance of the project and a critical bibliography of selected secondary sources.

As their work proceeds participants will submit draft segments of 8-10 pages of their research for discussion and criticism. There will be at least two rounds of such presentations/critiques.

At the same time that students will be honing their research and writing skills they will also be sharpening their critical analysis of work-in-progress. Thus, the two essential components of this seminar are the preparation of the final paper and fully engaged participation in the discussions and critiques of the work submitted by colleagues.

Course learning objectives:

Over the course of the semester students will hone craft skills that include:

- Ability to formulate a well formulated historical research question
- The historical research process
- Assembling a relevant and effective bibliography
- Crafting a methodology appropriate to the research project
- Properly use and interpret historical evidence and historical studies
- Analyze and interpret relevant monographic literature
- Prepare a research proposal and complete an article length historical paper
- Critically review and analyze others’ in-progress work
- An appreciation for the complexity of historical experience

Final versions of the paper are due the second week in May. There is a one week grace period.
Jan 30. Orientation and discussion of topics and course timelines

Feb 6. Prepare a single page that describes and discusses your central research question. This means the large enveloping issue that you will be addressing.

Feb 13. Prepare a short three page discussion of the historiography relevant to your topic.

Feb 20. Select and critique a book related to the subject of your research. Discuss whether it effectively engages the historical issues you are interested in exploring and assess its usefulness as a model for your work.

Feb. 27. Submit a proposal outlining these four elements:

- Statement of the problem
- Present state of scholarship
- Possible significance of findings
- Short bibliography

March 6. Strategy/ methodology: Discuss the methodology for your paper. Remember methodology does not mean which library you intend to visit or which sources you plan on working with, it does mean discussing your research strategy, how you intend to use your sources to construct a response to your central question.

March 13. Presentation draft research proposals for critique and response. Drafts are to be sent by email to all seminar participants for review and preparation of oral critiques to be discussed in class.

From this point forward we will be scheduling presentation/ critiques

March 20.
March 27.
April 10.
April 17.
April 24.

May 1. Submission of drafts for initial critique, optional

May 8.

May 15. Presentation of summary and submission of final papers