This course is part of a year long series of seminars in which you have the opportunity to develop a research project and produce an article. It might seem like a very long time to work on a single subject, but since it is also part of an exercise in working through the historiography in your sub-field and discussing the purpose and challenges inherent to doing history, it passes quickly. Of course, we also hope it will bring you a conference paper, a publishable article, and maybe even one step closer to a dissertation chapter by next spring. The reading is intended to raise questions about sources, approaches, and challenges. Please read it as such, rather than as a “content project”. Please come prepared to discuss the reading in class. Late assignment will not be accepted, so please note deadlines. Courtesy in classroom exchanges is imperative, and I look forward to developing a strong professional workshop atmosphere over the course of the term. Please feel free to email me at any time; it is the most efficient way to reach me.

8/31: Introductions, defining the parameters of a viable research project for the year, discussing areas of expertise and interest

9/7: Reading for stone—finding the arguments and thinking through historiographic approaches


Topics: why did I choose these essays? What do they do better than others? What can we take from their approaches? How do they establish their research questions? How do they engage with evidence? What do you think prompted the authors’ decisions to write these essays/pursue these questions?

9/14: Why do we write history anyway?


Steven Feierman, “Writing history: flow and blockage in the circulation of knowledge”

9/21: Translations and transitions: The challenges of working with sources


9/28: research day—go find a source or three that interest you! Please email me a page or more about each source indicating what interests you and how you might use the source in your research. Please provide full historical context for the source (date, author, place, intellectual context). Please include full citations and where the source is located.

10/5: College closed-Yom Kippur

10/12: Taking a step back to take a step forward: now that you have located at least one—or maybe some--primary sources that interest you, what approach to them do you plan to take? Please come to class prepared to discuss your own work as well as the articles assigned for today. The goal is to brainstorm approaches to primary material that might not be your first instinct and to broaden all of our understanding of what we mean by “sources”.


10/19: Acknowledging Source Limitations and what to do about them...a problem common to all historians! How do these historians acknowledge and address their source limitations? Is it possible to
actually write the histories of people missing from sources? Or from periods so long ago that our
discussions of actual experience are largely the product of informed imagination/interpretation?

Read: Lynn Schler, “Writing African Women’s History with Male Sources: Possibilities and Limitations,”
*History in Africa* 2004 v. 31: 319-333.


Clare Anderson, “Writing Indigenous Women’s Lives in the Bay of Bengal: Cultures of Empire in

10/26: Reconsidering your sources: please come to class with a revised version of your source analysis
that you can discuss that acknowledges what you cannot know from the sources and what you wish you
knew.

Due: revised source analysis and a plan for how to address/correct gaps in what you know

11/2: Historiography: or “you know the major players in your field, but who are they to you?”

Please come to class ready to introduce all of us to the major scholars in your field and to summarize
their positions, as well as indicate how your argument for this year’s paper relates to their work.
Assume you are addressing smart people familiar with academic history but not your specialty, as we all
come from such disparate fields. Make sure to avoid “inside baseball” in your presentation.
Presentations should not exceed 10 minutes.

11/9: What problems did you face in pulling together your draft? How do you plan to move forward to
address those? And how does your literature review reshape your approach to your primary sources?

Due: draft literature review

11/16: Final discussions of pulling together a draft for this paper—understanding that first drafts are
always a mess—and thinking through the process of moving from article/chapter draft to conference
presentation.

11/23: Drafts due—no class held

11/30: class presentations

12/7: class presentations

Final papers due: 12/21