The Graduate School and University Center
City University of New York
Ph D. Program in History

History 84900: First Year Seminar in American History
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Fall, 2022

This seminar is designed to train incoming graduate students in the craft of historical research and writing. Over the course of the term, each student will formulate a research topic, prepare a bibliography of relevant primary and secondary sources, write an historiographic essay, and present and defend a formal project proposal for the substantial research paper that is to be completed in the second semester seminar. Weekly meetings will discuss common readings, share and critique written work, and develop and refine the research proposals. We will also be devoting some time to methods and issues involved in undergraduate teaching.

Students should focus primarily on framing a topic and honing a well defined, focused, and reasonable research proposal for their papers. The purpose of the collateral assignments is to help push this process forward. Thus, from the very beginning students should be thinking about their research project, sampling secondary readings, and investigating the availability of accessible sources.

Course learning objectives: Familiarize students with the full range of issues we confront as historians trying to do original work: how to shape researchable questions; how to find and cull through appropriate sources; how to weigh and interpret evidence, construct arguments, and situate one’s own work in the wider debates in the discipline.

Over the course of the semester students will be expected to:

• formulate an historical research question
• master the research process
• assemble a relevant and effective bibliography
• shape a methodology for a historical research project
• demonstrate effective use of evidence and research
• read historical works critically and analytically
• propose a well defined research project for an article length historical paper
• critically review and analyze the work of others

Schedule of class meetings with assignments and timetables. Starred meetings are in class, in person; others are by zoom.

*Aug. 31. Introductions, Orientation: Selecting a Topic

*Sept. 7. Read:
Barbara Young Welke, “The Cowboy Suit Tragedy: Spreading Risk…,”
Then select one of the articles cited at the end of this syllabus from a recent *Journal of American History* or *American Historical Review* volume.

Prepare a 3-4 page paper that summarizes the main argument and discusses: the central question; approach and methodology; identify the main sources used as the basis of the articles; and conclude with an assessment of the overall quality and persuasiveness of the essays.

Finally, compare the strengths and weaknesses of the article you have read with the Welke article.

**Sept. 14**  
**Individual meetings.** Discuss your topic: scope, sources and secondary readings.

**Sept. 21**  
“Between Footnotes and Plagiarism: Imagination, Creativity and Scholarship.” Read the *Journal of American History*, March, 2004 Round Table discussion pp. 1325-1357 and write a 3 page essay addressing one of the fundamental issues raised.

**Sept. 28**  
For the topic you have selected do the following:
   a. prepare a list of primary and secondary sources
   b. discuss how these sources are central to your paper and will be useful in addressing your research question

**Oct. 12**  
Read one of the following historian interchanges. References to articles and http: info on Pp. 6-8.


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*Or


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*Or


Discussants each define a topic and prepare short talk.

Prepare and circulate a one page description of the central question that you propose to investigate and its significance. Discuss in class.
Oct. 19 Prepare a four page discussion of the historiography (the present state of relevant scholarship) surrounding your topic with a bibliography of important monographs in your area.

Oct. 26 In a one page submission discuss a book or article that might best serve as a model for the type of study you intend to do.

*Nov. 2 Undergraduate Teaching. Read:


Discussants: Report and Critique. Department requirements, the syllabus, a bow to the local learning culture, selecting texts, preparing lessons, priming discussions, exams, grades.

*Nov. 9* 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. It may help you to think in terms of how you propose to structure the various sections of the paper (perhaps in the form of sections) and how this will move the analysis forward to your conclusion.

Nov. 16 Joint meeting with European First Year Seminar. 15-minute Power Point conference-paper style revised presentations (with comments from critic/discussant) of the final research plan/proposal with potential implications of research findings on current scholarly understanding. Group I

Nov. 23 Joint meeting with European and non-American First Year Seminar (ENAFYS). Presentation of ENAFYS papers

*Nov. 30* Joint meeting with European First Year Seminar. 15-minute Power Point conference-paper style revised presentations (with comments from critic/discussant) of the final research plan/proposal with potential implications of research findings on current scholarly understanding. Group II

Dec. 7 Joint meeting with European and non-American First Year Seminar (ENAFYS). Presentation of ENAFYS papers

Dec. 14 Submit the final proposal

*Article selections for week Two*


HISTORIANS AND NATIVE AMERICAN AND INDIGENOUS STUDIES


Jean M. O’Brien, What Does Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAIS) Do?
David J. Silverman, Historians and Native American and Indigenous Studies: A Reply
The American Historical Review, Volume 125, Issue 2, April 2020, Pages 546–551,
https://doi-org.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/10.1093/ahr/rhaa197


Laurent Dubois, Going to the Territory
The American Historical Review, Volume 125, Issue 3, June 2020, Pages 917–920,
https://doi-org.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/10.1093/ahr/rhaa277

Matthew J. Smith, Pursuance: The Movement of The Common Wind,
The American Historical Review, Volume 125, Issue 3, June 2020, Pages 921–925,
https://doi-org.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/10.1093/ahr/rhaa230

https://doi-org.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/10.1093/ahr/rhaa192

Cristina Soriano, Julius Scott’s Masterless Caribbean and the Force of Its Common Wind,
The American Historical Review, Volume 125, Issue 3, June 2020, Pages 931–935,
https://doi-org.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/10.1093/ahr/rhaa229

Brandon R. Byrd, African Americans, Haiti, and the Incessant Common Wind,
The American Historical Review, Volume 125, Issue 3, June 2020, Pages 936–940,
https://doi-org.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/10.1093/ahr/rhaa234

Sasha Turner, In the Shadow of the Wind, The American Historical Review, Volume 125, Issue 3, June 2020, Pages 941–947,
**AHR EXCHANGE: RETHINKING THE HISTORY OF CHILDHOOD**


