

Texas A&M University – Central Texas
HIST 5300-115: Elements of Historical Inquiry
Fall 2020, First Session
Online

Instructor: Luke A. Nichter, Ph.D.
Professor of History

Office: 216J Heritage Hall
Phone: (254) 519-5735
Email: luke_nichter@tamuct.edu
Website: <http://lukenichter.com>

Office Hours:

By appointment. Email is the easiest way to reach me. Your message will be returned promptly even during weekends, evenings, holidays, and university break periods.

Mode of Instruction and Course Access:

This course is 100% online and uses TAMUCT's Canvas system (<https://tamuct.instructure.com/>).

Course Description (from the TAMUCT course catalog):

HIST 5300. Elements of Historical Inquiry. 3 Credit Hours. Examines history as a profession, including how historians read sources, pose questions, draw inferences, shape their narratives, and engage historical writings.

Course Overview:

The course surveys the historical profession, past and present, including an introduction to historiography and the development of the discipline. Other material includes good practices of research, writing, citation method, achieving success as a graduate student in history, and assessing and writing scholarly book reviews.

Learning Objectives of Course:

Knowledge:

- Students will improve their ability to identify connections between historical issues and life outside the classroom

Comprehension:

- Students will demonstrate how to think historically about the past by identifying and critiquing historical interpretation and analyzing issues in historical context

Application:

- Students will select and use evidence from a variety of sources, including primary sources

Analysis:

- Students will examine current issues from a historical perspective

Synthesis:

- Students will compare the historical development of their own and other cultures

Evaluation:

- Students will complete assignments that prompt them to argue effectively and critically

Course Unit Learning Objectives:

Week 1: Identify the factors that have driven the development of the modern historical profession

Week 2: Examine contemporary trends in the historical profession and their possible impact on tomorrow's profession

Week 3: Debate the best practices for documenting historical sources

Week 4: Assess various reviews from top academic journals

Week 5: Evaluate what it takes to write a sound scholarly review

Week 6: Critique the original methods of "doing" history

Week 7: Explain the impact of the Dark Ages and Renaissance on historians

Week 8: Distinguish how history is "done" today, as compared to previous eras

Instructor Responsibilities:

- Select and present course content;
- Identify themes to be emphasized;
- Evaluate student historical understanding and skills;
- Communicate evaluations to students in a timely manner;
- Assist students in improving their skills.

Student Responsibilities:

- Complete all required readings;
- Attend class regularly;
- Participate in all class activities and discussions;
- Communicate with instructor, as appropriate;
- Complete all assignments on time.

Required Text(s):

Thomas Bender, Philip M. Katz, and Colin Palmer. *The Education of Historians for the Twenty-First Century*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004.

- ISBN: 978-0-2520-7165-4

Conrad Edick Wright and Katheryn P. Viens, eds. *The Future of History: Historians, Historical Organizations, and the Prospects for the Field*. Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2017.

- ISBN: 978-1-9365-2011-4; pdf version available for free on Canvas and EPUB/Kindle here: https://www.masshist.org/publications/future_history

Kate L. Turabian. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 9th Ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

- ISBN: 978-0-2264-3057-7

John Burrow. *A History of Histories: Epics, Chronicles, Romances and Inquiries from Herodotus and Thucydides to the Twentieth Century*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007.

- ISBN: 978-0-3754-1311-7

Additional readings may be assigned and distributed at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Requirements:

The course grade will be determined by Discussion Board Questions (DBQs) (20%), two Review of Reviews essays (RoRs) (40%), and two Book Reviews (40%).

Grading Criteria Rubric and Conversion:

DBQs:	20%
RoRs:	40%
<u>Book Reviews:</u>	<u>40%</u>
	100%

Final grades will be computed according to the following scale:

- A = 90-100%
- B = 80-89%
- C = 70-79%
- D = 60-69%
- F = 59-0%

Posting of Grades:

All grades will be posted in the Canvas grade book. Students should regularly monitor their grades and address any questions or concerns promptly to the instructor. Throughout the course, the grade book will be updated at the end of each week to include all work completed up to that point in the course.

Review of Reviews:

See page 11 for more information.

Book Reviews:

See page 12 for more information.

Late Policy:

Any assignment submitted after the due date and time will be subject to a penalty of ten percent per twenty-four hour period late. If a specific assignment carries its own late policy, the specific assignment's late policy takes precedence over this general late policy.

Social Media Policy:

Due to the proliferation of social media and the need to keep professional distance between vocation and avocation, no Facebook friend requests will be accepted from current students. However, you are welcome to follow me on Twitter (@lukenic).

Canvas Access and Course Participation:

The most important prerequisite is that you have access to TAMUCT's Canvas portal, at <https://tamuct.instructure.com/>. If you are logging in the first time, your username is your MyCT username and password. If you have forgotten your username or password, follow the link provided on the login page.

If you do not have login credentials for Canvas (i.e. a username and password) you must resolve this immediately. No one—including your instructor—can do this for you. Failure to do so will result in failure of the course, since assignments are due beginning at the end of the first week of the course. While many of you are already familiar with Canvas, because such a large percentage of your final grade depends on Canvas participation these details bear repeating.

Be sure to look around the Canvas course shell. Perhaps you have used Canvas before, but not this version. If this is your first time using Canvas, or if you need a refresher, visit the Help section. There, you will find a variety of tutorials and other types of assistance.

The following are the Canvas modules used:

- “Announcements” is where you will find instructor announcements, which will also be emailed to you when they are posted.
- “Discussions” is where you will post your answers to the Discussion Board Questions (DBQs). As a reminder, when you post your answers to the DBQs, for each question you are required to submit three posts. The first should be a longer post—in a new “thread”—that thoroughly answers the question and demonstrates that you mastered the reading for that week. The second and third posts are shorter comments on your classmates’ posts.
- “Grades” is where you can monitor your course grades.
- “Assignments” is where you will find information about upcoming assignments.

At any point during the semester, if you need technical assistance related to Canvas, contact:

Help Desk Central
Online Chat: <https://www.tamuct.edu/help>
Phone: (254) 519-4266

While you in no way are expected to be a “computer expert” in order to succeed in this course, you should be aware of the types of documents most commonly posted on Canvas. These include *.pdf, and *.doc(x) files. To be successful in this course, you

must to be able to access both types of files. The following is a short description of each:

***.pdf**: commonly known as “pdf files,” for this course these may include primary source documents, readings, or excerpts of books or articles. Be sure you have Adobe Reader installed on the computer you use to access Canvas. If you need to download the current version of Adobe Reader, you may do so here for free:

<http://get.adobe.com/reader/otherversions/>

***.doc(x)**: commonly known as “Word documents,” I will post these files often, including the syllabus and other course documents from time to time. The latest version of Microsoft Word is recommended, but older versions should work fine even if they do not have every feature.

***.mp3**: on a weekly basis, I will post an audio file/podcast to review the previous week’s work, as well as preview the week ahead and provide other timely information and announcements at that stage of the course. *It is very important that you are able to listen to these files.* While they are optional, and do not include content you cannot obtain elsewhere, they summarize course announcements, feedback on previous assignments, additional explanation of future assignments, or information about the course readings.

If you have trouble accessing these files via Canvas, it may be easier if you first download them to your computer (or, perhaps a flash drive if you are using a shared computer) before attempting to open them. If you still need help, contact or visit a TAMUCT computer lab, which contains computers equipped with software that can open all of the above file types. On duty technicians will also be able to assist you on the phone or in person if you have questions:

<http://www.tamuct.edu/departments/informationtechnology/computerlabs.php>

The “normal” structure of this course that you should follow each week is:

1. Listen to the audio file for the week
2. Complete weekly reading
3. Complete Discussion Board Questions (DBQs)

At the start of each week, review your previous week’s work and grades in the Canvas grade book. All weekly assignments such as the Discussion Board Questions will be graded before the next weekly assignments are due. More substantial assignments, such as reviews, essays, and research papers, are typically returned electronically with comments and grade to the email address from which you submitted the assignment in approximately one week from the due date.

The inherent flexibility of this course is that you are able to complete the weekly assignments at your leisure. The drawback is that you have to be disciplined and self-motivated to such an extent that you are able to complete all assignments in a timely manner. No one will be staring over your shoulder to ensure you have done so.

Complete Course Calendar

Week One: Recent Developments in the Historical Profession

Objective: Identify the factors that have driven the development of the modern historical profession

8/24: Listen to Week 1 Podcast

Read: Bender, Chs. 1-2

Articles Posted on Canvas: 1) "No More Plan B," 2) "Plan C?," 3) "A Call for Reflection and Change, Again," 4) "Transforming the Preparation of Historians," and 5) "Helping History PhDs Expand Their Job Options"

Week Two: Future Developments in the Historical Profession

Objective: Examine contemporary trends in the historical profession and their possible impact on tomorrow's profession

8/31: Listen to Week 2 Podcast

9/5: **DBQs 1 due by 11:59 p.m.**

Review of Reviews 1 due by 11:59 p.m. (by Microsoft Word email attachment to luke_nichter@tamuct.edu)

Week Three: Using Proper Citation Style

Objective: Debate the best practices for documenting historical sources

9/7: Listen to Week 3 Podcast

Read: Bender, Chs. 3-4

Articles Posted on Canvas: 1) "You Have the M.A. What Now?," 2) "Next Steps for Career Diversity," 3) "The Many Careers of History PhDs," 4) "From History PhD to Librarian and Archivist," and 5) "The Real Academic World"

Turabian, Chs. 1-14

Wright/Viens, Chs. 1-8 (Viens-Sinha)

Week Four: Characteristics of Scholarly Reviews, I

Objective: Assess various reviews from top academic journals

9/14: Listen to Week 4 Podcast

9/19: **DBQs 2 due by 11:59 p.m.**

Review of Reviews 2 due by 11:59 p.m. (by Microsoft Word email attachment to luke_nichter@tamuct.edu)

Week Five: Characteristics of Scholarly Reviews, II

Objective: Evaluate what it takes to write a sound scholarly review

9/21: Listen to Week 5 Podcast

Read: Wright/Viens, Chs. 9-16 (Larson-Wright)

Burrow, Introduction, Preface, Chs. 1-11

Week Six: The Origins of the Western Historical Tradition

Objective: Critique the original methods of “doing” history

9/28: Listen to Week 6 Podcast

10/3: **DBQs 3 due by 11:59 p.m.**

Book Review 1 due by 11:59 p.m. (by Microsoft Word email attachment to luke_nichter@tamuct.edu)

Week Seven: The Nadir and Revival of the Historical Profession

Objective: Explain the impact of the Dark Ages and Renaissance on historians

10/5: Listen to Week 7 Podcast

Read: Burrow, Chs. 12-26

Week Eight: The Modern Historical Profession

Objective: Distinguish how history is “done” today, as compared to previous eras

10/12: Listen to Week 8 Podcast

10/17: **DBQs 4 due by 11:59 p.m.**

Book Review 2 due by 11:59 p.m. (by Microsoft Word email attachment to luke_nichter@tamuct.edu)

911 Cellular:

Emergency Warning System for Texas A&M University – Central Texas

911Cellular is an emergency notification service that gives Texas A&M University-Central Texas the ability to communicate health and safety emergency information quickly via email, text message, and social media. All students are automatically enrolled in 911 Cellular through their myCT email account.

Connect at [911Cellular](https://portal.publicsafetycloud.net/Texas-AM-Central/alert-management) [https://portal.publicsafetycloud.net/Texas-AM-Central/alert-management] to change where you receive your alerts or to opt out. By staying enrolled in 911Cellular, university officials can quickly pass on safety-related information, regardless of your location.

Drop Policy:

If you discover that you need to drop this class, you must complete a [Drop Request Form](https://www.tamuct.edu/registrar/docs/Drop_Request_Form.pdf) [https://www.tamuct.edu/registrar/docs/Drop_Request_Form.pdf]. Professors cannot drop students; this is always the responsibility of the student. The Registrar’s Office will provide a deadline on the University Calendar for which the form must be completed, signed and returned. Once you return the signed form to the Registrar’s Office, you must go into Warrior Web and confirm that you are no longer enrolled. If you still show as enrolled, FOLLOW-UP with the Registrar’s Office immediately. You are to attend class until the procedure is complete to avoid penalty for absence. Should you miss the drop deadline or fail to follow the procedure, you will receive an F in the course, which may affect your financial aid and/or VA educational benefits.

Academic Integrity:

Texas A&M University -Central Texas values the integrity of the academic enterprise and strives for the highest standards of academic conduct. A&M-Central Texas expects its students, faculty, and staff to support the adherence to high standards of personal

and scholarly conduct to preserve the honor and integrity of the creative community. Academic integrity is defined as a commitment to honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Any deviation by students from this expectation may result in a failing grade for the assignment and potentially a failing grade for the course. Academic misconduct is any act that improperly affects a true and honest evaluation of a student's academic performance and includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism and improper citation of sources, using another student's work, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials. All academic misconduct concerns will be reported to the university's Office of Student Conduct. Ignorance of the university's standards and expectations is never an excuse to act with a lack of integrity. When in doubt on collaboration, citation, or any issue, please contact your instructor before taking a course of action.

Academic Accommodations:

At Texas A&M University-Central Texas, we value an inclusive learning environment where every student has an equal chance to succeed and has the right to a barrier free education. The Department of Access and Inclusion is responsible for ensuring that students with a disability receive equal access to the University's programs, services and activities. If you believe you have a disability requiring reasonable accommodations please contact the Department of Access and Inclusion at (254) 501-5831. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such. For more information please visit our [Access & Inclusion](https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/access-inclusion.html) webpage [https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/access-inclusion.html].

Texas A&M University-Central Texas supports students who are pregnant and/or parenting. In accordance with requirements of Title IX and guidance from US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, the Dean of Student Affairs' Office can assist students who are pregnant and/or parenting in seeking accommodations related to pregnancy and/or parenting. For more information, please visit <https://www.tamuct.departments/index.php>. Students may also contact the institution's Title IX Coordinator. If you would like to read more about these [requirements and guidelines online](#), please visit the website [http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf].

Tutoring:

Tutoring is available to all A&M-Central Texas students, both on-campus and online. On-campus subjects tutored include Accounting, Advanced Math, Biology, Finance, Statistics, Mathematics, and Study Skills. Tutors are available at the Tutoring Center in Warrior Hall, Suite 111. If you have a question regarding tutor schedules, need to schedule a tutoring session, are interested in becoming a tutor, or any other question, contact Academic Support Programs at 254-519-5796, or by emailing Larry Davis at lldavis@tamuct.edu.

Chat live with a tutor 24/7 for almost any subject on your computer! Tutor.com is an online tutoring platform that enables A&M-Central Texas students to log-in and receive

FREE online tutoring and writing support. This tool provides tutoring in over forty subject areas. Access Tutor.com through Canvas.

University Writing Center:

Located in 416 Warrior Hall, the University Writing Center (UWC) at Texas A&M University-Central Texas is a free workspace open to all TAMUCT students with satellite hours in the University Library. Students may arrange a one-on-one session with a trained and experienced writing tutor by visiting the UWC during normal operating hours (both half-hour and hour sessions are available) or by making an appointment via [WCOOnline](https://tamuct.mywconline.com/) [https://tamuct.mywconline.com/]. In addition, you can email Dr. Bruce Bowles Jr. at bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu to schedule an online tutoring session. Tutors are prepared to help writers of all levels and abilities at any stage of the writing process.

While tutors will not write, edit, or grade papers, they will assist students in developing more effective composing practices. By providing a practice audience for students' ideas and writing, our tutors highlight the ways in which they read and interpret students' texts, offering guidance and support throughout the various stages of the writing process. In addition, students may work independently in the UWC by checking out a laptop that runs the Microsoft Office suite and connects to WIFI, or by consulting our resources on writing, including all of the relevant style guides. Whether you need help brainstorming ideas, organizing an essay, proofreading, understanding proper citation practices, or just want a quiet place to work, the University Writing Center is here to help! If you have any questions about the University Writing Center, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Bruce Bowles Jr. at bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu.

Library Services:

The University Library provides many services in support of research across campus and at a distance. We offer over 200 electronic databases containing approximately 250,000 eBooks and 82,000 journals, in addition to the 72,000 items in our print collection, which can be mailed to students who live more than 50 miles from campus. Research guides for each subject taught at A&M-Central Texas are available through our website to help students navigate these resources. On-campus, the library offers technology including cameras, laptops, microphones, webcams, and digital sound recorders.

Research assistance from a librarian is also available twenty-four hours a day through our online chat service, and at the reference desk when the library is open. Research sessions can be scheduled for more comprehensive assistance, and may take place on Skype or in-person at the library. Assistance may cover many topics, including how to find articles in peer-reviewed journals, how to cite resources, and how to piece together research for written assignments.

Our 27,000-square-foot facility on the A&M-Central Texas main campus includes student lounges, private study rooms, group work spaces, computer labs, family areas suitable for all ages, and many other features. Services such as interlibrary loan, TexShare, binding, and laminating are available. The library frequently offers

workshops, tours, readings, and other events. For more information, please visit our [Library website](https://tamuct.libguides.com/) [https://tamuct.libguides.com/].

Instructor reserves the right to amend this syllabus at any time.

Review of Reviews Instructions

Before writing your own scholarly book reviews later in the course, it is important to first have the opportunity to consider the components of a good book review. These are skills that will help you not just in this course, but anytime you evaluate historical writing.

Review of Reviews #1

Write a 1,500 word essay examining various book reviews written about a single academic book. You do not need to read the book, only the reviews of the book.

First, select one of the following oft-reviewed books:

- Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic*
- Gary Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution*
- James C. Scott, *Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*
- Douglass North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*

Using J-Stor, find **5** book reviews of the book you chose. When you read the reviews, consider factors such as: the usefulness of the review, what the reviewers say the book's thesis or main argument is, and praise and/or constructive criticism offered by the reviewer.

Prepare your essay properly citing the book reviews using Chicago/Turabian style. Summarize, compare, and contrast the approach taken by each reviewer, and note which review was more (or less) helpful. Explain what makes a good, useful review. Explicitly state what the reviewer said the thesis or main argument of the book is, where the book fits within the historiography of the subject, and note whether the reviewers disagree on this (or any other aspect of the book).

Review of Reviews #2

Write a 1,500 word essay examining various book reviews written about various books. You do not need to read the books, only the reviews of the books.

Next, by searching volumes of the *American Historical Review* and *The Journal of American History*, find **5** book reviews of five different books reviewed in the last ten years. When you read the reviews, look for the same factors that you did in the previous assignment: the usefulness of the review, what the reviewers says the book's thesis or main argument is, and praise and/or constructive criticism offered by the reviewer.

Then, prepare your essay properly citing the book reviews you read using Chicago/Turabian style. Summarize, compare, and contrast the approach each reviewer took, and note which review was more (or less) helpful. Explain what makes a good, useful review. Explicitly state what the reviewer said the thesis or main argument of the book is.

Book Review Instructions

You are required to complete two scholarly book reviews by the end of the course. Part of being a historian involves keeping abreast of new books and research in your field. Even senior historians write book reviews. Some of you have written book reviews for other courses, while for some of you this will be a new type of writing assignment. Regardless of whether you have written book reviews before or not, the following are some general guidelines for success in *this* course.

Reading historical monographs is not like reading a novel or a textbook. Historians write books for a purpose. It is how the historical profession communicates new knowledge and new perspectives on both old and new questions. As you read, you should focus on the author's arguments and the evidence used to support them. Read the preface/introduction and conclusion especially carefully. Usually, but not always, these sections are where the author sets out the book's thesis and summarizes key points.

1. Content of the Review:

The purpose of a scholarly review is: **1)** to explain briefly what the book is about, **2)** to analyze its thesis and evidence, **3)** to offer a critical assessment of the book's strengths and weaknesses, and **4)** to appraise its historical value. Look at examples of scholarly book reviews in historical journals such as The American Historical Review, Journal of American History, etc., which can be found on J-Stor.

2. Keys to a Successful Scholarly Review:

- Read the book thoroughly and reflect upon it
- Identify the author, including credentials and major publications
- Identify the major theme or thesis of the book
- Summarize the author's supporting arguments and evidence
- Give the reader a flavor of the book by quoting from it or describing the layout or other features of the book
- Offer both praise as well as constructive criticism, as appropriate
- Incorporate your own insights
- You are not permitted to review any required course reading

3. Format of the Review:

The review should be double-spaced, and approximately 1,500 words in length (+/- 10%). It should be written clearly and free of grammatical errors. Clear writing indicates clear thinking. This kind of formal writing takes effort, so be prepared to put in the time and the brainpower. Put your name and the date at the top of the first page, followed by the book's full citation data according to the following example (see the Chicago/Turabian for additional examples):

John Burrow. *A History of Histories: Epics, Chronicles, Romances and Inquiries from Herodotus and Thucydides to the Twentieth Century*. New York: Knopf, 2008.