

HIST 3300

Historian's Craft

Dr. Jones – Fall 2023

Heritage Hall – 2040

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Course Description and Objectives:

This course is the gateway to major in History. It introduces students to the practices and methods of the study of history. Students will learn 1) to think historically; 2) to understand how historians construct and write about the past; 3) to critically evaluate historical arguments and the material used to substantiate those arguments; 4) to develop writing and research skills; 5) to learn and practice professional standards for presenting their findings.

This is a face-to face class

Contacting the Professor

The best way to contact me outside of class is via email within Canvas. You can expect to receive a reply to any message in about 24 hours, except on weekends

Learning Outcomes:

1. Demonstrate factual knowledge and an understanding of fundamental theories: Students will examine and evaluate the major issues related to the field of history.
2. Analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view: Students will analyze and critically evaluate the conclusions of different historians concerning historical theory and method
3. Apply course material to improve thinking, problem solving, and decision making: Students will apply course material to improve thinking and decision through research and topical analysis
4. Demonstrate specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course: As future historians or professional working in history, students will evaluate and critically review of the work of other scholars and

develop personal methodologies history research.

5. Demonstrate skill in expressing themselves orally and in writing: Consistent with an upper-level history course, students will develop skills in written and/or oral communication including a research paper and presentation of research.

6. Use required resources and find additional scholarly resources for answering questions or solving problems: Students will engage in independent research of their selected topic utilizing books, journal articles, and other resources.

Required Readings:

Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. Boston: Bedford/St Martin's, 2018.

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, Ninth Edition: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018

Strunk, William, and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*. 2017.

Course Requirements and Grading Policy

As this course forms the foundation for pursuing a degree as a history major, all assignments are required to be completed prior to the submission of subsequent assignments. Each piece of submitted work forms a crucial part of the construction of the final paper, and each piece likewise reflects essential skills and practices of the profession of history.

The final average will be calculated based on the number of points received out of a total of 800.

The following point ranges correspond to the final grade for the course: 720 and above = A; 640-719 = B; 560-639 = C; 480-559 = D; below 480 = F. (On the percentage scale: A = 90-100%; B = 80-89%; C = 70-79%; D = 60-69%; F = 0-59%). Students will be graded and earn points for:

DOCUMENTATION EXAMPLE: Students will submit a short paper demonstrating proper Turabian style documentation for a selection of sources which reflect the most commonly used types in the field. The example assignment is worth 50 points.

TOPIC SELECTION: Students will identify and submit an informal topic selection which will be the basis for their work in the remainder of the class. This assignment will not generate a formal grade but is a requirement for submission of other assignments.

PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS: Students will analyze a primary source relevant to their research topic, judging its utility and worth as a historical source. The primary source analysis is worth 50 points.

TOPIC PROPOSAL: Students will compose and submit a formal 1-2 page research proposal outlining a course of research, study, and writing on a topic of their choice, to be approved by the professor. The topic proposal is worth 100 points.

MONOGRAPH REVIEW: Students will analyze and review a secondary book source they will use in their research paper as a source. The monograph review is three pages and worth 100 points

JOURNAL ARTICLE COMPARATIVE REVIEW: Students will compare and contrast and analyze two journal articles related to their proposed topic. The comparative review two pages and is worth 100 points.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY: Students will create an annotated bibliography for their selected topic. The annotated bibliography will contain a minimum of five primary and ten secondary sources. The annotated bibliography is worth 100 points.

QUIZZES - 100 points

RESEARCH PAPER: Students will create a ten (10) page research paper based on primary and secondary sources. The research paper is worth 200 points.

PRESENTATION Students will present their research to the class in a talk that is 5-7 minutes. PowerPoint can be used or not. 50 points.

Total = 800 points

LATE WORK: Late work will be accepted at a penalty of 5% of the assignment grade for each day past the due date. Please note, however, that late work will not be accepted past the semester end date of Friday, Dec. 15. Make-ups for missed assignments will be given on a case-by-case basis and only for documented reasons such as hospitalization/illness, incarceration, military service etc. Students are responsible for securing all necessary documentation for consideration when asking for a makeup.

INCOMPLETES: Incomplete grades are reserved for extraordinary circumstances that arise after the university drop date and which prevent the student from completing any outstanding

course work. Inability to complete assigned work for whatever reason before the drop date should be handled via dropping the course. Students requesting an incomplete need to have been active in the course throughout the semester and maintaining a passing grade. Decisions to allow an incomplete are made at the sole discretion of the professor.

FEEDBACK: As all written assignments will be submitted electronically, feedback on papers will also be delivered electronically and will generally be available within 7-10 days of the due date.

PLEASE NOTE: All written electronic assignments must be submitted in Microsoft Word. All other formats, such as Apple .pages or wps will not be accepted

Course Outline:

Please Note: This outline is intended as a general guide only. The professor reserves the right to adjust this syllabus or the class schedule in any way that best serves the needs of the course.

All assignments will be due on Monday evenings at 11:59 p.m. one week later than the course week in which they are listed excepting week 16 which is finals week.

Week 1 (8/28-30) Introduction to the class, What is history? Reading: Syllabus, Rampolla PP. 1-7

Week 2 (9/4-6) Documentation styles; research methods; Historiography; Reading: Rampolla pp. 8-23; **INITIAL TOPIC SELECTION DUE.**

Week 3 (9/11-13) Types of Sources, evaluating sources. Rampolla pp. 24-50; DOCUMENTATION EXERCISE.

Week 4 (9/18-20) Research skills, finding a primary source.

Week 5 (9/25-27) Considering and evaluating primary sources. Primary Source Evaluation

Week 6 (10/2-4) Considering and evaluating secondary sources, research techniques.

FORMAL TOPIC PROPOSAL Due.

Week 7 (10/9-11) Book reviews: what they are and how to use them.

Week 8 (10/16-18) Research questions and crafting a thesis. Read Rampolla Chapter 5 sections A and B. McNeill, Chapter 1. **Monograph Analysis (book review) Due.**

Week 9 (10/23-25) Introduction to historiography: what it is and why it matters.

Week 10 (10/30-11/1) Tackling a research paper: constructing an argument.

Journal Article Comparison and Analysis due.

Week 11 (11/6-8) Conducting research: resources and techniques. Read Rampolla Chapter 5C.

Week 12 (11/13-15) Taking notes and creating an outline. Read Rampolla Chapter 5D.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

Week 13 (11/20-22) Research and preliminary writing week. OUTLINES DUE

Week 14 (11/27-29) Documentation and handling sources properly. Read Rampolla Chapters 6 and

7. Optional Draft submissions.

Week 15 (12/4-6) Writing and research. .

Week 16 Paper due, presentations 12/11, more presentations 12-13)

Canvas Support

Use the Canvas Help link, located at the bottom of the left-hand menu, for issues with Canvas. You can select “Chat with Canvas Support,” submit a support request through “Report a Problem,” or call the Canvas support line: 1-844-757-0953.

For issues related to course content and requirements, contact your instructor.

Online Proctored Testing

A&M-Central Texas uses Proctorio for online identity verification and proctored testing. This service is provided at no direct cost to students. If the course requires identity verification or proctored testing, the technology requirements are: Any computer meeting the minimum computing requirements, plus web camera, speaker, and microphone (or headset). Proctorio also requires the Chrome web browser with their custom plug in.

Other Technology Support

For log-in problems, students should contact Help Desk Central, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Email: helpdesk@tamu.edu

Phone: (254) 519-5466

[Web Chat](http://hdc.tamu.edu): [http://hdc.tamu.edu]

Please let the support technician know you are an A&M-Central Texas student.

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES, PROCEDURES, AND GUIDELINES

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 Warrior Center for Student Success, Equity 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 Office of Access and Inclusion, WH-212; or call (254) 501-5836. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

For more information, please visit our [Access & Inclusion](#) Canvas page (log-in required) [https://tamuct.instructure.com/courses/717]

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. Any deviation by students from this expectation may result in a failing grade for the assignment and potentially a failing grade for the course. All academic misconduct concerns will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. When in doubt on collaboration, citation, or any issue, please contact your instructor before taking a course of action.

How to Write a Book Review:

A Guide for Students

HUGH B. HAMMETT

From *The Social Studies* (November 1974):263-65

Sooner or later most students who take history courses will be required to write a critical book review. The assignment is especially popular with harassed instructors who have too many students to require full-scale term papers but who would feel guilt without asking their students for some kind of written exercise outside of class. Book reviews are not particularly popular with students, however, because the average person has very little idea how to proceed with such a project. The enterprising student cannot find much help in sources like the *New York Times Book Review* or the *New York Review of Books* (since essays in these publications usually reveal far more about the reviewer than about the work under discussion. Nor should historians deceive themselves that journals like the *American Historical Review* or the *Journal of American History* offer more reliable guides. Unfortunately, most scholarly reviews are written solely for scholars (i.e., specialists) and all too frequently the only point that is made is that the reviewer knows more about the subject, or thinks he does, than the author of the volume under discussion.

The following suggestions are addressed to the student who wants to know how to go about reviewing a book. These suggestions assume that the review will be written for submission in class; but it will be well to observe that the good student will think through all of following areas as he reads, even if no written assignment is involved:

I. **Publication Information Should Be Complete.** This information will be important if anyone later wants to procure a copy of the volume; also, certain publishers specialize in books on particular subjects or with special political ideas. You should give the author's full name, the complete title of the book, and the place, publisher and date of publication. For example:

Thomas Bailey, *The Art of Diplomacy: the American Experience*. New York:
Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968.

If you use a revised edition, be sure to make a note of it since revisions often incorporate new or different material.

II. **The Author's Background Is Important to a Thorough Analysis of Any Book.** Would you pay attention to an unsigned letter? What difference is there in reviewing a book by an author of whom you know nothing? What if the author is a Communist, teaching in an East German university? Or what if he is an Eastern European émigré to the United States and a virulent anti-communist? Would it be to your advantage in reading a book about race relations to know that the author is white and has spent his entire life in Mississippi? Would it be well to know that a scholar writing about United States-Canadian relations was born and educated in Canada? Or might a diplomatic historian trained in a Latin American university possibly have a different attitude toward the Monroe Doctrine than a professor educated in the United States? If a man has

studied and written about the medieval frontier for all of his scholarly career, would you wisely be cautious if he suddenly published a monograph about Internal politics in Vietnam?

To belabor the point no longer, historians are a part of their books; and their books are part of them. A student approaches the task of critical evaluation with a huge "blind spot" if he knows nothing about the author of the volume. In some cases, of course, the author's Background may be of no special significance; but at other times it could be disastrous of you not to know.

The reference librarian at your college library can make many helpful suggestions about finding biographical information. As a starting point, however, for non-American writers you can look at Who's Who (especially for important British historians), the International Who's Who or the Dictionary of International Biography. American historians may be in Who's Who in America but more likely will be listed in the Directory of American Scholars, Volume 1, History.

III. There Are Certain Things That Every Book Review Should Contain.

Without this basic information your reader cannot tell whether the book would be valuable for his own use. What is the purpose of the book? Usually in the preface or the first chapter of a monograph (works on special topics in history are "monographs," not novels), meet that need. You should keep the stated purpose in mind as you read. If the author does not do what he said he would, then his book has failed one important test.

What is the scope of the book? What period of time does it cover? What kind of history does it include: political, economic, social, diplomatic, intellectual?

Are there major themes that are essential to understanding the book? Identify them. More important, is there a particular thesis (or original idea, a new contribution) that the author is trying to prove? You should determine whether or not the author offers evidence to support his thesis.

Are there basic flaws in the book? Point them out. Are there sections that are exceptionally well done? Commend them.

Is the book especially relevant in the light of contemporary events? Does it make any overall contribution to our knowledge of history that characterizes the book as a distinguished volume?

IV. Sources Must Also Be Considered. No assessment of a book is complete without some comment on the scholarly evidence from which the author draws. Are there footnotes? Is there an extensive bibliography? Does the author use primary source material (documents, diaries, letters, newspapers, journals) or does he confine himself to secondary materials (books written by other authorities on the same subject)? Usually, more scholarly works will heavily employ original research in primary sources. "Popularized," "derivative," or "synthesized" works draw principally on the books of others.

V. Reviews Must Be Specific As Well As General. For every generalization that you make about the book, you should offer one or two specific examples clearly illustrating what you mean. If for no other reason, your specific illustrations will show your instructor that you have

conscientiously read the book and that you have attained a certain mastery of basic factual material.

One word of caution is necessary about the use of extensive quotations. Merely to string sections of quoted material throughout your paper does not make your work scholarly. Each quotation that you use should be clearly linked to the material you are discussing. The quotation must be introduced by an appropriate comment that shows its relationship to the subject at hand.

Do not fall into the use of quotations out of laziness. Never borrow directly unless the quotation is so eloquent, witty, or precise that you could not possibly express the same idea in a better way yourself.

VI. Reviews Must Be Both Descriptive And Analytical. Would you believe that many reviews which are submitted might be written by the average bright student who has read only the table of contents and thumbed through the volume? You should communicate a few of the author's significant ideas. Why are they important? What disagreements or reservations would you have?

If a book is "good," why? If a book is "boring," why? (Oh yes, any book over one hundred pages is not automatically boring.)

Above all, do not be afraid to give your own opinion. Too often student papers are cop-outs--exercises in trying to say as little as possible. Avoid the use of the passive voice:

"Jefferson was said to....(Who said it? The author?

You? Jefferson's friends? His enemies?)

"It is believed...."

"England is shown...."

Also avoid weasel words:

"The author appears to say...." (Does he say it or not?)

"The book seems to say...."

"It may or may not be true...."

Be direct about what the author says and about what you think. Clearly distinguish between your ideas and those of the author.

Your instructors are aware that you are not an authority on the material you are studying. But they also know that you are a bright, intelligent person and are capable of forming critical judgments. Do not be intimidated by an author. Be decisive and forceful--even if it is only to state your approval of what you have read. For the purposes of learning, most teachers believe that it is better for you to attempt a critical judgment that may turn out to be unfounded than to make no judgment at all.

If you would like to see what other authorities have said about a book, check the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature in the reference section at the library. It will direct you to journals where reviews have been published.

VII. Work Hard on Your Writing. Painful as it is to be so blunt, the writing in the majority of student papers runs from barely adequate to abominable. Too many papers are mechanically sloppy. You should understand that correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, choice of word, and syntax are not important merely because they are traditional or because English has "always been done that way." They are important because they make your writing clear. They enable you to say exactly what you mean.

Without the ability to write clearly and correctly, you will be an intellectual cripple all of your life. In spite of the onslaught by television, the printed word is still the most common means of communication among highly educated people. It does not matter how brilliant or how noble your intentions. Without the ability to write forcefully and clearly, your gifts will be wasted. How far do you think Thomas Jefferson would have gotten had he written, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men is created equal..."?

A final suggestion may help. If you type your paper or have someone else do it (all instructors appreciate typed work, and some may require it), be sure to proofread your work before turning it in. Even after one typing, re-write your paper if necessary. Teachers have considerable sympathy for those students who try but who have never learned to write well: but they have little patience and show little mercy in awarding grades for those who are too careless to use their dictionaries or are too lazy to read their own papers before submitting them.

Historians as a rule pride themselves on a fine sense of the language. Moreover, history is one of the few disciplines left that offers the average educated person a clear and readable body of knowledge unencumbered by jargon and complicated by special vocabulary. Your papers will be most successful and your grades will be noticeably higher if your writing is in this tradition.

Research Paper Guidelines

Paper topics must be approved by the scheduled date. I will not accept papers on topics I did not approve. I will keep a record of topics I have approved. I will help you narrow your topic; “The Great Depression” is too broad. “The AAA: Success or Failure?” is better.

Sources: No encyclopedia references. Any internet sources should be scholarly. If in doubt, ask me, for I will evaluate the quality of your sources as part of your grade. You should incorporate both primary and secondary sources. Sources used should demonstrate information competencies such as use of databases to conduct a comprehensive review of the topic. Both local and external sources should be considered.

Papers will conform to either Chicago Style (Turabian) and use proper citation and correct bibliography..

Grammar and Style are also evaluated and follow guidelines in Strunk and White *Elements of Style*.

Avoid lengthy quotations. They give a cut-n-paste appearance. Paraphrase when possible, with a full-citation.

Have a relevant introduction, clear thesis, and conclusion that compliments your intro and thesis. Be careful not to stray from your topic and overall thesis. Your introduction should include a review of literature surrounding your topic.

Submit papers as an email attachment in Canvas.