

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
Fall 2014
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

HISTORY 9850A (001)UW
Methods and Practice in History

Thursday, 01:30 – 03:30pm
2270 C Lawson Hall


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Office Hours:TBA
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Methods and Practice in History is designed to teach the skills necessary for graduate work in History. The course explores some of the interpretive methods used by professional historians and is meant as an introduction to the “tool box” of historical studies. Through engaged discussions, critical readings, and informed analysis around common themes and specific topics, students will identify, develop and reinforce their familiarity with the methods of historical research. A selection of theoretically informed readings will provide the common discourse for historiographical analysis.

Objectives:

- to identify, recognize, and develop skills in historical research
- to equip students to conduct primary research in archival settings
- to build a theoretical vocabulary relevant for historiographical discussions
- to work collaboratively with classmates to strengthen analytical capacities

Required texts:

Martha Howell & Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001). 

Raymond Williams, *Keywords*, Revised Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983)

Assignments:

Participation:

This course is a seminar, which places a premium on informed participation in discussion. This requires that students read and reflect on the relevant material in advance, attend class meetings, and engage in the discussion regarding the readings, issues, and themes of the course. Each week, each student will provide a 150-250 word commentary/critical engagement/reaction to the readings. **Students must submit six(6) of these.** This commentary must **not** be a summary of our readings but rather a **response** to the issues they raise along with questions that you think should be addressed during our meetings. They should try to make connections across some or all of the week's readings. In addition, as the seminar unfolds week by week, it is especially productive to see what points can be made, and questions raised, that join readings and discussions for one week with readings and discussions from previous weeks. These response papers will form a significant part of the mark for participation.

Two written Assignments:


1. 1000 words. Due Thursday, 2 October 2014. Each student will write a brief essay discussing the work of historical scholarship that s/he would most like to have written and providing the reasons for his/her choice. This assignment will be discussed in class on 18 September.
2. 2500 words. Due Thursday, 11 December 2014. Each student will write a 2500 word prospectus for a research project. During the semester, each student will identify a list of primary sources, relevant secondary literature, and propose an appropriate theoretical framework. In support of this project there will be brief biweekly assignments related to the student's individual research and intended to develop students' research skills. This assignment will be discussed in class throughout the semester.

NB: Students should please take note that the requirements for this second assignment are distinct from the departmental requirements for the proposal for the MA Cognate Essay and from those for the PhD thesis proposal. (These can each be found on the History Department Graduate Studies website.) However, students may find this assignment useful in preparation for either of these program requirements.

More information about these assignments will be available in class.

Evaluation:	Participation*	30%	(includes weekly response papers)
	Short Essay	20%	
	Research Proposal	<u>50%</u>	
		100%	

Key

 Book on reserve shelf at Weldon (1-day loan).

 E-book or journal article available through online library catalogue.

Weekly Readings:

To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born is to remain always a child. For what is the worth of human life, unless it is woven into the life of our ancestors by the records of history?

Cicero, *Orator*

Thursday, 4 September: Introduction : “Getting Ready to Do History”

What are the foundational assumptions underlying the study of History?

Reading: William Cronon, “Getting Ready to Do History,” 1-6

http://www.williamcronon.net/writing/Cronon_Carnegie_Essay_Getting_Ready_to_Do_History_2004.pdf

Paul N. Edwards, “How to Read a Book”

<http://pne.people.si.umich.edu/PDF/howtoread.pdf>

Martha Howell & Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources*, Introduction, 1-17.

Assignment: Visit http://www.zotero.org/support/quick_start_guide

If you don't know history, then you don't know anything. You are a leaf that doesn't know it is part of a tree.

Michael Crichton

Thursday, 11 September: The Sources : What is the Basis of Our Knowledge about the Past?

Readings: Martha Howell & Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources*, 18-42.

Lisa Spiro, “Getting Started in the Digital Humanities,” *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*, 14 October 2011.

<http://digitalscholarship.wordpress.com/2011/10/14/getting-started-in-the-digital-humanities/>



William Turkel, “Going Digital,” *WilliamJTurkel.net*, 15 March 2011

Any good history begins in strangeness. The past should not be comfortable. The past should not be a familiar echo of the present, for if it is familiar why revisit it? The past should be so strange that you wonder how you and people you know and love could come from such a time.

Richard White, *Remembering Ahanagan*

Thursday, 18 September : What Do You Want to Know? Posing the Question and Finding the Sources to Answer It

Readings: Wayne Booth, Gregory Colomb, and Joseph Williams, *The Craft of Research* 3rd Ed.

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 29-101.   (available as an e-book through Weldon Library)



David Hackett Fischer, *Historians Fallacies*, Chapter One, p.3-39 

(available online at <https://archive.org/details/HistoriansFallaciesTowardALogicOfHistoricalThought>)

Assignment: Visit <http://www.lib.uwo.ca/archives>




History is real simple. You know what History is? It's what happened.
Rush Limbaugh

Thursday, 25 September : Reading Historical Texts

Readings: Martha Howell & Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources:* 43-68.
Errol Morris, "Whose Father Is He?" in *Believing is Seeing: Observations on the Mysteries of Photography* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), pp. 221-271. 
Sam Wineburg, "On the Reading of Historical Texts" and "Reading Abraham Lincoln," in *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), pp. 63-112. 

The past is full of life, eager to irritate us, provoke and insult us, tempt us to destroy or repaint it. The only reason people want to be masters of the future is to change the past."
Milan Kundera

Thursday, 2 October: What does the Evidence Say?

Readings: Martha Howell & Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources:* 69-87.
Plus **One** (1) of the following:
Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983). 
Annette Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy* 
Edward Larson, *Summer for the Gods: the Scopes trial and America's continuing debate over science and religion* 
Jill Lepore, *New York Burning: liberty, slavery, and conspiracy in eighteenth-century Manhattan*
Johnson, Michael. "Denmark Vesey and His Co-Conspirators." *William & Mary Quarterly* (2001)58, no. 4: 915-976.

All knowledge that is about human society, and not about the natural world, is historical knowledge, and therefore rests upon judgment and interpretation. This is not to say that facts or data are nonexistent, but that facts get their importance from what is made of them in interpretation... for interpretations depend very much on who the interpreter is, who he or she is addressing, what his or her purpose is, at what historical moment the interpretation takes place."

Edward W. Said

Thursday, 9 October: How am I going to Answer this Question?: Methodology

Readings: Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001),88-108. 

History is a Rorschach test, people. What you see when you look at it tells you as much about yourself as it does about the past.

Jennifer Donnelly, *Revolution*

Thursday, 16 October: What is Left to Say?

Readings: Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 109. □

Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2005), “Introduction,” 1-16. 📖

Assignment: Review of Secondary Literature

History is always written wrong, and so always needs to be rewritten

George Santayana

Thursday, 23 October: Making an Argument

Readings:

Thursday, 30 October: FALL BREAK – NO CLASS

An argument is a connected series of statements intended to establish a proposition.

John Cleese and Graham Chapman, “The Argument Clinic”

Thursday, 6 November:


The historian ought to be the humblest of men; he is faced a dozen times a day with the evidence of his own ignorance; he is perpetually confronted with his own humiliating inability to interpret his material correctly; he is, in a sense that no other writer is, in bondage to that material.

C. V. Wedgwood

Thursday, 13 November: Documentation – Guidelines and Cautionary Tales

Reading:

Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession*, 612– 621. 📖



Eric Hobsbawm, "Inventing Tradition," in Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 1-14. Available online at http://faculty.washington.edu/ellingsn/Hobsbawm_Inventing_Traditions.pdf
Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 119- 150. 
<http://www.h-net.org/about/citation>

I'm writing a first draft and reminding myself that I'm simply shoveling sand into a box so that later I can build castles.

Shannon Hale

Thursday, 20 November: The Writing Process -- The First Draft

Readings:

Wayne Booth, Gregory Colomb, and Joseph Williams, *The Craft of Research* 3rd Ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 171-203.  
<http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing/index.html?grad>
<http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing/index.html?handouts>

Assignment: First Draft

History is neither watchmaking nor cabinet construction. It is an endeavor toward better understanding.

Marc Bloch

Thursday, 27 November: Organization and Argument

Assignment: Read and Peer Review two papers.

So the writer who breeds more words than he needs, is making a chore for the reader who reads.

Dr. Seuss

Writing without revising is the literary equivalent of waltzing gaily out of the house in your underwear.

Patricia Fuller

Health and Wellness

As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on campus health-related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in Western's Campus Recreation Centre. Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year. Please check out the Faculty of

Music web page <http://www.music.uwo.ca/>, and our own McIntosh Gallery <http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/>. Information regarding health- and wellness-related services available to students may be found at <http://www.health.uwo.ca/>

Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. Campus mental health resources may be found at http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html

To help you learn more about mental health, Western has developed an interactive mental health learning module, found here:

http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/module.html. This module is 30 minutes in length and provides participants with a basic understanding of mental health issues and of available campus and community resources. Topics include stress, anxiety, depression, suicide and eating disorders. After successful completion of the module, participants receive a certificate confirming their participation.