

**History 630: 20th century American research**  
**Mondays 4-6:40p, 545 Park Hall**

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Office hours: Mondays 1-3pm or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar guides students in producing an article-length original research paper (approximately 30-35 pages) based on primary sources and engaged with relevant historiographical and methodological debates in the scholarly literature. Unless given advance permission by the instructor, topics should be related to the long 20<sup>th</sup> century (1877-2000) United States. Students will also develop their critical reading and engaging skills by providing peer feedback on others' written work.

There are no required texts for this course. When assigned, readings will be available on UB Learns.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

I expect you to show up for all scheduled classes and complete all assignments on time. Because the class depends on everyone being at the same stage in their work, all deadlines for assignments are firm.

\*\*Note that for the first two classes (August 29<sup>th</sup> and September 12<sup>th</sup>) it would be useful to bring in an Internet-capable laptop if you have access to one. This is not a requirement.

GRADING

Attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absences will lower your grade.

- Class participation (10% of your grade): You will be assigned a letter grade for your preparation and participation. This includes discussion of readings during those weeks when readings are assigned, but also the quality of your written and oral feedback on other students' writing during workshopping.
- Small assignments (10% of your grade):
  - Weekly assignments (detailed in syllabus below) are not graded but are noted as completed or not completed
- "First final" draft (due Friday noon, Nov 18<sup>th</sup>; 20% of your grade):
  - Paper will be graded as "complete" (finished); "incomplete" (partially finished); or "not completed"
- Final draft (due no later than Thursday, Dec 8<sup>th</sup>, 5pm; 50% of your grade)
- Five-minute research presentation (in class Monday, Dec 5<sup>th</sup>; 10% of your grade)

PLAGIARISM & EXTERNAL SOURCES POLICY

All students are expected to be familiar with and abide by the University's academic integrity policies, available in the Undergraduate Catalog (<http://undergrad-catalog.buffalo.edu/policies/course/integrity.shtml>) or the Graduate School Policies and Procedures Manual (<http://www.grad.buffalo.edu/policies>). Plagiarism detection software may be used by individual instructors or the institution to aid in determining the originality of student work.

What is plagiarism? Briefly, it is using the work and words of another writer (whether from print sources, from the Web, or from another student) without giving clear credit to her/him. Plagiarism is unacceptable in any course assignment, big or small, and will result in an “F” grade for the entire course. If you have any questions or doubts, ASK.

There are innumerable sources available for the study of post-WWII U.S. history, but I expect students to engage with the materials I have selected for this course. In your written work, therefore, do not refer more than briefly to sources other than those assigned for the course unless: (1) you have fully engaged all relevant course materials (including readings, lectures and discussion) and wish to add more to an already complete essay; and (2) you have received prior approval from me to bring in the additional source. This is particularly important for Web sources: absolutely no use of any Web sites for written work unless you have specifically cleared the Web site with me in advance.

### ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES

UB’s Accessibility Resources Office coordinates services and accommodations to ensure the accessibility and usability of all UB programs, services, and activities by people with disabilities. To receive accommodation for physical and learning disabilities, students are required to register with that office; more information can be found at <http://www.student-affairs.buffalo.edu/ods/>.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course entails learning goals from three distinct yet interrelated categories:

1. *Acquisition of historical and historiographical knowledge:* Students in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century U.S. Research Seminar will acquire deep specialized knowledge in a historical topic of their choosing, including the historiography of that subfield as well as a close familiarity with primary sources providing new and rich information about relevant people and events.
2. *Development of advanced analytical thinking skills:* Students in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century U.S. Research Seminar will engage in oral and written analysis of historical and historiographical material, including extensive examination of primary source materials, over the course of the semester.
3. *Development of advanced research skills:* Students in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century U.S. Research Seminar will learn how to pick important topics and ask useful questions about them; identify and locate appropriate primary source materials; reframe questions and research goals based on an engagement with those materials; organize research findings into a coherent and novel argument about the past; and write up those findings in clear, compelling prose.

### Learning Outcomes Chart

Learning Outcomes	Readings	Class Discussion & Peer Workshopping	Short assignments	Research Paper
Historical Knowledge	X	X	X	X
Historiographical Knowledge	X	X	X	X
Analytical Thinking	X	X	X	X
Research Skills			X	X

# UNIT ONE: PLANNING

## **August 29 (week 1): Thinking about the craft of history / historiography how-to**

### *Readings:*

- Cronon, “Getting ready to do history,” p. 1-6

### *Due:*

- Research paper topic (one short paragraph)

### *Class activity: Bring laptop if possible*

- Discussion of Cronon; goals for semester project; and topics
- Discussion of how to find secondary literature
- Individual work to identify books, articles, and historiographical reviews

## **September 5 (week 2): LABOR DAY, NO CLASS**

### *Readings:*

- Four books (at least one “classic”), two recent cutting-edge articles, and one historiographical review related to your research topic

## **September 12 (week 3): From topic to research question / primary sources how-to**

### *Readings:*

- Booth, Colomb, & Williams, *The Craft of Research 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*, selection
- Cronon, “What are the documents?”  
<http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/documents.htm>

### *Due:*

- At least 5 possible research questions developed using Booth et al., linked clearly to “problems” as per Booth et al., that have not been answered satisfactorily by the books and articles you read for week 2 (above)

### *Class activity: Bring laptop if possible*

- Discussion of the difference between topics, questions, and problems
- Discussion of how to find primary sources
- Small group / individual work to identify possible primary sources

## **September 19 (week 4): Finding primary sources / refining research questions how-to**

### *Readings:*

- Re-read Cronon, “What are the documents?”
- At least 2 examples of materials from at least 4 possible collections of primary sources

### *Due:*

- List of potential primary source materials, with pros and cons of each

*Class activity:*

- Discussion of how to select best primary sources & how to refine research questions to suit them
- Discussion of how to fit projects into existing historiography
- Group / individual work to fit projects into existing historiography

**September 26 (week 5): How to fit your new project into existing literature**

*Readings:*

- Complete, careful reading (with notes) of all selected historiography

*Due:*

- 2-4 page historiography review (detailed assignment forthcoming)
- List of multiple questions your project can answer that have the potential to build on, expand, debunk, correct, redirect, etc., the existing historiography

*Class activity:*

- Discussion: matching historiographical goals with research questions & primary sources
- Individual work on historiographical goals

# UNIT TWO: RESEARCH

## **October 3 (week 6): Preparing for research**

### *Readings:*

- Cronon, “A primer on the pleasures of note-taking”  
<http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/notetaking.htm>

### *Due:*

- Complete notes on at least one primary document (for practice)

### *Class activity:*

- Discussion of note taking systems, how to take notes
- Individual work problem-solving issues with any steps up to this point

## **October 10 (week 7): Research; No class**

### *Due:*

- This is not a vacation week! By the end of this week you should have a complete list of all primary documents, and you should have taken complete notes on half of them

## **October 17 (week 8): Reassessing your project after exposure to the evidence**

### *Due:*

- 1 page free-writing about what you found in your primary materials: what struck you as most interesting; what has changed (or not) over time; new questions that occurred to you; etc.

### *Class activity:*

- Discussion of what primary materials can, and cannot, tell us
- Discussion of how to revise research questions to suit your evidence
- Individual work on research issues

## **October 24 (week 9): Research; No class**

### *Due:*

- This is not a vacation week! By the end of this week you should have finished taking notes on all of your primary documents.

# UNIT THREE: WRITING

## **October 31 (week 10): Making sense of your notes**

### *Reading:*

- Bill Cronon, “A place for stories”

### *Due:*

- A schematic plot summary of your narrative, focusing on WHO were the actors, WHAT were the main things that happened, WHERE did they happen (i.e. where does your story take place), WHEN did they happen (i.e. chronology), and WHY (what makes your story move from event to event- what or who made things change?)
  - If possible, identify your narrative’s genre: Tragedy? Triumph? Irony? Etc.

### *Class activity:*

- Discuss the importance and use of basic elements of scholarly narrative: having a beginning, middle, and end; what readers (and you) need to know; maintaining critical distance; etc.
- Group / individual work on plot summaries

## **November 7 (week 11): Developing an argument and analysis**

### *Reading:*

- Al McCoy, “Writing Heuristics”

### *Due:*

- Statement of your argument and the analytical steps (based on your evidence) that demonstrate it, as per McCoy
- Statement of how this argument achieves your historiographical goals, or, failing that, what historiographical goals your argument does achieve

### *Class activity:*

- Discussion of McCoy and analytical writing
- Discussion of how to make narrative and analysis work together
- Individual work on argument/analysis

## **November 14 (week 12): Writing; No class**

### *Due:*

- This is not a vacation!
- A complete “first final” draft is due via email to professor and your assigned peer group by Friday, November 18<sup>th</sup>, at noon (detailed assignment forthcoming)

## **UNIT FOUR: REVISING**

### **November 21 (week 13): Workshopping papers**

*Reading:*

- Careful, complete reading of the 2 student papers assigned to you

*Due:*

- Completed “constructive critique” form for each paper

*Class activity:*

- Workshopping drafts in small groups
- Individual work with students who request it

### **November 28 (week 14): Revising; No class**

*Reading:*

- Professor’s comments on your draft

### **December 5 (week 15): Research presentations**

*Due:*

- Well organized, well-practiced, 5-minute oral report on your research, with professional PowerPoint or other visual aids, followed by a Q&A period

*Due no later than Thursday, December 8<sup>th</sup> at 5pm:*

- A finished version of your paper using “Track Changes”
- A 1-page cover letter summarizing the revisions you made in response to feedback from peers and professor