



Boston University International Programs
London

**Research Seminar and Tutorial in English History
Fall 2010**

Instructor Information

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Course Overview

The Seminar begins with a five-week ‘Research Methods’ phase aimed at showing how primary evidence is employed in historical argument. An introductory lecture considers the relationship between the past and the present, and surveys the evolution of key historiographical trends in modern English – and British – history. Consideration is then given to how various types of sources have illuminated different aspects of the past (approached via the state, geographical location, and through human agency), and this is dovetailed with practical guidance in historical investigation for some of the main archives in London. The Seminar then aims to apply the technical skills being developed to an appropriate research topic, which in turn must tie in with the themes and issues covered in the core class on the history track of this program (‘London: Imperial Capital to Global City’). The outcome will be an upper level undergraduate research paper that demonstrates an ability to find relevant historical information, both primary and secondary, that deploys this information persuasively both in terms of organization and judgement, and which ultimately approaches historical problems with creativity and intellectual independence.

Course Methodology and Assessment

The course is taught over the whole semester. The ‘Research Methods’ phase (weeks one to five) is assessed by a ‘Resources Quiz’, which is worth 20% of the final grade. In this students will be examined on the appropriateness of various archival repositories and electronic research databases to particular fields of historical study. A further 20% of the final grade will be awarded for a 600-word research proposal, submitted at the start of class 7. (This proposal will be peer discussed in draft form via student presentations in class six.) The eventual statement should identify a realistic research topic, give a sense of the historiography in which the topic fits and, finally, detail secondary and primary sources to be consulted. A fully realized and practicable research statement will gain the highest marks. A 4,000-5,000 word research paper, presented in an appropriate scholarly style, is worth 60% of the overall grade. Regular one-to-one tutorials – or in small groups of two or three when research topics overlap in some way – will be held during weeks seven to fourteen. These tutorials will assist in the preparation and communication of the final

research paper by means of mini assignments, which should be agreed upon in a collaborative manner.

Class Schedule

* denotes compulsory class readings (either online or on the BU course webpage)

Part One – ‘Research Methods’

Background reading, which includes additional specified assignments for classes 1 to 4:

John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Direction* (2006)

Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (2001)

David Cannadine (ed.), *What is History Now?* (2004)

Jeremy Black and Donald M. MacRaild, *Studying History* (2007)

David Hey (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Family and Local History* (2008)

Class 1: Introduction: How the present engages with the past

How to understand the ‘bias’ of a source; embracing ‘bias’ for what it tells us about the past; what our interpretation of the bias says about the present. Examples of how history has been deployed for political purposes.

* Extract from Margaret MacMillan, *The Uses and Abuses of History* (2009)

Class 2: The State: Using ‘official’ records

The grand narrative—how history has been invented to create national traditions; the role of ‘great events’; the changing scope and nature of state activities and how this is reflected in the preserved records; Britain as a European power in the national archives; Britain and the non-European world at a governmental level; social and economic history as seen by the ruling elites; government propaganda materials; how to search the National Archives catalogue; using parliamentary records; the History of Parliament project.

* <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/researchguidesindex.asp>

Class 3: The City: Researching the history of London

Guest lecture and guided field trip to the London Metropolitan Archives.

* http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/Corporation/LGNL_Services/Leisure_and_culture/Records_and_archives/ (London Metropolitan Archives)

* <http://history.ac.uk/cmh/lpol> (London’s past online: a bibliography of London history)

* <http://www.history.ac.uk/cmh/cmh.main.html> Centre for Metropolitan History (see seminar schedule)

Class 4: The individual: Biography and history

Traditional ‘great man’ history (and the flipside); the changing role of ‘national’ biography publishing projects; writing women into the past; history from below; the uses of family history; anthropology and sociology in historical understanding; what the sources can’t tell us; what is missing from the archival records; the uses of diaries, private papers, oral history and film and sound archives.

- * <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nra/default.asp> (National Register of Archives: on-line catalogue)
- * <http://www.oxforddnb.com/public/index.html> (*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*)
- * <http://www.bfi.org.uk/nftva/> * (National Film and Television Archive)

Class 5: Resources Test / Guidance on how to write a research proposal

Part Two – The Research paper

Class 6: Group session: student presentations

In a seminar setting students present draft versions of their research proposals for group discussion.

[Final version of proposal submitted just before class 7. Decision then taken on tutorial groups and times.]

Class 7: Student tutorial

Assignment to be set.

Class 8: Student tutorial

Assignment to be set.

Class 9: Group session: student presentations

On progress to date.

Class 10: Student tutorial

Assignment to be set.

Class 11: Group session: student presentations

On progress to date.

Class 12: Student tutorial

Assignment to be set.

Class 13: Student tutorial

Students must submit their research papers by 10am on the day following this session.

Class 14: Group seminar: Stocktaking

Students discuss their key findings amongst their peers. Marked papers will be returned at the start of the class.

Grading

Please refer to the Academic Handbook for detailed grading criteria, attendance requirements and policies on plagiarism:

<http://www.bu-london.co.uk/files/images/ACADEMICHANDBOOKSU09.pdf>.

Terms and Conditions

Attendance at all classes is mandatory. Persistent lateness will also be penalised in the final grade. A register of attendance will be taken at the beginning of each session, and marks will be awarded for attendance. Absence can be conveyed by advising a senior member of staff in the Academic Affairs Office with a request that the information be passed on to me. Leaving it to another class member to convey messages will not be acceptable.

Any student who is unable to attend a class, or take part in an Assignment because of religious reasons, must give notice of the fact in advance. He/she will be required to make up for time lost. In this situation arrangements must be made with another student for class notes to be shared.

Course work must be delivered on or before the agreed deadline. Failure to hand on time will result in deducted marks.

Michael Thornhill
Dec 2009