

## JONATHAN R. ZATLIN

Office hours • W9:30-11 at Kilachand College (91 BSR), Th1:30-3:00 at History (226 BSR) • [jzatlin@bu.edu](mailto:jzatlin@bu.edu)

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GRS HI 801

### GRADUATE RESEARCH SEMINAR: THE HISTORIAN'S CRAFT THURSDAYS 3-6 (226 BSR, ROOM 504)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION** The goal of this research seminar is to provide graduate students with the tools and training to complete a major research paper on a topic of their own choice. The seminar will guide students through the various stages of producing a publishable article, including conceptualizing historical questions, locating primary and secondary sources, deploying methodologies to analyze sources in imaginative ways, and engaging with theoretical and historiographical debates. Because the seminar is composed of students working in diverse fields with a range of approaches, moreover, students will work closely with an academic adviser (ideally their major adviser) as they formulate a question, seek sources, and locate their project in a body of historiographic writing. Students will also gain experience in presenting their work to colleagues who are not specialists in their fields. To hone their communication skills, students will present their work as well as the work of their peers aimed at generating critical but collaborative discussion.

**REQUIREMENTS** This course is a seminar, which means that **attendance is required** and **participation** in discussion **essential**. **Class participation** includes substantive analysis of the assigned texts, engaging your peers in constructive debate, and demonstrating a willingness to make mistakes. Making mistakes is integral to the learning process; it is only through mistakes that we are able to understand how and what we think. For this reason, you will not be graded on the content of what you say, but rather on how much you contribute constructively to the class. You cannot participate in debate – the linchpin of all learning – if you are not present. For this reason, your grade will be marked down for unexcused absences. **Students who miss discussion of assigned readings, moreover, must hand in a 2-page critical assessment of each article missed within a week of the class missed.** In addition to discussing the common readings, you will also be asked to offer critiques of your own and of the work of your peers. It is vital that you come prepared to make substantive but helpful comments about other students' work.

The principal **written assignment** is an original research paper, based on primary sources, relating to the student's field of interest. The paper should be 25-35 pages in length and of publishable quality (or form the foundation for a publishable article). There will also be several shorter written assignments aimed at developing a more nuanced understanding of historical writing. In addition to submitting **drafts of their research paper**, students will write **one 5-page "pitch" paper** laying out the questions they want to explore, the historiographic debates mediating their questions, and the primary and secondary sources they will consult. In addition, students will turn in several drafts of their papers. One of those drafts will consist of a **5-page section of their paper** that you will submit to the class so that we can workshop it. That is, I will ask also everyone to comment on each other's papers at least once during the semester.

In addition to class participation and written assignments, students will be asked to make **three presentations**. Each student will make one **oral report** consisting of a **short, 10-minute analysis** of the common reading assignment aimed at stimulating class discussion. Given that this is a research seminar, students should pay special attention to the reading's source base and how it shapes the rhetorical,

narratological, and methodological strategies pursued in the texts.

For the **second presentation**, students will be paired with research partners in an effort to promote close collaboration and critical analysis. The presentation should be no longer than **10 minutes** and explain to the class of your research partner's proposed research paper. To explain your partner's proposed paper effectively, you must grasp the core questions and design of your partner's research and communicate them to the rest of the class in language that captures the research paper's purpose and method without permitting the technical aspects of his/her subfield to obscure what is important about the project.

The **third presentation**, due in the final two weeks of class, entails a **10-minute summary** of your own research paper. Students are encouraged to make creative use of visual media to assist them in presenting their papers, provided that these aids do not interfere with the task of communicating information in a clear and intelligible manner about the sources consulted, the methods used, the historiographic questions raised, and the narrative strategy pursued. The ensuing discussion will be moderated by your research partner, who will lead discussion by introducing three questions based on your paper. The aim of these oral exercises is to improve your presentation skills, expose you to the constructive criticism of your peers, and teach you to ask rigorous yet helpful questions of your peers.

**Class participation**, including the **oral report**, counts for 25 percent of your grade, the **two other presentations** for 25 percent, and the various iterations of the paper for 50 percent. Please turn papers in on time. "On time" means at the **beginning of class** on the day they are due.

**PLAGIARISM** Defined as the use of intellectual material produced by another person without appropriate acknowledgment, plagiarism is a serious infraction of scholarly conduct. It will earn an automatic F for the course and be prosecuted according to the Boston University Academic Conduct Code.

**READINGS** Starred texts (\*) can be found on JSTOR or elsewhere online; texts with a carrot (^) can be found on the Blackboard website.

#### Week 1 (January 16): **Introduction: Knowledge vs. Interpretation**

In class:

Thoreau, "Conclusion," *Walden* (1854) and Walter Benjamin, "On the Conception of History" (1940)

#### Week 2 (January 23): **Designing a Research Agenda**

Readings:

\*Carlo Ginzburg, "Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method," *History Workshop* 9 (Spring, 1980): 5-36.

\*Amos Funkenstein, "The Dialectics of Assimilation," *Jewish Social Studies* 1:2 (Winter, 1995): 1-14.

\*Gordon S. Wood, "Rhetoric and Reality in the American Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 23:1 (Jan., 1966): 3-32.

Students are asked to submit **three research questions from their chosen subfield**, explain to the class why they are worth asking, and **propose** a method of answering them.

#### Week 3 (January 30): **Narrative as Hindrance**

Reading:

^Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, "The Aiguillete: Castration by Magic," in: Le Roy Ladurie, *The Mind and Method of the Historian*, trans. Sian Reynolds and Ben Reynolds (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 84-96.

\*Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53:2 (Summer, 1994): 414-452.

\*Salo W. Baron, "Ghetto and Emancipation" in: Leo Schwarz (ed.), *The Menorah Treasury*, 50-63.

Class will meet at **3 pm at the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, 5<sup>th</sup> floor, Mugar Library**

**Five-page project "pitch" paper due**

Week 4 (February 6): **Introductions**

Reading:

\*Andrew Zimmerman, "A German Alabama in Africa: The Tuskegee Expedition to German Togo and the Transnational Origins of West African Cotton Growers," *The American Historical Review* 110:5 (2005): 1362-1399.

\*Jonathan R. Zatlin, "Scarcity and Resentment. Economic Sources of Xenophobia in the GDR, 1971-1989," *Central European History* 40:4 (December 2007): 1-38.

**Oral presentations by research partners**

Week 5 (February 13): **The Straight and the Narrow**

Reading:

\*Margot Canaday, "Building a Straight State: Sexuality and Social Citizenship Under the 1944 G.I. Bill," *Journal of American History* 90:3 (2003): 935-957.

N.B.: This article won the annual Pelzer Prize for the best essay in American history by a graduate student. For more on the Pelzer Prize, see:

<http://www.oah.org/awards/awards.pelzer.winners.html>

**Introduction and outlines due**

Week 6 (February 20): **The Public Sphere**

Reading:

\*David Scobey, "Anatomy of the Promenade: The Politics of Bourgeois Sociability in Nineteenth-Century New York," *Social History* 17:2 (May, 1992): 203-227.

Week 7 (February 27): **Individual meetings with professor**

Week 8 (March 6): **Workshopping drafts**

Students must **email all class participants a five-page section** of their paper by **5 pm on Monday, March 3**. The section should analyze a particular case or theme using primary sources.

March 8-16: Spring break

**Week 9 (March 20): The Problem with Periodization**

Reading:

Peter Holquist, "Violent Russia, Deadly Marxism? Russia in the Epoch of Violence, 1905–21," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 4:3 (Summer 2003): 627–52.

**First drafts due**

**Week 10 (March 27): Individual meetings with professor**

**Week 11 (April 3): Nature and the Natural**

Reading:

\*William Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," *Journal of American History* (March 1992): 1347-76.

**Week 12 (April 10): Examining the Subject at Hand**

Reading:

\*Anna Krylova, "The Tenacious Liberal Subject in Soviet Studies" *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1:1 (Winter 2000): 119-146.

**Revised drafts due**

**Week 13 (April 17): Final Presentations and Discussion, round 1**

April 24: no class (substitute Monday schedule)

**Week 14 (May 1): Final Presentations and Discussion, round 2**

**\*Final versions of research papers are due at the beginning of class on May 1**

**HI 801 Due Dates**

**January 23:** three questions from subfield

**January 30:** 5-page pitch paper

**February 6:** presentations by research partners

**February 13:** introductions and outlines

**March 3:** email 5-page sections of paper

**March 13:** no class, Spring Break

**March 20:** first drafts due

**April 10:** revised drafts due

**April 17:** Presentations, round 1

**May 1:** Presentations, round 2

**\*Final papers due May 1**