

HI402: History Honors Thesis Seminar

Spring 2017, Wednesdays 2:30 PM – 5:15 PM

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 10:30 AM to 1:30 PM

Course Description

The second semester of the history honors thesis seminar will facilitate the completion of the thesis itself, building upon the preliminary research, initial writing assignments, and in-class work undertaken during the fall semester. This class eschews more traditional seminar formats in favor of a series of workshops wherein students will read and critique each other's work, and collectively address the obstacles which arise in the course of producing a major work of original research. The ultimate objective of this course is the production of a 45-60 page honors thesis by the middle of April; this thesis will serve as the basis for awarding history degrees with honors.

The seminar itself is offered as the scaffolding that will allow students to complete their individual projects; the class time and deadlines are means to the larger end of producing original research which is bettered through collective reading, critiquing, and editing. As before, students will continue to work under the supervision of the outside advisor who is an expert in the subject matter at hand; it remains the student's responsibility alone to initiate meetings, follow up on advice and suggested resources, and produce and adhere to a set of individual deadlines for updates and written assignments. The course instructor's primary role is to offer critical feedback on the crafting of the thesis itself. The final grade for the semester, and for the thesis as a whole, will be determined collectively by the project advisor and the course instructor.

Course Structure and Evaluation

Your work this semester will be evaluated on two components: class participation (20%) and the final thesis itself (80%). The unlikely neglect of the participatory element of the class may result in the forfeit of honors. To graduate with honors, your thesis must receive a grade of B+ or higher. The three class deadlines are non-extendable; a second draft section is due February 8, a full draft is due on March 17, and the final submission date for your thesis is April 19.

Our semester will revolve around regular cycles of draft section submissions and in-class workshops. We will discuss four or five drafts per meeting; in contrast to the first semester, you will be expected to submit written comments on each draft to your peers and me at the beginning of class: you should write questions and comments in the margins, and add a few sentences at the end of each draft addressing organization, argument, use of evidence, logic, and so forth. Above

all, these comments should exhibit thoroughness, engagement, and attentiveness to the work at hand. We will be divided into two groups, and we will alternate which group's paper we read first. Group 1 consists of Isabella, Ameen, Nicolette, Crystal, and Zoe, and Group 2 consists of Natalie, Joe, Mac, and Erin.

On a more philosophical note, while the drafts and theses we complete are ultimately individual projects, we are engaged in a larger, collective project of feedback, teaching, learning, and growth. This will require drawing upon the trust and respect that we built collectively over the course of the first semester, and the concomitant pledge to take ideas and drafts seriously, remaining candid and respectful in our comments. Our individual success as scholars depends on the effort we put into each other's drafts, and our receptiveness to others' editorial input.

Course Schedule

Wednesday, January 25, 2017 – Discussion of Draft Section 1, pt. 1 (Group 1)

Wednesday, February 1, 2017 – Discussion of Draft Section 1, pt. 2 (Group 2)

For these two meetings, we will offer feedback on the draft sections submitted at the end of the first semester. We will also discuss the current outlines that you all have for your theses, and how your first and second sections will fit within them.

Wednesday, February 8, 2017 – Submission of Draft Section 2 [No Class]

The section you submit for this week may be either an expansion of your previous submission (totaling about 25-30 pages) or entirely new sections comprising 10-15 pages. Whichever option you choose, think carefully about how the first two draft sections relate to each other, and how the extant pages fit (or do not yet fit) within your overall thesis outline. **This section must be e-mailed to the class by 5:00 PM on February 8.**

Wednesday, February 15, 2017 – Discussion of Draft Section 2, pt. 1 (Group 2)

Wednesday, February 22, 2017 – Discussion of Draft Section 2, pt. 2 (Group 1)

For February 15 and 22, we will focus on the second sections that you will have submitted by 5:00 PM on February 8. For these discussions, comments should focus both on the content of the new material, and the overall arc/narrative/argument that the theses are starting to produce.

Wednesday, March 1, 2017 – Open Office Hours

In lieu of our usual class session, I will be holding open office hours. Use this as time to write, or to come in and ask questions – whatever will advance your thesis most usefully.

Wednesday, March 8, 2017 – No Class (Spring Break)

Wednesday, March 15, 2017 – Open Office Hours

Again, in lieu of our usual class session, I will be holding open office hours. Use this as time to write, or to come in and ask questions – whatever will advance your thesis most usefully.

Drafts of the entire thesis should be submitted to your instructor and advisor by **5:00 PM on Friday, March 17**. The instructor will circulate these to your classmates for review that day.

Wednesday, March 22, 2017 – Discussion of Thesis Drafts, pt. 1 (Group 1)

Wednesday, March 29, 2017 – Discussion of Thesis Drafts, pt. 2 (Group 2)

For these two weeks, we will focus on workshopping drafts. Beyond questions of content, I encourage you to pay special attention to the transitional points and introduction of the theses – these are the key places for making arguments explicit, and we will focus on how effectively this has or has not been done.

In these two classes, we will also be workshopping titles – a critically important part of your thesis which is more often than not neglected until the very last minute. For each class, please write down and bring to class five suggestions for thesis titles for each of the theses that we will be reading.

Wednesday, April 5, 2017 – Troubleshooting Meeting #1 (Group 2)

Wednesday, April 12, 2017 – Troubleshooting Meeting #2 (Group 1)

For these last two meetings, we will again gather in an open format to address specific problem areas within our theses. These will also be dedicated times where you can work to polish problematic sections of your papers and get immediate feedback from your peers and instructor.

Wednesday, April 19, 2017 – Final Thesis Due to Instructor and Advisor

Hard copies of the thesis will be due in the instructor's box in room 308 of the history department; separate arrangements should be made for submission to the thesis advisor.

End of April, 2017 – End of Semester Party at Instructors' House

Details to follow; likely on the evening of April 26.