

**History 501: Senior Honors Seminar**  
**Fall 2013**  
**Tuesdays, 7:00-9:00**

**Professor Renee Romano**

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**Office Hours:**

Mondays, 1:00-3:00  
 Tuesdays, 11:00-12:15  
 (and by appointment)

Welcome to the wonderful world of serious historical research! This seminar seeks to provide honors students with an opportunity for discussion, advice, and support from your fellow thesis writers, as well as support and guidance from me as the History Honors Coordinator this year. Each of you has an individual faculty advisor and this group is not meant to substitute for the advising you should be getting from your individual advisor. Rather, we will discuss general strategies of research and note-taking, consider the methodology of historical research, and serve as a combination support group (or therapy group, if necessary) and writer's workshop. As the term progresses, we will begin reading and reviewing people's work, a project that will accelerate in our second semester.

We will meet weekly on Tuesday evenings from 7:00-9:00. Please note the session for schedules below. If you are asked to post a response to the blackboard site, you must do so by 5:00 p.m. on the Monday before our Tuesday class. Everyone should plan on reading through the postings of other class members. In addition, we will begin every session with each member of the group giving a brief (no more than 5 minute) summary of where they are with their project. Come prepared for this weekly update.

Congratulations on being selected for honors! I hope that this group will provide a convivial atmosphere for you to share your ideas, fears, challenges, and triumphs.

**Required Readings:**

There are two required books for History 501, both available at the campus bookstore and on reserve at Mudd:

John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (2004)

Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition (2007)

**Meeting Schedule:**

September 3: Introductions

*Prepare a brief statement (1-2 pp, single spaced) explaining your topic, the most salient historiographical issues you plan to address, and your sources. Also briefly discuss what you have done so far on the thesis and what you personally consider your biggest challenge to be with this project. Post your statement to the blackboard site by 5 p.m. on Monday, Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup>.*

*Also make sure to schedule an individual meeting with Jen Starkey ([Jennifer.starkey@oberlin.edu](mailto:Jennifer.starkey@oberlin.edu)) at the library to discuss your project if you have not already done so. You MUST meet with Jen Starkey before our class meeting on September 17.*

#### September 10: Crafting a Work Schedule

*Please come to this meeting with a schedule for your research over the course of the semester. Have you successfully created a schedule that enables you to work on your thesis enough each week? How have you divided up the components of your research? How long do you think various parts of your research will take? Have you worked on plans to access sources elsewhere, if necessary? Post a one-page statement about your schedule to the blackboard site by 5 p.m. on Monday.*

#### September 17: Doing Historical Research and Taking Notes

*Please read Turabian, Part I, sections 1-4, pp. 1-47 and come prepared to discuss it. We will also spend time talking about taking notes. Taking notes might seem very basic, but in fact, being able to take succinct and useful notes, being able to find and reference the notes that you have taken, and keeping everything organized is one of the biggest challenges of any major research projects. Come to this session prepared to share your successful strategies in organization and note-taking, as well as to admit to your weaknesses in this regard.*

#### September 24: So What Does a Thesis Look Like?

*For this session, students will be asked to skim through two different theses, both available on our course blackboard site. We will talk about the structure of each thesis, how the writers managed their topics, and what the differences between them are.*

#### October 1: Uncovering the Ductworks: The Methodology of History

*What, exactly, is the historical method? Historians often find themselves at a loss to explain exactly what their methodology is. For this week, we will read the short book, *The Landscape of History* by John Lewis Gaddis and discuss his spirited defense of the value of the particular method employed by historians. Post a one-page statement about how you define your project and yourself methodologically. Post by 5:00 pm on Monday before class.*

#### October 8: Group 1—Present on Primary Source and Project Status

*Over the course of the next three sessions, each of you will be asked to give a formal presentation on the current status of thesis research and to lead a discussion of one of your primary sources. More details about the presentations are available on the blackboard site. In total, you will have approximately ½ hour to lay out where things*

*stand with your project, to talk through your ideas, and to seek advice on challenges that you are having. Please bring enough copies of one primary source to share with your classmates. You will be asked to discuss the source and how it relates to your larger research strategy.*

October 15: Group 2—Present on Primary Sources and Project Status

*Presentations by Group 2*

October 22: NO CLASS—FALL BREAK

October 29: Group 3—Present on Primary Source and Project Status

*Presentations by Group 3*

November 5: Crafting an Outline and Preparing for Winter Term

*Deciding how best to organize your information into chapters is one of the most daunting aspects of writing a thesis. For this session, we will focus on developing chapter outlines. Everyone should prepare **two** different outlines to present to the class. Post outlines to the blackboard site by Monday at 5:00 p.m.*

*We will also spend some time in this class discussing how you expect to use Winter Term. You are eligible to apply for an Artz History Honors Grant to help defray up to \$1000 in costs for a research trip. Before this meeting, be sure to talk to your advisor and to look at the History Department website for the application.*

November 12: First writing due—Workshop Group 1

*It's time to show your stuff—everyone should write a short section of your thesis (no less than 5 and no more than 10 pages). Choose whichever section you feel most comfortable with—you could start with an introduction, with the historiographical section, with writing about a particular source. But it's time to write something! Everyone should post their writing to the course blackboard site by Monday at 5:00 p.m. **Everyone** should read the submissions by those students in Group 1 and fill out a reader's response form (available on the blackboard site). We will workshop their writing samples in class on Tuesday.*

November 19: Workshop Group 2

*Workshop writing samples of Group 2.*

November 26: NO CLASS MEETING

December 3: Workshop Group 3

*Workshop writing samples of Group 3.*

December 10: Final Discussion Before Break

*By this point, you will already have written a short section and should be well on your way to finishing your research. We will discuss everyone's progress and plans for winter term, and will celebrate how far you have come!*