

HIST 499-005: Senior Seminar: Witch Hunting in Old and New England

M 4:30-7:15 p.m., Research Building 202
George Mason University, Fall 2014

Mack P. Holt

Office: Robinson B226

Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 12:00-2:00 p.m. and by appointment

Email: mholt@gmu.edu

Required reading:

Malcolm Gaskill, *Witchfinders*

Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*

Wayne Booth, Gregory Colomb, and Joseph Williams, *The Craft of Research*, 3rd edition

Recommended reading:

Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*

Goals of the course:

1. To allow the history major the opportunity to practice history rather than just study it, in the form of constructing a semester-long research paper based intensively on primary sources.
2. To make sure that the history major understands that historical research is a process of building, sustaining, and supporting an argument in a wider conversation, not just an exercise in information gathering about a specific topic.
3. To offer the history major the opportunity to pull together the results of her/his entire educational experience by demonstrating a mastery of the skills of research, analysis, and communication as well as the ability to apply those skills to a particular topic.

The Senior Seminar is the capstone course for all History majors at GMU. It is also the History Department's synthesis course, meeting the University General Education requirement. Finally, the course also fulfills all or part of the writing-intensive requirement for the history major. As such, the Senior Seminar requires research on a specialized topic culminating in a seminar paper (15-25 double-spaced pages with normal fonts and margins, not counting notes and bibliography) and an oral presentation at the end of the course. As a synthesis course, all students will be expected to integrate the knowledge and skills acquired in their general education coursework.

General requirements:

I do not want to ban electronic devices from the classroom unless you force me to. I know many of you prefer to read from an iPad or Kindle and take notes on your laptop, and I do not want to discourage you from doing so. But texting, tweeting,

surfing the web, and checking email or Facebook are not allowed during class time. I want you to be able to consult texts on on-line when we are discussing them in class, and I shall trust you, unless you give me a reason not to, to use your electronic devices for these purposes only. Any violators will have the participation portion of their grade (see below for what this entails) lowered by one letter grade for each violation. And if there are multiple offenders I shall have to ban all electronic devices from the classroom altogether. I am well aware that students of your generation consider multi-tasking as easy as breathing; you've been doing it all your life. But trust us old fogies on this one: multi-tasking is not good for concentration, and I want all your concentration to be focused on what is going on in the classroom.

All written work must be submitted in hard copy in class on the appropriate due date. Late assignments will be accepted, but they will be marked down roughly one-half letter grade for each calendar day late. Please note: all work must be double-spaced and in 12 pt. font.

Academic honesty: Plagiarism is a violation of the GMU Honor Code. Always cite sources—and ideas drawn from them—carefully and properly in the Chicago format. Using un-cited words as if they were your own, even if you accidentally lost track of a source, constitutes plagiarism, which is a form of theft. Keep careful track of your sources. And quoting word for word without quotation marks, even if you cite the source, is also plagiarism. *Caveat scriptor!*

Other Campus Resources:

The Office for Disability Services: <http://ods.gmu.edu/students/>

Writing Center: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

Ask a Librarian: <http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

Counseling and Psychological Services: <http://caps.gmu.edu>

Schedule of assignments:

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| Week 1 (Aug. 25): | Booth, et al., <i>The Craft of Research</i> (entire) |
| Week 2: (Sept. 1): | Labor Day Holiday. Class does not meet. |
| Week 3 (Sept. 8): | Gaskill, <i>Witchfinders</i> (entire) |
| Week 4 (Sept. 15): | Norton, <i>In the Devil's Snare</i> (entire)
Problem for research must be finalized by today and submitted to me via email or in writing! |
| Week 5 (Sept. 22): | Sources: Manuscript, printed, and digital. Tentative bibliography to be handed in today in correct Chicago style. Bring a laptop or tablet to class if you have one. |

- Week 6 (Sept. 29): Moving from primary sources to a bibliography. **One page summary of research problem and evidence of conflicting claims is due in class today. CLASS MEETS IN FENWICK LIBRARY, ROOM 214 A TODAY ONLY!**
- Week 7 (Oct. 6): Class will not meet as a group this week, but you must schedule an individual tutorial with me.
- Week 8 (Oct. 14): **Class meets on Tuesday this week only due to Columbus Day Holiday.** Read sample Senior Seminar papers, which will be distributed via email. **Complete bibliography, divided into primary and secondary sources and in correct Chicago style, is also due in class today.**
- Week 9 (Oct. 20): Class will not meet as a group this week, but you must schedule an individual tutorial with me. **You are required to turn in a draft of the introduction of your paper (first three pages minimum).** Also, bring all research notes with you to the tutorial. If your notes are in digital form, print them out or bring a flash drive or your laptop with you.
- Week 10 (Oct. 27): Class will not meet as a group this week, but you must schedule an individual tutorial with me. **You are required to turn in a draft of at least the first six pages of your paper.** Also, bring all research notes with you to the tutorial. If your notes are in digital form, print them out or bring a flash drive or your laptop with you.
- Week 11 (Nov. 3): Class will not meet as a group this week, but you must schedule an individual tutorial with me. **You are required to turn in a draft of at least the first ten pages of your paper.** Also, bring all research notes with you to the tutorial. If your notes are in digital form, print them out or bring a flash drive or your laptop with you.
- Week 12 (Nov. 10): **Although class will not meet this week, the complete first draft (hard copy) of research paper (including all notes and bibliography) is due in my office no later than 4:30 p.m. Late papers will be penalized.** You will also be asked to sign up for a required tutorial for the following week.

- Week 13 (Nov. 17): Class will not meet as a group this week, but you must schedule an individual tutorial with me where I shall discuss and give back your first drafts.
- Week 14 (Nov. 24): The entire class period will be devoted to oral presentations.
- Week 15 (Dec. 1): We shall complete any remaining oral presentations. **Final drafts of research paper are due in class today. You are required to turn in the graded first draft, plus one hard copy and one electronic copy (you may send this to me via email) of the final draft! Late papers will be penalized.**

The Senior Seminar will not meet as a class every week. During much of the first half of the semester we will be meeting collectively as a class. As the course is organized as a seminar, everyone in the class will be expected to participate in the discussion, though volubility is no substitute for thoughtfulness. In the second half of the semester you will spend all your time in the research and writing of a research paper. We shall not meet as a class for much of this period, but we shall be meeting individually in the form of tutorials as indicated on the schedule of assignments.

Criteria for grading research papers:

- Construction of a historical thesis (or claim)
- Use of primary sources in support of this thesis
- The degree to which the paper engages the existing literature in secondary sources
- The synthesis of diverse sources and the sophistication of historical analysis
- How well the paper is linked to broader historical issues appropriate to the topic
- The integration of knowledge and skills acquired in other disciplinary contexts
- The organization and style of the presentation and the written narrative

Criteria for grading oral presentations:

- Ability to synthesize several aspects of general education in the presentation
- Ability to speak in formal rather colloquial English
- Ability to make paper's argument, evidence, and counter-arguments clear
- Ability to handle questions from the audience and to stay within allotted time
- Ability to engage and maintain the audience's attention, in other words, no reading a text nor relying on Powerpoint

Grading: First draft: 25%

Final draft: 50%

Class participation (including oral presentation and all other written assignments):25%