

## History 300-04-Introduction to Historical Methods: The Information Revolution in America, 1750-1876

### Instructor Information

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### Course Information

Information Revolution in America, 1750-1876 - 11822 - HIST 300 – 004  
Credit Hours-3  
Monday 4:30-7:10 p.m.  
Fenwick Library 1014A

### Required purchases (texts and supplies)

- Daniel R. Headrick *When Information Came of Age: Technologies of Knowledge in the Age of Reason and Revolution, 1700-1850*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000
- Alfred Fabian Young, Gary B. Nash, and Ray Raphael, eds., *Revolutionary Founders: Rebels, Radicals, and Reformers in the Making of the Nation*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011).
- Kate L. Turabian, Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams. *A manual for writers of research papers, theses, and dissertations: Chicago Style for students and researchers*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).
- Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *"They Say / I Say": The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, Third edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014).
- Recommended
  - Anthony Brundage, *Going to the Sources: A Guide to Historical Research and Writing*, Fifth edition (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2013).
  - Portable Flash Drive

Class Contacts: names and telephone numbers of at least two classmates.

- 1.
- 2.

### Introduction and Description of the course:

This class introduces students to the study of history. Fundamentally, the core questions of the class include what do historians do and how do they do their work.

This course, *Introduction to Historical Methods*, is designed as one of the research courses for the history major. As such, it provides students with the opportunity to focus on the process of writing an

original research paper based on the use of primary sources. The seminar will utilize a limited chronological period ranging between 1750-1860 and the broad topic of the information revolution in this period as a vehicle to teach the methods of historians. By the end of this class, students will be able to find, utilize, and evaluate a variety of sources in order to produce an extended, formal essay on a topic. The student will select their topic using the methods demonstrated in the class and will be able to communicate their knowledge about this subject orally, and in writing, to a variety of audiences.

What is the information revolution?

This writing intensive course will focus on the broad topic of the information revolution in America between 1750-1876. This revolution came in the form of new institutions, such as specialized learned societies, military academies, new types of colleges, as well as museums and libraries; in the emergence of scientific disciplines, and in the emergence and proliferation of new ways to disseminate knowledge across the republic, offering access to a greater number of people.

### **Objective of the Course:**

This writing intensive course will focus on the broad topic of the information revolution in America between 1750-1876. This revolution came in the form of new institutions, such as specialized learned societies, military academies, new types of colleges, as well as museums and libraries as new means to disseminate knowledge across a wider part of the American polity. The emergence and proliferation of publishing offered new opportunities to access, and ironically, limit knowledge for those that lived in the early republic. Within this context the objective of this historical methods class is for students to be introduced to the work of historians and to begin doing the work of a historian themselves. Students will be provided with a core set of skills to draw upon and utilize in their upper-level coursework. In particular, this course provides the necessary framework for taking the capstone course, History 499. Students will learn how to develop research questions, find and analyze both primary and secondary sources, organize their analyses into arguments that are supported by evidence, and present those arguments effectively in both written and oral forms. Satisfies the Mason Core requirement in Synthesis. Instructor: George Oberle

The objective of this historical methods class is to introduce students to the work of historians and to begin doing the work of an historian themselves. This course fulfills the *Writing-Intensive* requirement in the history major and for the university. It does so through the successive stages, namely the topic statement, a bibliography, small research tasks, and drafts; these are due on dates indicated on the syllabus. Upon completion, students will obtain a core set of skills to draw upon and utilize in upper-level coursework, in particular in preparation for taking the capstone course, History 499.

HIST-300 is part of Mason's Students as Scholars initiative. Students who enroll in this "Students as Scholars Inquiry" course will develop a research question, answer that question by using historical research and writing methods, and situate their findings in an appropriate historiographical context. HIST-300 also fulfills in part the Writing Intensive requirement for the History major via multiple written assignments of varying lengths. Note that students must earn a grade of C or better in HIST-300 in order to register for the second required Writing Intensive History course, HIST-499. This course focuses primarily on developing skills, all of which have real-world applications. Students will access information, work with historical texts, publish a transcription of an early manuscript cookbook, create an online Omeka exhibit and a poster, and write a grant proposal according to guidelines prescribed by the National Endowment for the Humanities. They will also learn about ways in which historians and other humanities scholars have become both producers and consumers of digital technologies.

Class locations, which may change from week to week but are generally in Fenwick Library 1014A. These are noted on the course schedule.

### **Course Requirements:**

Students are expected to follow the course schedule. Attendance is essential for success in this course, which meets only once weekly. In-class work is significant and there are assignments due in class most days (as noted in the course schedule). If you miss class, it is your responsibility to keep up with the work and to submit your assignments on time. If you come to class unprepared for the day's work, you may be asked to leave.

*Written work:* The course is designated as a writing intensive course. Students will complete several written assignments over the course of the semester, each of which must be submitted electronically through the course Blackboard site. The Writing Intensive regimen culminates in a 3500-word research paper. (approx. 15 pages double spaced.) The department requires that students earn a C to meet the departmental rules regarding successful completion of the major.

For specific assignments, please see the course schedule and also the specific directions in the Assessments section of Blackboard. Late submissions will be penalized, typically by a deduction of one letter-grade.

*Oral work:* Students will do one formal oral report, in addition to participating regularly in informal class discussions. Please come to class prepared to discuss that day's assigned work or reading. Because discussion and in-class work are integral to this course, attendance will be taken.

Detailed instructions for assignments are located in the Course Materials Section in our Blackboard shell. Students will submit assignments in the Assessments section of Blackboard by the assigned due date unless otherwise directed.

### **Grading:**

Grades in this class will be calculated as follows:

Participation and Completion of Assigned Class Workshops and reading discussions: 40%

- Introduction to Using Secondary Sources as a Historian 5 points
- Reading Discussion: reading a scholarly article 5 points
- Special Collections Source Types Worksheet 5 points
- Books/Imprints 5 points
- Adding Items in Omeka 5 points
- Close reading Newspapers 5 points
- Special Collections 2 5 points
- Cookbook Annotation and Omeka edits 5 points

Creating and Disseminating Historical Knowledge 60%

- Revision of topic and Annotated Bibliography 10 points
- Historiography Peer Review 5 points
- Historiographical essay 10 points
- Draft of Research Proposal 5 points
- Omeka Exhibit 5 points
- Oral Presentation and Poster 15 points
- Final Research Proposal 10 points

### **Required Readings:**

- Daniel R. Headrick *When Information Came of Age: Technologies of Knowledge in the Age of Reason and Revolution, 1700-1850*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000
- Alfred Fabian Young, Gary B. Nash, and Ray Raphael, eds., *Revolutionary Founders: Rebels, Radicals, and Reformers in the Making of the Nation*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011).
- Kate L. Turabian, Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams. *A manual for writers of research papers, theses, and dissertations: Chicago Style for students and researchers*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).
- Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *"They Say / I Say": The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, Third edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014).

### **Suggested General Topics:**

- Military Academies
- Business Periodicals or Standards for Business
- Scientific Surveys
- Proliferation of Libraries/Museums/Historical societies
- Development of Scientific Societies
- Naturalists
- People
- Presentation of "new" natural/historical wonders (Feegee Mermaid/Sea Serpent/Kentucky Mummy)
- Encyclopedia or other publishing projects
- Development or carrying out of census.
- Proposals of education systems.
- Monuments and early historical editing projects.
- Others???

### **Useful information:**

Writing Center (writingcenter.gmu.edu): A114 Robinson Hall, 703-993-1200

Counseling and Psychological Services (caps.gmu.edu): 703-993-2380

Learning Services (academic skills help housed within CAPS; see <http://caps.gmu.edu/learningservices/>)

Last day to add or drop with no tuition penalty: 9/5/17

Last day to drop (with 67% tuition penalty): 9/29/17

Selective withdrawal period: Oct 2 – Oct 27

### **Course Schedule:**

#### **Class 1: Mon. 8/28/2017 Introductory Meeting of Class in Fenwick Library 1014A**

##### **Readings**

- Discussion of Course Expectations and the Readings.
- History, Historians, and thinking historically
- Developing and planning a research project
  - Topics
  - Sources
- Overview of Library Resources
  - Using Library Catalogs and Finding Journal Articles
  - Introduction to Zotero

- In-class video: *Finding Kate*: What primary sources does Ph.D. student Sara Collini use to reconstruct the life of an enslaved woman at George Washington's Mount Vernon?

### 9/4/2017: Labor Day- NO CLASS

### Class 2: Mon. 9/11/2017 Class meets in Fenwick Library Room 1014A

#### Readings

- Read both *When Information Came of Age* and *The Revolutionary Founders*.
- Read Turabian Chapter 1 and 2
- Read "Paragraph Structure" in the Course Content section of Blackboard.
- Read Young, Alfred F. "George Robert Twelves Hewes (1742-1840): A Boston Shoemaker and the Memory of the American Revolution." *William & Mary Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (October 1981): 561–623.

#### Workshop

- Submit the assignment **Introduction to Using Secondary Sources as a Historian** in BB before class on 9/11/17 at 4:30 p.m. Also, make sure you bring a copy or have access to this submission so that we can discuss this in more detail. (5%)
- Students will be able to identify the characteristics of scholarly works and will bring a tentative research topic to class in order to find appropriate scholarly works using library resources. Bring to class either a print copy of the "George Robert Twelves Hewes..." article or a device that will allow you to annotate.

**Reading Discussion and in class assignment: analyzing a scholarly source** Young, Alfred F. "George Robert Twelves Hewes (1742-1840): A Boston Shoemaker and the Memory of the American Revolution." *William & Mary Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (October 1981): 561–623. (5%)

### Class 3: Mon. 9/18/2017 Class Meets in Special Collections and Research Center in Fenwick Library.

#### Readings

- Read Turabian Chapter 3 and 4

Class Objective: Students will be introduced to the diversity of primary sources available in Special Collections and Archives and to examine these resources for evidence. Students will be able to identify the core identifying characteristics of sources based upon the assignment worksheet in Blackboard posted in the Assessments section. Students will complete the assignment and submit to Dr. Oberle at the end of the session.

**Workshop: Visiting Special Collections and examining Primary Documents: An Introduction.**

Special Collections Visit and assignment: Complete the Special Collections Worksheet—In Blackboard—Due at end of class. Monday 9/18/17 (5%).

### Class 4: Mon. 9/25/2017 Class meets in Fenwick Library 1014A

#### Reading:

- Cotlar, Seth. "Every Man Should Have Property": Robert Coram and the American Revolution's Legacy of Economic Populism." In *Revolutionary Founders: Rebels, Radicals, and Reformers in the Making of the Nation*, Edited by Alfred F. Young, Gary B. Nash, and Ray Raphael. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011, 337-353.

- Check America's Historical Imprints and find this source. It is the main source that Cotlar uses. Coram, Robert. *Political inquiries: to which is added, a plan for the general establishment of schools throughout the United States.* By Robert Coram, author of some late pieces in the Delaware gazette, under the signature [sic] of Brutus. Wilmington: Printed by Andrews and Brynberg, 1791.

Class Objective:

Students will learn how to add items into a shared Omeka site and how to create their own exhibit.

In-class discussion about the selected sources below and discussion of source documents and using individual work.

Students will be able to “read” the different sources like an historian and analyze where the source comes from to determine the value as evidence. Using the database *America's Historical Imprints* we will explore using books as primary sources.

Reading discussion and discussion of what is a genre?

**Workshop: Finding and Using Published Sources:** Reading, Finding and Using Books/Imprints as primary sources. Introduction to several databases including *America's Historical Imprints*. Complete assignment “Books as Sources.”

**Guest Speaker Ms. Megan Brett Ph.D. (Candidate) RRCHNM.**

Introduction to Omeka and add at least one item into site.

**Due: Using Books/Imprints 7:10 p.m. 9/25/2017**

Complete Using Books as Primary Sources—In Blackboard—Due at end of class 7:10 p.m. Monday 25 September (5%).

### **Class 5: Mon. 10/2/2017 Class Meets in Fenwick Library Room 1014A**

Reading:

- Use the issue of the *Massachusetts Spy* in the course content section of Blackboard.
- “Prowling the Periodicals” <http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/periodicals.htm>

Revising your topic and finding secondary sources.

- Bring at least one book to class and be prepared to discuss how the source relates to your tentative topic and how will you find other sources.
- Bring at least one example of a primary source (digitized or notes about)

Class Objective: Students will be introduced to the diversity of published primary sources including periodicals and perform a close reading of a single newspaper. Students will be introduced to collected (edited) primary sources and will be introduced to an ongoing project using the Elizabeth Fairfax Cookbook.

### **Workshop: Finding and Using Published Sources**

#### **1- Close Reading of Newspaper and Discussion of following sources:**

- Broadside: [Collection Sale of Pierre du Simitiere](#)
- Government Document: [United States Secretary of State, Register of officers and agents, civil, military, and naval, in service of U.S.; with names, force, and condition of all ships and vessels belonging to U.S.,... Washington: Jonathan Elliot, 1816](#)
- Diary [excerpt]: [Albigence Waldo, 1777](#)

- Letter: [Thomas Jefferson to John Banister Jr., 15 Oct. 1785](#) (typescript) and [also here](#) (manuscript)
- Map: [The United States of America laid down from the best authorities, agreeable to the Peace of 1783](#)
- Image/cartoon: [Congressional Pugilists, 1798](#)

## 2- Discussion of Cookbook Project

### Manuscript Cookbook

**Due: Close Reading of Newspaper 4:30 p.m. 10/2/2017**

Discussion of "Prowling the Periodicals" and discussion of your annotated sources.

### Class 6: Tues. 10/10/2017

Class Objective: Students will focus on a specific set of resources and perform a more advanced inquiry into a selected set of primary sources available in Special Collections Research Center. Students will complete the assignment and submit to Dr. Oberle at the end of the session.

### **Workshop: Visiting Special Collections and Discussion**

Special Collections Visit 2-TBA

**Due: Revision of topic and Annotated Bibliography 10/10/2017 10%**

### Class 7: Mon. 10/16/2017

Individual meetings to discuss student topics. Students will sign up for an appointment. Meet in my Office Fenwick Library Room 2211

**Due: Cookbook Project Due 10/16/17 5%**

### Class 8: Mon. 10/23/2017 Class Meets in Fenwick Library Room 1014A

### **Workshop: Historiographical essay, writing, and participating in the scholarly conversation.**

Bring your current bibliography and discuss the sources that you have.

**Read:** The two Freehling essays.

- William W. Freehling, "The Founding Fathers and Slavery," *American Historical Review*, 77 (1972): 81-93 (available electronically via the Fenwick Library catalog or *America: History and Life*)
- William W. Freehling, "The Founding Fathers, Conditional Antislavery, and the Nonradicalism of the American Revolution," 1994 (pdf posted in Course Contents section of Blackboard)

**Due: Draft Historiography Essay in class 10/23/17-Peer evaluation of Historiography essays. Final Version Due: 10/27/17. 10%**

### Class 9: Mon. 10/30/2017 Fenwick Library Room 1014A

Using sources responsibly for Historians

Read

- Peter Charles Hoffer, *Past Imperfect: Facts, Fictions, and Fraud--American History from Bancroft and Parkman to Ambrose, Bellesiles, Ellis, and Goodwin* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007). 141-171

“Falsification: The case of Michael Bellesiles”

Microhistory and Local History

- Victoria Bynum, “Mothers, Lovers and Wives: Images of Poor White Women in Edward Isham’s Autobiography.” In *The Confessions of Edward Isham: A Poor White Life of the Old South* ed. Charles C. Bolton, and Scott P. Culclasure, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998. (In Blackboard)
- Autobiography of Edward Isham (in Blackboard)
- OPTIONAL- Find in Library Catalog or America: History and Life. Scott P. Culclasure, “‘I Have Killed a Damned Dog’: Murder by a Poor White in the Antebellum South,” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 70, no. 1 (1993): 14–39.

**Class 10: Mon. 11/6/2017 Fenwick Library Room 1014A**

Poster Creation and the SPARC Lab and Digital History

Developing Presentations Ms. Hannah McLaughlin from University Libraries SPARC Lab.

This class will introduce students to examples of methods and scholarship using digital history methods. TBA

Omeka Check in and project updates

**Class 11: Monday 11/13/2017 Fenwick Library Room 1014A**

Open Workshop. This is a working session where we will be available to help with posters/Omeka or final proposal.

**Class 12: Mon. 11/20/2017 Fenwick Library Room 1014A**

**Workshop: Peer Review Session**

Peer feedback on draft research proposal. Submit your revised draft of research proposal (in light of peer review) via Blackboard by 11/22/17.

**Draft of Research Proposal**

**Class 13: Mon. 11/27/1/2017**

Class will meet in Fenwick Library Room 1014A

**Student Presentations**

**Class 14: Mon. 12/4/2017**

Class will meet in Fenwick Library Room 1014A

**Student Presentations**

**Revised final proposal with annotated bibliographies due by Friday, December 8, 2017 at 5:00 p.m. 10%**