

**History 300.4: Introduction to Historical Method**  
***GMU and Northern Virginia in Late 20-Century U.S. History – 1960s-1990s***  
Spring 2024, George Mason University

Professor Laura Moore

Email: [lmooreb@gmu.edu](mailto:lmooreb@gmu.edu) - best way to contact me

Office Hours via Zoom at <https://gmu.zoom.us/j/94945513648> will vary by week and by appointment;  
I will also usually be available before class

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History 300 is not like other classes. It is a skills-based course in which history majors learn the **process** of writing an original research paper based on primary sources that they find and analyze themselves. The class is an opportunity to dig deeply into both the theory and practice of historical scholarship. It also prepares students for further advanced historical study.

History 300 is central to the history major and fulfills other important elements of a GMU undergraduate degree. It is a Mason Core “synthesis” and “writing intensive” course, giving students the opportunity to “master new content, think critically, and develop life-long learning skills” while writing drafts and revisions based on extensive professor feedback. It is also designated a “Mason Impact” course which supports original undergraduate research.<sup>1</sup>

In this particular section of History 300, we will focus on late 20<sup>th</sup>-century U.S. history (approximately the 1960s-1990s), and paper topics will grow out of archival research on our local history -- George Mason University and Northern Virginia. We will begin by reading about the philosophy and practice of historical research and examples of historical scholarship. At the same time, you will complete weekly writing and research assignments that introduce various research skills. By the fifth week of the semester, you will have developed a research question that will emerge from that “digging.” You will spend the second half of the semester on your own original research and writing as well as sharing findings and drafts with classmates. In the end, you will gain experience with the methods, challenges, and collaboration required of advanced historical scholarship.

The course is organized around the four major elements that go into creating an original research project:

1. Finding and analyzing **primary sources**
2. Reading scholarly works, **secondary sources**, that relate to the primary source research
3. Organizing one’s findings and writing **drafts**
4. Getting **comments** and advice from colleagues

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<sup>1</sup> For information about these designations, see <https://masoncore.gmu.edu/mason-core-course-categories/>,  
<https://provost.gmu.edu/academics/undergraduate-education/mason-impact>

## HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE:

**-Stay in touch with Professor Moore:** Always let me know right away if you get stuck, confused, or worried about any assignments. Keep me updated on your research and writing. You can always email me. Don't hide problems from me – I know this is a hard class, and I can help you to navigate it. But also, please share exciting finds and insights!

**-Do EVERY assignment, on time and following instructions:** This class emphasizes the research PROCESS. Assignments take you on the step-by-step journey of researching and writing an original research paper. You cannot succeed if you don't complete the steps *in order* and *on time*. You should be able to complete the readings and assignments averaging about six hours per week outside of class time. We all have busy lives, though. Sometimes you won't have as much time as you'd like to do your schoolwork. Sometimes other classes or other parts of your life will take priority over this one. Even then, by following the steps, you can reach a successful end result in your research paper. *In other words*, get the assignments (including all reading) done in the time you have to do them, meeting all deadlines. Please don't make me give you a "zero" on anything.

**-Attend EVERY class meeting, on time and well-prepared:** For a small seminar like this one to succeed, every student must attend every class – with the reading done and assignments completed. Because scholarship is a collaborative enterprise, your absence would also hurt other students. We will not always use the full allotted class time and we may not meet every week. When we are in class, we all need to be there, fully participating.

Note: For more information on attendance, see "participation" below about how absences or arriving late lowers the course grade. If you must miss class, alert me ahead of time.

## READINGS

You must have the correct editions of these three books the first week of class:

- John H. Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction* (2000)
- American Historical Association, *Careers for History Majors* (2018)
- Kate L. Turabian et al, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition (2018). You may use either the paperback or e-book version, as long as it's the correct edition. **Bring this book to every class meeting.**

Additional assigned reading will be available online through the course Blackboard page.

**Always have copies of assigned readings and your notes on them with you during class.**

As part of your original research, you will find primary and secondary sources that you are, of course, required to read. Keep me up to date on what you're reading and **bring notes or copies to class.**

## TECHNOLOGY

I assume all my History 300 students have reliable, *daily*, internet access and basic computer literacy. Please alert me to any potential technology or access issues you might encounter this semester.

I expect you to check your **GMU email** at least once every twenty-four hours, including weekends. It is our official university communication method, and I am required to use it when emailing with you. Keep in mind that what I email you is official course content. In other words, make sure you get my emails.

Every week you will download, read, and submit materials on our **Blackboard** page.

This course requires that you use the bibliographic management software **Zotero**. We will use class time to go over Zotero, but first you need to download the most recent version at <http://www.zotero.org/>. For installation advice go to <https://www.zotero.org/support/installation>.

I encourage you to bring a computer to class, but it should remain closed during class discussions except when I say otherwise. Mobile phones, etc., should also be turned off unless, again, I say otherwise. You will need **paper and a pen or pencil** every day.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I take my obligations under the University Honor Code seriously and expect you to do the same. You have signed the Honor Code, and all the work you do in this course is subject to the policy. It is especially important that you do not commit **plagiarism** – that is using others' wording *or* ideas without attribution. You can avoid it by **using proper citation methods** (including to ALL internet sources used in any kind of research) and quotation marks when quoting. Remember that summary, paraphrasing, and quoting all require citations. And remember, as well, that plagiarism includes not only published sources, but also the writing or ideas of friends, family, classmates, *and* AI without acknowledging them. I also expect you to review the Writing Center's plagiarism handout available here: <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/writing-resources/citing-sources/plagiarism> and the full Honor Code including its definition of plagiarism: <https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/full-honor-code-document/>

Please remember that sharing materials created by the instructor or other students – including recordings of class – such as uploading them to sites outside of our course, violates the Mason Honor code as does uploading your own coursework to online study sites. Please check the Office of Academic Integrity webpage for more information.

If you are at all worried that you (or a classmate) may be in danger of an Honor Code violation, you should talk to me immediately. Any suspicions of any kind of cheating will be referred to the Office of Academic Integrity.

## INCLEMENT WEATHER/CAMPUS CLOSINGS

If campus closes because of bad weather (or any other reason), you are still responsible for **completing all work as scheduled**, and we will be in touch via email and Blackboard – so, you need to make sure you can contact me. If the University is open, we will hold class as scheduled and all of the rules regarding attendance and punctuality apply.

## RESOURCES

I encourage you to utilize the many support services available to GMU students, which are summarized here:

<https://historyarthistory.gmu.edu/undergraduate/resources-and-support-services>

For example, **Learning Services** offers workshops in academic skills, some of which are particularly well-suited to history majors: <https://learningservices.gmu.edu/>.

I also expect History 300 students to use the **Writing Center**. You can make an appointment for a writing consultant session (which I recommend you do at least once this semester) at <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/appointments>

Librarians are a historian's greatest allies, and you will spend a lot of time this semester at **Fenwick Library**, <http://library.gmu.edu/>

We will be working with the History Liaison Librarian, George Oberle, who you can contact for research help at [goberle@gmu.edu](mailto:goberle@gmu.edu)

I appreciate students reaching out to me about how I might best support them while in my course. That said, I strongly encourage you to turn to Mason's confidential resources as appropriate, *such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380.*

A commitment to diversity and inclusion is central to my teaching philosophy, and I strive to do my part to foster a welcoming, safe, and equitable learning environment. I encourage all students to review the university's **diversity statement** at <https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/knowledge-center/general-teaching-resources/mason-diversity-statement/>

As an instructor, I also have certain legal obligations, including under **FERPA** (<https://registrar.gmu.edu/ferpa/>) and **Title IX** (<https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/>); contact *Mason's Title IX Coordinator* by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing [titleix@gmu.edu](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu)).

If you are a student with a disability who needs academic accommodations, please see me privately and contact the **Office of Disability Resources** at (703) 993-2474 (<https://ds.gmu.edu/>). All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

For questions about the history major or administrative procedures such as withdrawal, please contact your history advisor or the **History Undergraduate Coordinator**, Carrie Grabo, [cgrabo1@gmu.edu](mailto:cgrabo1@gmu.edu)

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Participation: 10% of course grade  
Journal: 10%  
Research Digs: 10%  
Quizzes: 10%

Writing Assignments (drafts and comments): 15%  
Paper Proposal: 15%  
Research Paper: 30%

**Participation:** This part of the grade credits you for coming to class well-prepared and for participating actively in discussions. More generally, it reflects my expectation that every student will be a “*good citizen*,” that is, treat the course and fellow students with attention, respect, and professionalism.

Being *well prepared* means, at a minimum, that you have reviewed the syllabus as well as notes and handouts from the previous class, that you have the assigned readings with you along with ideas for discussing them, and, of course, that you know what’s due that day.

If you come to every class meeting, on time and prepared, listen respectfully, and offer something substantial to discussions every week, then you will earn at least a “B” for your participation grade, and participation will not lower your course grade. If, however, you miss more than one class meeting (or arrive late), assume you will not earn better than a “C” for participation, and if you miss more than three meetings, you will likely NOT PASS THE COURSE.

**Journal:** Throughout the 14 weeks of the semester, you will keep a weekly journal on Blackboard on the reading, research, and writing that you’re doing for this course. I will check the journals every Monday at 1:30pm, so you need to post at least one entry every week by that time.

If you miss more than one journal entry, you can earn at best a “C” for the journal grade, missing more than four earns an “F” on the journal, and missing more than six means you FAIL THE COURSE. To get credit, journal entries must detail how you spent approximately six hours that week on the class, and they should reflect on what you learned doing the week’s reading, research, and writing. It will generally take *at least* 300 words every week to log this work in your journal, usually more.

When reading is assigned, it must also be clear from the journal entry that you have done it ALL and have given it some serious thought. You might respond in your journal to the Reading Questions I provide. At least, let me know what especially interested or confused you about the assigned readings, what you think is especially important, what questions you have, and what you might like to talk about in class.

In addition, use the journal to brainstorm and to communicate with me about how your research and writing go, to reflect on the process by which you’re conducting your research, where you run into roadblocks, where the research leads in different directions than you expected, which resources are especially helpful, problems or questions you’re wrestling with, ideas for writing paragraphs or sections of your paper, and so on.

**Research Digs:** During the first six weeks of the semester, you will complete a series of library research assignments using different methods to find a variety of sources. They will require you to go to Fenwick Library, to copy or upload and print documents, to include citations, to take notes, and to informally address questions I give you about the sources and research tactics. The research question and topic for your final paper will emerge out of these “digs.”

I will provide detailed instructions on these assignments. If you turn the digs in on time, following instructions exactly with nothing missing, you will earn an “A” for this part of the course grade. Just one zero, however - that is missing just one dig - means FAILING THE COURSE. I *may* accept one research dig a little late, with a grade reduction, but *only* if you contact me *before* it’s due to let me know you’ve run into difficulty and to arrange how to turn it in.

**Quizzes:** Many weeks I will give you an in-class or take-home quiz that will require you to refer to your notes on class discussions and readings. Sometimes these will be “pop” quizzes, given without warning. They will vary in length and style. They will always be *open-note*, because a main point of the quizzes is to encourage you to practice *note-taking skills*. If you keep up with all class assignments and meetings and take good notes, you will be prepared for quizzes. Quizzes cannot be made up or rescheduled under any circumstances.

**Writing Assignments:** The key to writing well is writing steadily and revising drafts effectively. After I receive the Paper Proposals, I will divide you into writing groups. For the rest of the semester, you will share drafts and comments on drafts with your group members.

I will provide detailed instructions for each Writing Assignment, including questions you must address for the comments. To get credit, a draft must follow instructions carefully and demonstrate care and serious thought as well as attention to previous comments. In the comments, I’ll be looking for thoughtful insights and useful, concrete advice, again *following instructions* and addressing all the questions seriously.

**DRAFTS:** You must turn in each of these assignments or YOU WILL NOT PASS THE COURSE. They must also be on time. If you need a little extra time, you must contact both me and your group members *before* the deadline to obtain permission – which I may not grant.

Research Question: Due

First Draft:

Second Draft:

**COMMENTS:** Missing a set of comments will LOWER YOUR COURSE GRADE by one full letter grade. As with the drafts, you must obtain permission from me and your group members, *before* the deadline, if you want some extra time.

Comments on Paper Proposals: Due

Comments on First Drafts:

Comments on Second Drafts:

**Paper Proposal:** A graded assignment, the proposal will lay out your research question, discuss relevant secondary sources, explain your primary source research strategy, and include a bibliography. I will provide detailed guidance on this assignment. The proposal is **REQUIRED TO PASS THE COURSE**.

**Research Paper:** The end result of the semester's work, the paper is graded and, of course, **REQUIRED TO PASS THE COURSE**. It will be an original research paper of approximately 3,500 words (around 12 pages). As with any history paper, this one will be evaluated on how clear, convincing, logical, original, and insightful the argument is and how well it uses evidence from primary sources. It must show solid understanding of relevant scholarly literature (secondary sources), while being grounded in primary source research (at least half of its footnotes should be to primary sources).

In format, the paper must follow standard scholarly practice (which we will discuss in class), relying on Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*. In addition to footnotes, the paper must also include a bibliography of primary sources and a separate bibliography of secondary sources, which should include every source you used during your research, including websites, whether or not you refer directly to them in the paper.

In addition to the written version of the paper, you will do an ORAL PRESENTATION of your research at the end of the semester. The oral presentation is also required in order to pass the course, so you must attend class those days.

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*I look forward to exploring history with you and to learning from your research!*

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NOTE: I reserve the right to make changes to the course and to the assignment schedule in ways that I deem in the best interests of the class. It is ***your responsibility*** to use the syllabus, to keep track of any changes, and to ensure you have received all handouts and other instructions.

The key to success is to be proactive!

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After **re-reading the syllabus**, please sign the following statement and show it to me in class on January 29:

*I have read the entire syllabus for History 300.4 Spring 2024. I have noted all due dates. I understand that missing assignments, including readings and participation, means failing the course or a substantially lowered course grade. I understand that if I have problems completing an assignment on time, I should contact Professor Moore and that she may or may not grant extra time. I have asked Professor Moore any questions I have about the syllabus, and I will ask her when I realize I need any further clarification. I will also make sure that I receive and read all forthcoming instructions and handouts, including via GMU email.*

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- Jan 22 Introductions – Bring the three required books; bring a laptop if possible
- Jan 29 Turn in: Research Digs 1, 2 and 3  
 Read: “Tips for Active Reading” and “Strategies for Reading Academic Articles” at <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/writing-resources>  
 John Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, Preface, Chapters 1-4  
*Careers in History*, pages 4-5 and pages 10-14  
 Turabian, “A Note to Students,” “Preface,” “Overview of Part I,” & Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4  
 American Historical Association’s “Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct” sections 1-4 only at <http://www.historians.org/pubs/free/ProfessionalStandards.cfm>  
 “Learning Historical Research: On the Search” at <http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/searching.htm>  
 SCRC InfoGuide, “Research with Primary Sources,” at <https://infoguides.gmu.edu/scrc/research>  
 “Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide – Notes and Bibliography” at [https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html](https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html)
- Feb 5 Turn in: Dig 4  
 Read: John Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, Chapters 5-7  
 Watch: Professor Moore’s lecture on U.S. history 1960s-90s, link on Blackboard  
 Read: “Using Archives” <https://www2.archivists.org/usingarchives> and its subsections: “What Are Archives,” “Finding and Evaluating Archives,” “Typical Usage Guidelines,” and “Notes On Copyright...”  
 Info about SCRC: <https://scrc.gmu.edu/about>, <https://scrc.gmu.edu/visit>
- Feb 12 Watch: SCRC Hist300 YouTube playlist, link on Blackboard  
 Read: Chapter Introductions, *A History of Our Time*, on Blackboard  
 “A History of George Mason University,” every “exhibit” or chapter at <https://silverbox.gmu.edu/masonhistory/>  
 “Black Lives Next Door,” selections tbd, at <https://silverbox.gmu.edu/legacy/s/blnd/page/home>  
 Heinemann, *Old Dominion, New Commonwealth*, Chaps 15-16 on Blackboard
- Feb 19 Turn in: Dig 5  
 Bring to class: draft Research Question  
 Review all readings assigned so far  
 Install Zotero, if you haven’t already  
 Read: Turabian, chapters 15, 16, and skim chapter 17  
 “Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide” at [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)  
 Zotero “Quick Start Guide,” “Creating Bibliographies,” and “Word Processor Integration” at <https://www.zotero.org/support>
- Wed Feb 21 Post to Blackboard: RESEARCH QUESTION
- Feb 26 Turn in: Dig 6 (Draft Paper Proposal with annotated bibliography)  
 Bring to class and start reading: individually assigned secondary source



Mar 4 SPRING RECESS

Mar 11 Turn in and post to Blackboard: **Paper Proposal**  
Finish reading: assigned secondary source

Wed Mar 13 Post to Blackboard: COMMENTS on your group members' Proposals

Mar 18 Read: Comments on all your group members' proposals  
Turabian, chapters 5, 6, 7 and skim chapter 25  
"Learning Historical Research: Drafting, Revising, Editing" at  
<http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/writing.htm>  
Review: "Sample Research Paper" Hacker and Fister, link on Blackboard  
Turabian, Appendix (pages 371-408) noting especially Figures  
A.1, A.10, A.12, A.14, and A.15

Mar 25 Come to class prepared to update us on your research and writing

Wed Mar 27 Post to Blackboard: FIRST DRAFT

Sat Mar 30 Post to Blackboard: COMMENTS on group members' First Drafts

Apr 1 Read: Comments on your group members' drafts  
Turabian, chapters 9, 10, 11, 12

Apr 8 Individual meetings on Zoom – we will not gather together in class

Apr 15 Turn in and post to Blackboard: SECOND DRAFT

Wed Apr 17 Post to Blackboard: COMMENTS on Second Drafts

Apr 22 Read: Comments on your group members' drafts  
Turabian, Chapters 13-14  
*Careers in History*, pages 6-13, 15-34  
Review all assigned readings from earlier in the semester

Apr 29 Turn in: **Research Paper**  
**Oral Presentations**

May 6 Keep the Final Exam time open, in case

### **History 300: The Basics**

Be prepared to CITE ASSIGNED READINGS in answering these questions.

1. What are historians talking about when they talk about:

- primary sources?

-secondary sources?

2. Where and how might you find different types of primary sources?

3. What are some of the best methods to find secondary sources?

4. A) Which citation format do historians use?

B) What are a couple resources you could turn to on how to do that citation format correctly?

5. What are the key differences between bibliographies and notes (footnotes or endnotes)?

6. For historians and other scholars, why is proper citation an ethical issue?