

**History 300.3: Introduction to Historical Method**  
***Twentieth-Century U.S. Women's History – Going to the Archives***  
Fall 2011, George Mason University

Dr. Laura Moore  
Email: lmooreb@gmu.edu  
Office: Robinson B 371B  
Mailbox: Robinson B 359  
History Dep't Phone: (703) 993-1250  
Office Hours: TBA in class

History 300 is not like other history courses. It provides history majors with preparation for History 499 by introducing them to the process of writing an original research paper based on primary sources that students find and analyze for themselves. In this particular section, readings and research will focus on twentieth-century United States women's history and on the excitement and challenges of finding primary sources in archival collections – which will require spending time at a research center such as GMU's Special Collections. (Students should note that such archives often have limited, daytime and weekday, hours. If you cannot do research during those hours, this section is not for you.)

In this writing-intensive course, students will complete weekly writing assignments that will lead to an original research project. Paper topics will emerge out of the research (not the other way around). In the first few weeks of the semester we will read about and discuss the historical process in general. By the fifth week, you will have developed a research agenda and will be focusing on your own investigations, placing your research within relevant secondary literature, and writing up your findings. In addition, you will learn to read and comment on each other's drafts. In the end, you will gain experience with the methods, challenges, and collaboration required of advanced, archival-based, historical scholarship.

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

1. reading scholarly works – secondary sources that relate to one's research topic
2. finding and analyzing primary sources
3. organizing one's findings and writing drafts
4. getting comments and advice from colleagues

## READINGS

You can purchase these books at the campus bookstore (or perhaps get better prices elsewhere – but make sure you get the correct editions!):

John H. Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction* (2000)

Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (2007)

Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, Fifth Edition (2011)

The other required readings will be available either on reserve at the Johnson Center, online or via the course Blackboard page.

## TECHNOLOGY

I assume that all History 300 students have basic computer literacy and *daily* internet access, including on weekends. I expect you to check your **GMU email** at least once every twenty-four hours. Also, almost every week you will read and submit materials on our course page on **Blackboard**. To reach this page, you must log in to MyMason.gmu.edu using the same userID and password that you use for your GMU email account. Then click on the “Courses” tab to find our class.

In addition, this course requires that you use the bibliographic management software **Zotero**. We will use class time to go over Zotero, but first you’ll download version 2.1 at <http://www.zotero.org/>. To download it, you need the internet browser Mozilla Firefox which you can download at <http://www.mozilla.org/>

To help ensure proper citation, we will also pass paper drafts through an online plagiarism prevention program, which I will explain further in class.

It is *your responsibility* to ensure that you receive all course-related communications and are able to submit all assignments. Trouble with Blackboard or Zotero, for example, is not a valid excuse for skipping an assignment!

## ATTENDANCE

In a discussion-based course such as this one, every student must come to every class meeting on time and well-prepared. *Well-prepared* means that you have reviewed the syllabus and 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. Your preparation for class will affect your participation grade.

If you must miss class or come late, you should notify me well in advance. Note, too, that you cannot receive credit for some assignments if you are not in class the week they are due. If you miss more than one class meeting, for any reason, assume that you will not be able to earn better than a “B” for participation. Arriving late will also affect your participation grade. If you miss more than two class meetings (or are late) assume that your course grade will be significantly affected.

## HONOR CODE

I take my obligations under the University Honor Code seriously and expect you to do the same. 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. You have signed the Honor Code stating that you understand what plagiarism is. Still, to help avoid falling into the plagiarism trap, we will use an online plagiarism prevention program, and you should review the Writing Center's plagiarism handout at: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/resources-template.php?id=1>

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 Dean of Students.

## ADVICE

My favorite college professor used to say that true learning begins when you admit that you're confused. In that spirit, I encourage you to **ask questions** of me, of other students, and of yourself. I really enjoy talking with students – please feel free to approach me with questions, concerns, and ideas, whether small or large.

This course will be completely discussion-based – the active and thoughtful participation of everyone is absolutely crucial to its success. Keep up with the reading and other work, bring imaginative questions to the material, respect each other, and don't be shy.

This is an advanced course that requires hard and serious work outside class hours as well as during them. You should not, however, feel overwhelmed by the work. If you start to feel overwhelmed, **talk to me**.

I also strongly encourage you to utilize other academic support services available to GMU students. For example, CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services) offers workshops in academic skills: <http://caps.gmu.edu/learningservices/workshops.php>.

In particular, I expect History 300 students to make use of the **Writing Center**. You can make an appointment for a writing tutor session (which I recommend you do at least once this semester) at <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>. You can also access their resources online at <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/writing-resources.php>.

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

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Participation, including journal: 20% of course grade

“Skills Tests”: 15%

Writing Assignments (drafts and comments): 20%

Paper Proposal: 10%

Research Paper: 35%

You will earn your course grade through a series of un-graded but required assignments and two more formal graded written assignments including the Research Paper itself.

**Participation:** General Participation: Different people make different kinds of contributions to a discussion. Some of us are more talkative or assertive than others; sometimes just one, short, thoughtful comment can move a discussion to a deeper level. In figuring your participation grade, I will take into account the quality and thoughtfulness – and to a lesser degree the quantity -- of your contributions to class discussions. I will evaluate general participation on how engaged you are in the discussions, and how well you listen to other members of the class and respond to what they say. Attendance will also be a factor here – after all, it’s hard for your mind to be present when your body is not.

Journal: At least once a week, every week, you will post a journal entry on Blackboard – including the first week of the semester and Thanksgiving week – at least 14 entries. You should write at least 300 words per week in the Journal, and they must be posted by 11:00am every Thursday.

At a minimum each entry should log whatever course-related reading, research, and writing you have done that week – where you go, what you look at, the search terms you used, and that sort of information. Preferably (and to get a check-plus), entries will also include brainstorming and research or writing ideas. Research Journals are useful tools for recording the process by which you conduct your research, where you run into roadblocks, where the research leads you in different directions than you expected, which resources are especially helpful, and so on. For weeks with assigned readings, journal entries must also include an informal response to the readings, showing me that you have completed and given some thought to what I assigned.

Turning in all the journal entries, on time and following instructions, will earn at least a “B” for this part of the participation grade. More than one missed week (a zero) earns a C or below.

**“Skills Tests”:** Occasionally I will ask you to turn in something that helps you practice what we have been studying. Sometimes this will be an exercise we do in class, sometimes I’ll give you instructions one week for something due the following week. For example, you might turn in a Zotero-generated bibliography, write down how to use a particular library database, or summarize the thesis of an assigned reading. These so-called “skills tests” cannot be turned in late and cannot be made up under any circumstances. Note as well that they are not listed on the syllabus. They are for credit alone, that is, if completed on time, following instructions precisely, they will get a check. Checks on all of them – no zeroes or incompletes (check-minuses) – earns an A for this part of the grade.

**Writing Assignments:** A basic philosophy of this course is that writing is a collaborative process. Learning how to read and comment on colleagues' drafts is an important skill. Moreover, the key to writing well is learning how to revise drafts effectively. You will, thus, spend much of this semester helping each other revise drafts. During the sixth week of class I will divide you into *groups*. For the rest of the semester, you will be responsible for writing comments on drafts written by members of your group.

PLEASE NOTE: I will accept no more than one of the Writing Assignments late -- and then *only* if you get in touch with me and your group *before* the deadline to let us know when it will arrive. After that, late drafts and comments will get zeroes

Drafts: You will complete your Research Paper through a series of un-graded writing stages, or drafts, first a "Research Question" due September 21; then a first draft due October 24; and a second draft due November 17. To earn at least a check, each draft stage must follow instructions carefully and demonstrate care and serious thought. For example, if a draft includes revisions from previous drafts, it does indeed need to be revised and improved. One or more zeroes means a *course* grade of at best a C, so be careful not to skip any of these assignments!

Comments: You will write comments for all of your group members on the first and second drafts and on their Paper Proposals. Comments are due on October 12, October 26, and November 21. I will be looking for thoughtful insights and useful, concrete advice, and I will give you instructions to help you accomplish that. To earn at least a check, again follow instructions and demonstrate that care and serious thought has been put into writing the comments. And, missing any of these assignments also means a heavy penalty – more than one zero will knock your *course* grade down to at best a C.

**Graded Writing:** The Paper Proposal, due October 6, will lay out your research question, discuss relevant secondary sources, and explain your archival research strategy. I will provide detailed guidance on this assignment.

The Research Paper itself is the end result of the entire semester's work. It will be approximately 12 pages, plus the bibliography. 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, while being grounded in primary source research.

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 bibliography of secondary sources that includes *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. This presentation will constitute 5% of the Research Paper grade. The oral presentation is required in order to pass the course.

**NOTE:**

I reserve the right to make changes to the course and to the assignment schedules 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 make sure you have received all hand-outs and other instructions. The key to success is to be proactive!

- September 1      Introducing the class and each other  
We will NOT meet together in class, but in a virtual “chat room” on Blackboard
- September 8      Remember your first journal entry – by 11:00 am on Blackboard!  
Bring to class: the syllabus, all required books, and a copy of “Using Primary Sources” from the History Toolkit (see below)  
Read: ○ Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, Preface and Chaps 1-4  
○ “Using Primary Sources” in the *History Toolkit* at:  
[http://dohistory.org/on\\_your\\_own/toolkit/index.html](http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/index.html)  
○ Turabian, *Guide for Researchers*, pp. xiii-xv, 3-11  
○ “Overview,” and “Finding Sources: Primary Sources,” in Hacker and Fister’s *Research and Documentation Online: History* at  
[http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e\\_ch05\\_o.html](http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e_ch05_o.html)  
○ GMU Special Collections & Archives InfoGuide at  
<http://infoguides.gmu.edu/sca>:  
Download Zotero at <http://www.zotero.org/>
- September 15      Read: ○ Arnold, chaps 5-7  
○ Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, pp. ix-x, Chaps 9-22 (selections TBA), and pp. 607-608 and 600-606  
○ Turabian, chapters 2-3  
○ “Documenting Sources: Overview” and “Documenting Sources: Chicago Documentation Styles” in Hacker and Fister at  
[http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e\\_ch10\\_o.html](http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e_ch10_o.html)  
○ GMU Writing Center’s “Turabian Style Guide” handout at  
<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/resources-template.php?id=8>  
○ Zotero’s “Quick Start Guide” “Frequently Asked Questions” and “Screencast Tutorials” at <http://www.zotero.org/support/>  
Skim Turabian, chapters 15, 16, 17
- Wednesday Sep 21 Turn in (on Blackboard): Research Question
- September 22      Read: ○ GMU library InfoGuide at [http://infoguides.gmu.edu/history\\_general](http://infoguides.gmu.edu/history_general)  
○ *American Women: A Library of Congress Resource Guide for the Study of Women's History and Culture in the United States* at: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhhtml/index.html>  
○ one of the Document Projects (to be assigned in class) in *Women and Social Movements* available through GMU Library’s databases.  
○ Turabian, chapters 4-5
- September 29      Read: ○ secondary source book – to be assigned based on your research question

- October 6 Turn in: Paper Proposal
- Wednesday Oct 12 Turn in (on Blackboard): Comments on Proposals
- October 13 Read:
  - Turabian, chapters 6-7
  - GMU Writing Center Online Resources at <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/writing-resources.php>
  - Hacker, "Documenting Sources: *Chicago* Manuscript Format" and "Documenting Sources: Sample Paper" at: [http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e\\_ch10\\_o.html](http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e_ch10_o.html)
- October 20 NO CLASS MEETING – research and writing on your own
- Monday Oct 24 Turn in (on Blackboard): First Draft
- Wednesday Oct 26 Turn in (on Blackboard): Comments on First Drafts
- October 27 Come to class prepared to discuss the comments on your draft and to explain your revision strategy  
Read:
  - Turabian, chapters 9-12 and 14  
Skim: Turabian, chapters 20-25
- November 3 Individual Appointments – We will not meet in class
- November 10 Come to class prepared to discuss ongoing revisions including your current thesis, primary source evidence, and writing struggles
- November 17 Turn in: Second Draft
- Monday, Nov 21 Turn in (on Blackboard): Comments on Second Drafts
- November 24 THANKSGIVING BREAK
- December 1 Come to class prepared to discuss the comments on your draft and your strategy for completing the final version of your research paper  
Read:
  - Turabian, chapter 13
- December 8 Oral Presentations on Research Papers  
Turn in: RESEARCH PAPER