History 300.4: Introduction to Historical Method

GMU and Northern Virginia in Late 20-Century U.S. History - 1960-1990
Spring 2019, George Mason University

Professor Laura Moore
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Office Hours: Vary by week, but you will usually find me in my office 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 several other important elements of a GMU undergraduate degree. It is a Mason Core “synthesis” course, meaning it should “expand students’ ability to master new content, think critically, and develop life-long learning skills.” As a “writing intensive” course, students must write drafts and revisions based on the professor’s feedback. Finally, as part of the “Students as Scholars” initiative it is also a “Scholarly Inquiry” course where students learn content and skills in their field to be “prepared to conduct your own scholarly project.”

In this particular section of History 300, we will focus on late 20th-century U.S. history (approximately the 1960s-1980s), 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 fourth 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 one’s research topic
3. Organizing one’s findings and writing drafts
4. Getting comments and advice from colleagues

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1 For information about these designations, see https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#Capstone%20or%20Synthesis, http://wac.gmu.edu/wi-course-resources/wi-course-criteria/, and https://oscar.gmu.edu/students/take-a-class/
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. I’ll follow your progress through the weekly journal and, most weeks, will catch up with you in class. In addition, 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 advanced, 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 ten 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 school work. 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 senior thesis 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.

-Come to 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 in hand. 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.

READINGS

You must have the correct editions of these two books the first week of class:
- Kate L. Turabian et al, A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 9th 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 or through the course Blackboard page. Four films are also required viewing. As with the reading, you must bring notes on them and be prepared to discuss them on the date they are listed below.

Always bring to class copies of assigned readings and your notes on assigned readings and films.

Finally, as part of your original research, you will find primary and secondary sources that you are, of course, required to read. You will find them in online databases, library shelves, archival collections and elsewhere, as we will practice in class. Always keep me up-to-date on what you’re reading and bring notes or copies to class.
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. GMU’s official policy is to use only Mason e-mail accounts to communicate with students, and you are required to use it for university communications, including this class.

Every week you will read and submit materials on our course page on **Blackboard**, available via https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu.

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. Cell 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 just published sources, but also the writing or ideas of friends, family, or classmates without acknowledging them. I also expect you to review the Writing Center’s plagiarism handout available here: http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/writing-resources and the Honor Code statement on plagiarism available here: https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/what-is-plagiarism/

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, no matter what the weather is like, we will hold class as scheduled and all of the rules regarding attendance and punctuality apply.
I encourage you to utilize the many support services available to GMU students. 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 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 https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/tutoring.

Librarians are a historian’s greatest allies, and you will spend a lot of time this semester at Fenwick Library and on its website, 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

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.

Finally, please note the following key dates:
- Last day to add: January 29
- Last day to drop with full tuition refund: February 5
- Last day to drop with no refund: February 12
- Last day to self-withdraw with no refund and grade of W: February 25
- Last day of Selective Withdrawal: March 25

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
ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Participation: 10% of course grade
Writing Assignments (drafts and comments): 15%
Journal: 10%       Paper Proposal: 15%
Research Digs: 10% Research Paper: 30%
Quizzes: 10%

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, responsibility 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. Attendance is also a factor – after all, you cannot participate if you’re not there.

If you do come to every class meeting, on time and prepared, offer something substantial to every discussion, and listen respectfully and take notes, 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 two meetings, you will likely NOT PASS THE COURSE.

Journal: Throughout the 14 weeks of semester, you will use Blackboard to keep a weekly journal on the reading, research, and writing that you’re doing for this course. I will check the journals every Monday at Noon, 12:00pm, 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 ten hours that week on the class, and they should reflect on what you learned doing the week’s reading, research, and writing. It will 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 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 five weeks of the semester, you will complete a series of research assignments using different methods to find a variety of sources. They will require you to go to the library, to make printouts and photocopies, 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 research 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/films. 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: Due
- Second Draft: Due

**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: Due
- Comments on Second Drafts: Due

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

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After re-reading the entire syllabus, please sign the following statement and show it to me in class on February 4:

*I have read the entire syllabus for Spring 2019 Hist 300.4. 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.*

Student Signature: _____________________________ Date: __________________
Jan 28  Introductions
Bring to class the required books

Feb 4  Turn in: Digs 1, 2 & 3
Read: John Arnold, *History: A Short Introduction*, Preface and Chaps 1-4 (focus on Chapter 4)
American Historical Association’s “Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct” sections 1-4 only at http://www.historians.org/pubs/free/ProfessionalStandards.cfm
Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, “A Note to Students,” “Preface,” “Overview of Part I,” and Chapter 1
“Learning Historical Research: Introduction” at http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/index.htm
“Learning Historical Research: On the Search” at http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/searching.htm
“Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide – Notes & Bibliography” at https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html
Read, print, & bring to class: “Using Primary Sources” in the *History Toolkit* at http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/primarySources.html

Feb 11  Turn in: Dig 4
Read: Arnold Chaps 5-7 (focus on Chapter 5)
“Tips for Active Reading” and “Strategies for Reading Academic Articles” at https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/writing-resources/wc-quick-guides
Turabian, Chaps 2, 3, 4
Chapter Introductions, *In Our Time*, on Blackboard
“A History of George Mason University,” http://ahistoryofmason.gmu.edu/
Heinemann, *Old Dominion, New Commonwealth*, Chaps 15-16 on Bb
SCRC Finding Aid, to be assigned, at: https://scrc.gmu.edu/collections-alpha.php
Watch: *Freedom Summer* and *Berkeley in the Sixties*

Feb 18  Turn in: Digs 5 & 6
Read: Bailey and Wynkoop selections, on Blackboard
Turabian, chapters 15, 16, and skim chapter 17
“Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide” at http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html
Zotero “Quick Start Guide,” “Creating Bibliographies,” and “Word Processor Integration” at https://www.zotero.org/support
Watch: *She’s Beautiful When She’s Angry* and *After Stonewall*

Wed Feb 20  Post to Blackboard: RESEARCH QUESTION

Feb 25  Turn in Dig 7 – Paper Proposal Draft
Bring to class: secondary source assigned based on Research Question
March 4  Turn in: Paper Proposal
Read: secondary source assigned based on Research Question

Friday, March 8  Post COMMENTS on all Group Members’ Proposals

March 11  SPRING BREAK

March 18  Read: Comments on your group members’ proposals
          Turabian, chapters 5, 6, 7 and skim chapter 25
          “Learning Historical Research: Drafting, Revising, Editing” at
          http://www.williamcroron.com/researching/writing.htm
Review: Turabian, Appendix, noting especially Figures A.1, A.9, A.10, A.12, A.14,
          and A.15 (pages 391, 403, 406, 408, 412, 413)
          “History: Documenting Sources” and “Sample Pages –Chicago Style
          Paper” at
          https://www.macmillanlearning.com/catalog/static/bsm/hacker/resdoc/histo
          ry/footnotes.htm

March 25  Turn in: FIRST DRAFT

Friday, March 29  Post COMMENTS on your group members’ drafts

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

April 8  Individual Meetings

April 15  Turn in: SECOND DRAFT

Friday, April 19  Post COMMENTS on your group members’ drafts

April 22  Read: Comments on your group members’ drafts
          Turabian, chapters 13-14
          “AHA History Tuning Project: History Discipline Core” (2013) at
          https://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/tuning-the-history-
          discipline/2013-history-discipline-core
          “What to do with a BA in History” selections TBA at:
          https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-
          history/what-to-do-with-a-ba-in-history

April 29  Come to class prepared to update us on your revisions

May 6  Oral Presentations
      Turn in: Research Paper

May 13  4:30-7:15pm Keep the final exam period available in case we need to make up a class
History 300: The Basics

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. Which citation format do historians use?

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

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

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