

Fall 2020  
History 797: Research Seminar in History  
*War & Society*

Day, time & location: Thursdays 7:20-10 PM, synchronous online

Instructor: Dr. Lair, [mLair@gmu.edu](mailto:mLair@gmu.edu)

Office hours: Online by appointment



### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is the required research seminar for graduate students. The goals of the course are to:

- develop the skills of an historian;
- produce an article-length research paper that makes an original contribution to knowledge;
- present research to the class;
- assist other students in their work.

Students are bounded by the topic “war and society,” but they may pursue research in any time period of human history and in any geographic location on planet Earth. However, students should be realistic about their own skills, the instructor’s ability to help (I am a 20<sup>th</sup> century US historian), and especially the availability of source material.

Skills developed in the course:

- Note-taking
- Identifying and finding sources
- Analyzing sources
- Interpreting and contextualizing historical documents
- Framing questions
- Critical thinking
- Historical writing and citation
- Proof-reading and self-editing
- Editing others’ work
- Providing constructive feedback to others
- Preparing and delivering an oral presentation
- Project management

### COURSE READINGS

Students are required to obtain or maintain access to a style manual. Standard, for historians, is Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. The University Library subscribes to the complete Chicago Manual of Style online, but it’s nice to have a desk copy for quick reference.

Other course readings will be made available through Blackboard.

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## LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course has one central requirement: a research paper of 8,000-10,000 words (plus citation) based on original research in primary sources on a topic of the student's choosing that makes an original contribution to knowledge. There are a number of preliminary requirements along the way, but the writing of the final essay is the point of the course. It is through this essay that you will be able demonstrate the ability to:

1. Select a research topic.
2. Frame a research question.
3. Conduct research in relevant primary & secondary sources that span a variety of disciplines.
4. Evaluate the quality, credibility, and limitations of the arguments presented by scholars working on similar topics.
5. Situate your findings within the scholarly literature of your topic.
6. Craft a historical argument that is appropriately supported by the evidence you compile through your research.
7. Connect issues in your topic to larger intellectual or social concerns; that is, to appreciate and convey the broadest significance of your research.
8. Effectively communicate your research findings orally and in writing.
9. Effectively incorporate other scholars' feedback into your work.
10. Manage a large project and self-motivate in the absence of direct supervision and task-specific deadlines.

## COURSE ASSESSMENT

Assessment will be based on the following assignments. Students must complete every assignment, including the oral presentation, in order to pass the course.

- Book review
- Research proposal with annotated bibliography
- Historiographic essay
- Outline of research paper
- Rough draft of research paper
- Peer review assignment
- Oral presentation of research
- Final draft of research paper
- Class preparation & participation

### **How to Think about Grades**

Grades represent an assessment of your work, not an assessment of you as a person. They are not a reward or a sanction. Your focus this semester should be on improving your process and results, not on achieving a particular grade. Everything you do as a graduate student deserves your best.

### **How to Think About Grades as a Graduate Student**

Graduate school grades are different than undergraduate in many respects. Graduate students who maintain less than a 3.0 can be terminated from their programs, and students with multiple unsatisfactory grades (2 Fs, 3 Cs, or 1 F and 2 Cs) will be terminated from the University. In graduate programs with funding, students lose their funding with less than a 3.5. Therefore, receiving a grade of B or B- in graduate school suggests that there is something wrong in your process that deserves your attention. Frequent B grades, of any type, generally preclude admission to a doctoral program.

## COURSE POLICIES

Please read these course policies and make sure you understand them. If you have questions, please ask. You are expected to know these policies and to plan your work schedule accordingly. That being said, I understand that we are all facing a lot of uncertainty in our health, our loved ones' health, employment, and housing. Please keep in touch with me about your circumstances.

### **Academic Integrity**

Mason students are bound by an Honor Code (<http://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/full-honor-code-document/>), which states, "Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work." The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously, and violations are treated gravely. In this course, academic integrity means that:

- When you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task.
- When you rely on someone else's work in any aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form.
- All aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions.
- You will tell the truth about the status of your work.

For a discussion of plagiarism, go here: <http://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/what-is-plagiarism/>

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. I will report students suspected of dishonesty to the University's Honor Board for disciplinary action, including failure of the course and even expulsion.

### **Attendance & Punctuality**

Our class is synchronous online, and I expect you to attend. If you take ill, have technical problems, or have other emergent circumstances that cause you to miss class or a deadline, please notify me by email at your earliest convenience.

### **Communication**

I will be using Blackboard to email the class via the Announcements feature. Emails sent through Blackboard may be found under "Announcements" on the course Home Page for the duration of the semester. Please write to me only from your GMU account, and please check your GMU account regularly or forward your GMU email.

- **Please preface the subject of your emails to me with "HIST 797."**

### **Decorum**

I expect you to be physically and intellectually present in our online class, to behave in a professional way, and to be respectful of others. Please review the handout "Guide to Online Learning" for specifics on etiquette in our synchronous classroom and during office hours.

### **Disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability and need academic accommodations, please see me privately and contact Disability Services (<https://ds.gmu.edu>). All academic accommodations are codified by that office, but implementing them will fall to me. Accommodations begin only once I am notified about them in writing, and they cannot be retroactive.

### **Diversity**

George Mason University strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected. Please strive to keep your politics out of the classroom and your work. **If you feel uncomfortable or unwelcome in class for any reason, please come and talk to me.**

### **Inclement Weather**

On bad-weather days, consult the University's homepage for cancellation information. If the University is open, we will be having class. The weather where you live is not the operative variable; it is the weather at Mason. Please plan accordingly.

### **IT Policy**

I would like my students to be intellectually and emotionally present in our online class, and it is my responsibility to forge a productive classroom culture that encourages best-practices for learning. Studies have shown that students retain more information when they take notes by hand, though this is admittedly problematic for saving notes and making them searchable. Further, computers and cell phones provide intense temptation to multitask, dividing the user's attention.

- **Phones:** Please silence your phones and put them away before our synchronous online class.
- **Computers:** If you use your computer to take notes during our synchronous online class, please refrain from multitasking.

Please join me in creating an online space for learning and discussion, in which we are all focused on your research projects, our learning and improvement, and each other!

### **Late Assignments**

The best reason to submit assignments on time is that the work of this class is cumulative. That being said, circumstances may arise that necessitate missing a deadline. Assignments will be accepted late, but a grade penalty may attach. Failure to give your oral presentation at all will be catastrophic for your course grade. Please notify me at your earliest convenience if your circumstances require an extension on an assignment.

**Submitting Your Work**

You will submit your work as Word documents (not PDFs) via Blackboard. When saving your files, please label them as follows: **Your\_Last\_Name.HIST797.Name\_of\_Assignment.FA20.doc(x)**.

**Office Hours: By appointment.**

I encourage you to meet with me online to discuss any facet of the course. I can also remain in our course meeting room after class ends to take brief questions. Please notify me in advance if you would like to meet. I will prioritize setting appointments for Thursday evenings before class but can meet with students at other times as well.

**University Enrollment Policy**

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes. (Deadlines each semester are available on the Registrar's website: <https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/>.) After the last day to drop a class, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the CHSS dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons.

## USEFUL CAMPUS RESOURCES

**Blackboard:** <https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/>

**Career Services:** For networking, mentors, and assistance applying for jobs. SUB 1 Room 3400, 703-993-2370, [careers@gmu.edu](mailto:careers@gmu.edu), <https://careers.gmu.edu/>

**Chosen Name & Pronoun Policy:** For information on how to update your chosen name and pronouns. <https://registrar.gmu.edu/updates-chosen-name-pronouns/>

**Citing Sources in Chicago Style:** <http://vle.credoreference.com/george-mason/citing-sources-chicago>

**Counseling and Psychological Services:** For free counseling. SUB I Room 3129, 703-993-2380, <http://caps.gmu.edu>

**COVID-19 Safe Return to Campus:** <https://www2.gmu.edu/coronavirus>

**COVID-19 Student Emergency Assistance Funding:** <https://ulife.gmu.edu/student-emergency-assistance-funding/>

**Disability Services:** <http://ods.gmu.edu>

**Financial Literacy:** Assistance understanding your finances and financial aid. <https://www2.gmu.edu/admissions-aid/financial-aid/financial-literacy>

**Graduate Student Life:** <http://gradlife.gmu.edu/>

**Learning Services:** Free coaching & academic skills workshops. <https://learningservices.gmu.edu/>

**LGBTQ Resources:** <http://lgbtq.gmu.edu>

**Library Info Guides:** <http://infoguides.gmu.edu/>

**Mason Alerts:** Sign up at <https://ready.gmu.edu/masonalert/> for alerts related to emergencies and closings.

**Office of Academic Integrity:** <https://oai.gmu.edu/>

**Patriot Pantry:** For free food assistance. <https://ssac.gmu.edu/patriot-pantry/> or email [pantry@gmu.edu](mailto:pantry@gmu.edu) to make a private appointment to use the pantry.

**Patriot Web:** For registration, transcripts, and degree evaluations. <https://patriotweb.gmu.edu/>

**Stay Mason Student Support Fund:** For students in acute financial distress who are at risk of dropping out. NOTE: The application process takes several weeks, and funds are limited. But, it's worth a try! <https://ulife.gmu.edu/forms/stay-mason-student-support-fund-application/>

**Student Support & Advocacy Center:** For health, well-being, and support. SUB I Suite 3200, 703-993-3686, <https://ssac.gmu.edu/>

**University Policies:** All members of the Mason community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

- The Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>
- University Policies <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>
- CHSS Policies <https://chss.gmu.edu/graduate>

**Writing Center:** Multiple locations, 703-993-1200, <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

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## REPUTABLE & HELPFUL COVID-19 RESOURCES

**Baby goats in pajamas:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RN50R3gycgo&list=RDCMUCkwX4zpgUOug0Ryr-fQavbg&start\\_radio=1&t=6](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RN50R3gycgo&list=RDCMUCkwX4zpgUOug0Ryr-fQavbg&start_radio=1&t=6)

**COVID-19 Safe Return to Campus:** <https://www2.gmu.edu/coronavirus>

**COVID-19 Student Emergency Assistance Funding:** <https://ulife.gmu.edu/student-emergency-assistance-funding/>

**Virginia Department of Health:** <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/>

**The CDC:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

**WHO Situation Reports:** <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports>

### **Good data:**

- JHU Coronavirus Resource Center: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>
- *New York Times*: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-us-cases.html>
- Worldometer: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/#countries>

**Understanding the phrase “Flatten the Curve”:** <https://www.flattenthecurve.com/>

**Understanding “Herd Immunity”:** <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/health/coronavirus-herd-immunity-simulation-vaccine/>

**How You Can Help:** <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/03/21/how-you-can-help-during-coronavirus/?arc404=true>

**How to talk to kids:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html>

**Corgi Puppy Compilation Video:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ith2\\_EPmDpE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ith2_EPmDpE)

## OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS IN HISTORY

**Dr. Zachary Schrag’s blog,** <http://historyprofessor.org/>, which contains multiple how-to’s relevant to this course.

**Dr. Karen Kelsky’s *The Professor Is In* blog,** <http://theprofessorisin.com>, which provides practical advice for graduate students of all kinds, especially those in doctoral program

## HIST 797: WAR & SOCIETY CLASS SCHEDULE

The schedule is subject to change at Dr. Lair's discretion. Readings may be added to any week. Students should be prepared to provide oral updates about their work on every night we meet.

| Wk  | Date     | Topic   | Reading  | Deliverable(s)  |
|-----|----------|---|--|---|
| 1.  | Aug. 27  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions &amp; Expectations</li> <li>• How To: Framing Research Questions &amp; Topics</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Blackboard course page</li> <li>• Course Paper Formatting Requirements</li> <li>• "Writing Book Reviews"</li> <li>• "How to Revise &amp; Proofread Your Work"</li> </ul>        | Any questions you might have!   |
| 2.  | Aug. 31  | <b>Last Day to Add</b>  |  |   |
|     | Sept. 3  | How To: Finding & Reading Sources   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "How to Read a History Book"</li> <li>• "How to Build a Bibliography for a Literature Review"</li> <li>• A scholarly book or article related to your research interests.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A short (750-1000 words) review of the scholarly source you found.</li> <li>• Have the book/article handy during class.</li> </ul> |
| 3.  | Sept. 7  | <b>Email 250 words on your project idea to me &amp; Dr. Oberle (<a href="mailto:goberle@gmu.edu">goberle@gmu.edu</a>) not later than 5 PM.</b>  |  |   |
|     | Sept. 8  | <b>Last Day to Drop</b> (no tuition liability)  |  |   |
|     | Sept. 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How To: The Library</li> <li>• How To: Research Proposals &amp; Annotated Bibliographies</li> </ul>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "How to Find Primary Sources"</li> <li>• "Research Proposals"</li> </ul>  | Post your ideas on the discussion board and offer comment on 2 of them.   |
| 4.  | Sept. 15 | <b>Final Drop Deadline</b> (50% tuition refund)   |  |   |
|     | Sept. 17 | <b>No class: research/writing night. Email an update or meet with Dr. Lair!</b>   |  |   |
| 5.  | Sept. 24 | How To: Historiographic Essays  | "How to Write an Historiographic Essay"  | Research proposal with annotated bibliography.  |
| 6.  | Sept. 28 | <b>Last Day of Student Self-Withdrawal</b> (100% tuition liability, W on transcript)  |  |   |
|     | Oct. 1   | <b>No class: research/writing night. Email an update or meet with Dr. Lair!</b>   |  |   |
| 7.  | Oct. 8   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How To: Working with Primary Sources</li> <li>• How To: Outlines</li> </ul>                            | "How to Write an Outline"  | Historiographic Essay   |
| 8.  | Oct. 15  | <b>No class: research/writing night. Email an update or meet with Dr. Lair!</b>   |  |   |
| 9.  | Oct. 22  | How To: Rough Drafts  | None   | Research Paper Outline  |
| 10. | Oct. 29  | <b>No class: research/writing night. Email an update or meet with Dr. Lair!</b>   |  |   |
| 11. | Nov. 5   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How To: Revising a Draft</li> <li>• How To: Intros &amp; Conclusions</li> </ul>                        | "How to Revise & Proofread Your Work" (review)   | Rough Draft   |
| 12. | Nov. 12  | <b>No class!</b> View the slideshows on "Effective Oral Communication for Historians"   |  | Group A: Email your latest draft to your peer partner.  |
| 13. | Nov. 19  | Group A: Research Presentations   | Group A: None<br>Group B: Their Group A peer partner's draft.  | Group A: Submit your slides.<br>Group B: Email your latest draft to your peer partner & submit your peer review.  |
| 14. | Nov. 25  | <b>No class!</b> (it's a Wednesday)   | Group A: Their Group B peer partner's draft.<br>Group B: None  | Group A: Submit your peer review by 10 PM.  |
|     | Nov. 26  | <b>No Class: Happy Thanksgiving!</b>  |  |   |
| 15. | Dec. 3   | Group B: Research Presentations   | None   | Group B: Submit your slides.  |
| 16. | Dec. 10  | <b>Due: Final drafts by 10 PM!</b>  |  |   |