COURSE DESCRIPTION

In the era of viral memes, alternative facts, deep fakes, and fake news, it is hard to know what’s real let alone what’s true. Historians are voracious consumers of information who interpret evidence and sift, sort, categorize, and mobilize data points to make effective arguments about the past, arguments that often contextualize and influence our understanding of the present. The skills we acquire as historians can be helpful in sorting fact from fiction online, and sorting fact from fiction online can make us better historians.

To that end, this iteration of Introduction to Historical Methods will teach the basics of historical research and writing by examining historical rumors, myths, and memes that appear on the Internet. We will identify and unpack the mobilization of historical content online and in the news, strategize how to fact-check it, and learn to contextualize and interpret it. Skills developed in the course include basic research methods, analyzing sources, interpreting and contextualizing historical arguments and documents, framing questions, critical thinking, historical writing and citation, editing and revising written work, being an effective discussant, and preparing and delivering an oral presentation with slides.

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

In a normal college-level course, students should expect to study at least 2 hours for every class hour, for a minimum of 5 hours a week per class. However, HIST 300 is an exceptionally labor-intensive course that will require extra time. Students should take that into consideration in choosing their other courses and setting their work schedules.

Final grades will be based on completion of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>% Final Grade</th>
<th>Date Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion participation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework and in-class exercises</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 of 6 writing assignments marked with a ⭐</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Multiple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final project proposal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>March 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final project rough draft</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>April 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer review</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>April 28 - May 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral presentation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>April 28 and May 3 &amp; 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revised final project</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>May 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students will have readings or other materials to prepare for every class session. There will be a series of 6 assignments for which everyone must do the readings and find various sources, but you only have to submit essays for 3 of these. These 6 assignments, from which you can choose to write an essay, are marked with a ⭐. All other homework assignments are required of every student.
THOUGHTS ON PARTICIPATION

How to participate in the life of our class:

• Ask/answer a question or make a comment in class, orally or in the chat.
  ◦ Oral participation is preferable to the chat, because students need to practice this valuable skill. However, some students may not have an audio connection that facilitates oral participation. Also, I would rather have shy students participate via the chat feature than not at all. But I urge everyone to push themselves to get comfortable speaking in front of others and to become more effective with the Zoom medium.

• Meet with me in office hours or email me to discuss course material.

• Post and/or comment thoughtfully on threads that I or other students create on the course discussion board.

What is productive participation?

• Use your words. Discussion board posts provide a great opportunity to practice rendering complete thoughts in writing.

• Be informed. Spend time with the course readings.

• Make connections between lectures & readings and/or between our course materials & what you have learned or observed elsewhere.

• Support your ideas with evidence. Be concise but specific. Explain unfamiliar terms. Quote or cite your sources (but try to put ideas into your own words).

• Stay on topic. If you’re going to share, you should have a relevant point to make about course topics or materials. If you’re responding to a question, you should answer the question being asked.

• Practice being thorough but succinct. (“Brevity is the soul of wit!”)

• Innovate, don’t replicate. This is especially relevant for the discussion board. Don’t just say, “I agree with so-and-so.” Offer your own opinion in your own words, even if it challenges what someone else says or writes. We want to hear what you think!

A NOTE ON GRADES

Grades represent an assessment of your work, not a reward, sanction, or evaluation of you as a person. A’s are for excellent work; B’s are for accomplished work; C’s are for average work; D’s are for below average work; and F’s are for work that suggests a lack of comprehension or care. Any distribution of final grades is possible; there will be no “curve” in this class.

Course grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>97-100</th>
<th>87-89</th>
<th>77-79</th>
<th>60-69</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94-96</td>
<td>84-86</td>
<td>74-76</td>
<td>&lt;60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-93</td>
<td>80-83</td>
<td>70-73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS & LEARNING OUTCOMES**

HIST 300 meets criteria for several University requirements.

**Synthesis Requirement**

This course meets the *Synthesis requirement* of the University general education program, known as the "Mason Core." Synthesis courses provide students with the opportunity to synthesize the knowledge, skills and values gained from the general education curriculum. Synthesis courses strive to expand students’ ability to master new content, think critically, and develop life-long learning skills across the disciplines.

Students will learn to:

- Communicate effectively in both oral and written forms, applying appropriate rhetorical standards (e.g., audience adaptation, language, argument, organization, evidence, etc.).
- Connect issues in a given field to wider intellectual, community, or societal concerns using perspectives from two or more disciplines.
- Apply critical thinking skills to evaluate the quality, credibility, and limitations of an argument using appropriate evidence or resources.

**Writing Intensive Course**

As part of the university’s commitment to student writers in all undergraduate programs, HIST 300 has been designated as fulfilling the “writing intensive” (WI) requirement. While other courses in the major may require written projects, teachers of the designated WI courses will devote class time to instruction on how to complete assignments successfully, assign and grade a minimum of 3500 words, provide constructive feedback on drafts, and allow revision of at least one graded assignment.

**Mason Impact**

At the end of this course, students will:

1. Understand how knowledge is generated and communicated, and how it can be used to address questions or problems in disciplines and in society.
2. Be able to identify and negotiate multiple perspectives on a subject, work collaboratively within and across multiple contexts, and engage ethically with their subject and with others.
3. Use inquiry skills to articulate a question; engage in an inquiry process; and situate the concepts, practices, or results within a broader context.
   - Students will be able to ask increasingly complex questions about significant problems, debates, or challenges.
   - Students will be able to evaluate and choose inquiry methods that are appropriate to a project.
   - Students will be able to explain how a project has value to local, civic, professional, scholarly, or global contexts.
COURSE & UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Please read these course policies and make sure you understand them. If you have questions, ask! You are expected to know these policies and to plan your 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 welcome page for the duration of the semester. Please use your GMU account to write to me, and please check your GMU email regularly or forward your GMU email. Please preface the subject of your emails to me with “HIST 300.”

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. If you wouldn't do it in an in-person class, you probably shouldn't be doing it in our online class sessions. Please review "Online Etiquette & How-To's" 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. Accommodations 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.**

IT Policy
I would like you to be physically and intellectually 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 phone and put it away during 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 the course topics, our learning and improvement, and each other!

Late Assignments
Assignments will be accepted late, but a grade penalty may attach. Please notify me at your earliest convenience if your circumstances require an extension on an assignment.

Office Hours: after class & by appointment
I encourage you to meet with me online to discuss any facet of the course. I will remain in our course meeting room after class ends. If you cannot remain after class, or there are other students in the "room" and you want privacy, please reach out about setting up a private time to meet on Zoom.

Submitting Your Work
- Submit written work as Word documents (not PDFs) via Blackboard.
- Please save your files as follows:
  - **Your_Last_Name.HIST300.Name_of_Assignment.SP22.doc(x).**

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/](https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/).) Major Registrar deadlines may be found in the schedule below.

Zoom
Please visit “Online Learning Etiquette & How-To's” under “Our Zoom Classroom” in the left-hand menu of our Blackboard course page to learn more about my expectations.
USEFUL CAMPUS RESOURCES

Live links for these resources as well as others related to mental health and stress management may be found on Blackboard under “Supplemental Information.” There are additional resources related to stress management and intimate partner violence there as well.

Academic Advising for CHSS students: https://academicaffairs.chss.gmu.edu/undergraduate-students

Advising for History majors & minors. https://historyarthistory.gmu.edu/undergraduate/welcome

Career Services: For networking, mentors, and assistance applying for jobs. SUB 1 Room 3400, 703-993-2370, 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/updating-chosen-name-pronouns/

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

Disability Services: http://ods.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/masonaler/ for alerts related to emergencies and closings.

Office of Academic Integrity: https://oai.gmu.edu/

Patriot Pantry: For free food assistance or to make donations. https://ssac.gmu.edu/patriot-pantry/ or email 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 Emergency Assistance Fund: For degree-seeking students in acute financial distress who are at risk of dropping out. NOTE: The application process takes a while, 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://academicaffairs.chss.gmu.edu/ugradpolicies

Writing Center: Multiple locations, 703-993-1200, http://writingcenter.gmu.edu
**Biweekly Topics and Reading Assignments**

- *This schedule is subject to change at my discretion. If you’re unsure where we are, just ask!*
- Assignment details & upload portals are in Blackboard >> Biweekly Class Sessions & Assessment Overview.
- There are 6 homework assignments marked with a ★ that involve writing an essay. You are required to research all 6, but you are only required to submit the essays for 3 of them. I recommend you space them out.

**HIST 300 Schedule Part I**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WK</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC(S)</th>
<th>PREPARATION FOR CLASS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. | Jan. 25 | • Introductions & Expectations  
      • Thinking Historically | • Blackboard course site  
      • Discussion board introduction |
|    | Jan. 27 | • Rumors, Myths, & Memes  
      • Historical Time Travel | • Readings on Memes  
      • Homework: Historicizing the Pandemic |
|    | Jan. 31: Last day to add. | | |
| 2. | Feb. 1 | The Devil Is in the (Historical) Details | Homework: Kamala Harris and the Evolution of Civil Rights in American History |
|    | Feb. 3 | History and/or Information in the 21st Century | Readings:  
      • Reading for Historical Research  
      • The History of Information |
|    | Feb. 7: Last day to drop with 100% tuition refund. | | |
| 3. | Feb. 8 | Markers of Quality Scholarship | Homework: Black “Confederates” in the Civil War |
|    | Feb. 10 | How to Use the Library | • Readings: Handouts on library research  
      • Homework: Library exercise |
|    | Feb. 14: Last day to drop with 50% tuition refund. | | |
| 4. | Feb. 15 | Assembling Quality Sources | Homework: Robert E. Lee, Slaverholder (?) ★ |
|    | Feb. 17 | How to Be an Ethical Historian | Homework: Readings on historians behaving badly |
|    | Feb. 15: Unrestricted withdrawal period begins (0% tuition refund). | | |
| 5. | Feb. 22 | Assembling Quality Sources | Homework: Sex, Gender, and Consent in 20th-Century America ★ |
|    | Feb. 24 | How to Analyze Secondary Sources | Work on your next module. |
|    | Mar. 1: Unrestricted withdrawal period ends (0% tuition refund). | | |
|    | Mar. 2: Restricted withdrawal period begins (0% tuition refund). | | |
| 7. | Mar. 3 | How to Analyze Primary Sources | • Start developing a final project topic.  
      • Work on your next module. |
|    | Mar. 8 | Fact-checking Historical Myths | Homework: Jane Fonda, Traitor (?) ★ |
|    | Mar. 10 | What makes a research topic worth pursuing? | Research proposal due. |
|    | Mar. 14-18: Spring Break: No Class! | | |
# HIST 300 Schedule Part II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WK</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>READING/PREPARATION FOR CLASS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|    | Mar. 24 & 25 | Discuss your research projects with me. | Project status reports in a small-group setting.  
• Sign-up sheet will be online. |
|     | Mar. 31 | How to Produce a Rough Draft | • Reading: “How to Write an Outline”  
• Work on Tuesday’s homework and/or your final project. |
|     | Apr. 7 | Research/Writing Day | Work on your rough drafts. |
|    |     | **April 11: Selective withdrawal period ends (0% tuition refund).** | |
| 12. | Apr. 12 | Research/Writing Day | Rough drafts due by 10PM. |
|     | Apr. 14 | How to Revise & Edit Your Work (or Someone Else’s) | Reading: “How to Revise & Proofread Your Work” |
|     | Apr. 19 | How to Write Introductions & Conclusions | Keep working on your final projects. |
|     | Apr. 21 | Effective Oral Communication for Historians | Keep working on your final projects.  
• PowerPoint  
• Oral Presentations  
• Participating Q&A |
| 13. | Apr. 26 | How to Frame Original Research Questions & Topics | Keep working on your final projects. |
|     | Apr. 28 | Oral Presentations of Final Projects | • Peer evaluation assignment  
• Keep working on your final projects. |
| 14. | May 3 |                  | |
|     | May 5 |                  | |
| 15. | May 13 | Final projects due by 10PM! | |

*Have a wonderful summer!*