

## **Research Seminar: Policy and Technology**

HIST 797, section 1. George Mason University. Spring 2022  
Thursdays 7:20–10:00 p.m. Innovation 330.

Professor Zachary M. Schrag

Syllabus revised January 27, 2022.

Course Blackboard site: <http://mymason.gmu.edu>.

General advice: <http://historyprofessor.org>

Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide: <https://bit.ly/3jLsI6R>

E-mail: [zschrags@gmu.edu](mailto:zschrags@gmu.edu) (please include “797” in subject header).

Tel. 703-594-1844.

Office Hours: Thursdays, 1-3, and by appointment. Please sign up for a slot at <https://zschrags.as.me/>. For weeks when we have individual consultations for this course, please choose a time other than Thursday afternoons.

### *Course description*

This research seminar focuses on histories of the development of technology, policy, or both. We will tell stories of how people identified problems, debated possible solutions, and effected change for the better or worse. The seminar is designed to give students a great deal of leeway to choose topics about which they care, provided they can locate appropriate primary sources. Students are encouraged to contact the professor to discuss possible topics.

### *Goals*

The chief goal of this class is simple: to give students experience writing original scholarly history using primary sources. While not the only task of the historian, this is the basic task, practiced since the time of Thucydides. The final product of the course is a paper of the length typically published by a scholarly journal. Thus, by the end of the course, students should understand what it takes to produce a scholarly article, and some may even wish to revise theirs for publication.

Other goals are reading secondary scholarship critically, supporting peers in their work, and learning about the history of policy and technology.

## Materials

### Readings

- Zachary M. Schrag, *Princeton Guide to Historical Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021). To offset any royalties I will earn from assigning this book to my own students, I have made a donation to the University Life Student Emergency Assistance Fund.
- *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th ed. (online). <http://goo.gl/sNWiKW> . All assignments should use Chicago notes-and-bibliography format.
- Other readings, listed on the schedule, are available through university-owned databases and can be accessed through a search at [library.gmu.edu](http://library.gmu.edu).

### Software (recommended)

- Zotero. Available for Mac, Windows, and Linux. Free. <https://www.zotero.org/>. Tutorials online at <https://library.gmu.edu/tutorials/student-tutorials> . Please note that while Zotero can help you craft Chicago-style footnotes, it often generates notes with extraneous or erroneous information. Cleaning this up is your responsibility.
- Scrivener. Available for MacOS, Windows, and iOS. Approximately \$42 for educational license. <https://www.literatureandlatte.com/scrivener/overview> . Please note that Scrivener can compile files to the required .docx format. You may want to post .scriv files as well, but if so, please post the .docx files too.
- Backup software. I expect you to plan your work so that the sudden loss of a file, device, or computer will not set you back more than a day, ideally less than that. The best way to achieve this is to use an online backup system so that the malfunction or loss of the computer you usually use will not take your work with it. Mason students have access to 1TB cloud storage via OneDrive: <https://its.gmu.edu/service/office-365-onedrive/>

## **Organization**

### *Online Components*

You may be asked to bring some paper copies of assignments for class discussions, but all assignments should be posted on Blackboard, <http://mymason.gmu.edu>. You will also receive comments on Blackboard. Please check Blackboard at least once per week to see if you have received comments.

### *Format*

Please save your assignments as .docx files and post them as attachments to Bb.

Do not use the Blackboard comments field, since I do not see the contents of this field if I batch-download student assignments.

I don't care about margins and fonts, but all submissions should have your last name in the file name, your name and the date on the submission, and page numbers. Using Word's heading styles (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.) often helps with organization.

The final draft should conform to *The Chicago Manual of Style* notes-and-bibliography system, and preliminary assignments and drafts should do so as much as practicable. All quotations should be clearly distinguished from your own words. Footnote individual sentences, rather than combining all citations in a paragraph.

### *Small Groups*

In early March or so, I will assign you to groups of 3-5 students based on your chosen topics for individual papers. You will spend two class sessions discussing the work of your group, and you will act as a panel for the presentations. Two or three small groups will constitute Group A and the remainder Group B for purposes of deadlines (see the schedule).

### *Individual meetings*

Class will not meet every week. On weeks the class does not convene, either half the class or every student is expected to meet with me by Zoom, either during the regular seminar time or during another convenient time. Please use the time saved from seminar meetings to work on your papers.

I am happy to meet individually during other weeks of the class as well. Please sign up for a slot at <https://zschragschrag.as.me/>. That keeps me from double booking. If you cannot meet on the dates listed, please let me know which dates would work.

## Assignments

The success of this seminar depends on students' critical reading of assigned texts and each other's work. Students are expected to come to class ready to talk about these materials and to seek peer comments on their own work.

Throughout the semester, you are asked to submit short portions of your work on Blackboard. These will not be graded individually, but I will check to make sure they are submitted promptly and thoroughly. In the final two weeks of class, you will write a critique of one of your classmate's drafts and present the paper and your critique to the class.

The purpose of this research seminar is to give students experience in writing article-length works of original scholarship, informed by secondary sources but based on primary sources. Most of your footnotes, especially in the body of the paper, should reference primary sources. The articles in the assigned readings offer good models for these papers.

The final paper should be an original work of scholarship, based on analysis of primary sources, running between 7,500 and 10,000 words, exclusive of notes and bibliography. The paper must present:

- A clear research question informed by secondary scholarship
- An interpretive thesis that answers the question
- Analysis of primary sources that supports the thesis

The paper must be organized into well-defined thematic or chronological sections, with appropriate headings for each section. The paper itself should have a title that reflects its content and argument, in the style of an academic journal article. The paper should conform to the notes-and-bibliography system of *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

All papers should include a bibliography. When appropriate, this should be divided into sections on primary and secondary sources, though this division does not make sense for all topics.

## Evaluation

Assuming good citizenship, regular attendance, and prompt completion of preliminary assignments, the grade for the course will be based entirely on your final paper. While the preliminary assignments are required, they will not be graded unless they are seriously late or deficient. In this case, they will count for up to 30 percent of your course grade. I may issue grades for some preliminary assignments, but these will be advisory only and will not count toward your final grade.

A: Original findings about a topic of significance, based on primarily on research in primary sources, presented in a form comparable to a scholarly journal article. Demonstrated correction, complication, or addition to existing scholarship on the general subject.

A-. An original research question, an explanation of how that question engages with previous scholarship, an interpretive thesis, and solid primary research to support the thesis. Clear organization and writing. Citation conforms to *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

B+. Excellent research without a clear thesis, or a clear argument insufficiently supported by research, or good research and argument insufficiently connected to previous scholarship. Goes beyond existing scholarship. May have some defects of style or citation.

B. Significant research effort and accuracy, but no interpretive argument. Or a clear interpretation based on secondary sources but lacking engagement with and critical reading of primary sources. Or engages previous scholarship only to confirm it; does not advance our understanding.

B- or below: Lacks deep primary research, or does not meet the standards expected of graduate work.

## Schedule

The final draft is due on Thursday, May 12. 10:15 p.m. For weeks when we do not meet as a class, please post your assignment 24 hours before our individual meeting. All other assignments are due on Blackboard at 10 a.m. on the Thursday listed.

*Introduction. Due by 10 a.m., January 20. Earlier is better.*

- Read Princeton Guide, Part I: Introduction and Part II: Questions
- Read American Historical Association, “Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct,” <https://bit.ly/34Zzihq>
- Identify the scholarly history journal that most frequently publishes articles about your interests, and start reading some. Look for the kinds of questions scholars ask, and the sources they use to answer those questions.
- Complete the research résumé at <https://forms.gle/jynhDLoMukcfGZ8Y6>

Combine the following in a single document and post to Bb as an attachment.

- A description of your general research interests and how you came to them, whether through coursework, life experience, or other origins.
- Ideas for one or more research topics for this semester. Explain how much you know about each.
- A preliminary bibliography of secondary sources.
- The title of one or more historical journals that might publish your work.

To identify journals and specific articles, the best databases are America: History and Life (for North American topics) or Historical Abstracts (for other regions), both via [library.gmu.edu](http://library.gmu.edu). JSTOR advanced search can also help. Be sure to limit your search to history journals.

Spend some time entering keyword and subject queries on topics that interest you, and see which journal titles show up most often, or which publish the articles that most appeal to you.

Also take a look at scholarly books and articles that you’ve read for previous seminars or in other contexts. Read the footnotes, and see which journals they most frequently cite. If you have favorite historians, you could also use America: History and Life and Historical Abstracts to see where they have published articles.

One method—though not the only one—to find historical journals is consult the list of affiliates of the American Historical Association (<https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/affiliated-societies>). Not all top journals are published by these societies, not all societies publish journals, and some society names differ quite a bit from the name and scope of the journals they publish. (Most notably, the Forest History Society publishes *Environmental History*, which is not limited to forest history.) However, a great many of these societies do publish journals related to their areas of interest. The key point is to identify journals that cover scholarly history, not literary studies, political science, or other fields in the humanities and social sciences.

### *1. January 27. Asking questions*

Read

- Lindsey Bestebreurtje, “Beyond the Plantation: Freedmen, Social Experimentation, and African American Community Development in Freedman’s Village, 1863–1900,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 126, no. 3 (2018): 334–65.
- Brandan P. Buck, “‘The Mortar Between the Bricks’: Willis Conover and Global Jazz,” *Jazz Perspectives* 10, no. 2–3 (September 2017): 185–206, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17494060.2017.1408479>.
- Stephen Macekura, “‘For Fear of Persecution’: Displaced Salvadorans and U.S. Refugee Policy in the 1980s,” *Journal of Policy History* 23, no. 3 (2011): 357–80.
- One recent, scholarly journal article of your choosing that will help you in your research. This should be a recent work of history, not a primary source or an article from another discipline. And it should be a work of original scholarship, based on primary sources, not a historiographical essay.

Write: an analysis of each article (including the one you select) in the following format. For most tasks, bullet points may work better than complete paragraphs.

For each article,

- Identify the actors in the story. Whose story does the historian tell? How are they defined: as individuals, as members in a demographic or occupational group, by their beliefs? List three to four individuals or groups at most; we are looking for the main actors. Who isn’t in the story, or gets only a minor role?
- Identify the geographical and chronological scope of the essay. When is the main action? How much prologue and epilogue does the scholar include?
- Write out the thesis in the thesis-statement-template format: Why did [person/persons] [do /say/write something surprising]? [Plausible explanation], but in fact [better or more complete explanation]. Hints: if you can’t find an explicit why question, you might look for claims of causality, such as the word “because.” And if you can’t identify the thesis in the introduction, look in the conclusion as well.
- Explain which dialectic is used from Princeton Guide section on dialectics.

Combine these into a single document and post to Bb as an attachment.

## 2. February 3. Finding sources

Read

- Princeton Guide, Part III. Sources
- Arwen Palmer Mohun, “Laundrymen Construct Their World: Gender and the Transformation of a Domestic Task to an Industrial Process,” *Technology and Culture* 38, no. 1 (1997): 97–120, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3106785>.
- Evan Faulkenbury, “‘An Uncommon Meeting of Minds’: The Council for United Civil Rights Leadership in the Black Freedom Struggle, 1963–1967,” *Journal of African American History* 104, no. 3 (2019): 392–414, <https://doi.org/10.1086/704118>.
- A second recent, scholarly journal article of your choosing that will help you in your research. This should be a recent work of history, not a primary source or an article from another discipline. And it should be a work of original scholarship, based on primary sources, not a historiographical essay.

For each article (including the one you select),

- Identify the actors in the story.
- Identify the main sets of sources used. Which sources tell the story of each set of actors?
- Write out the thesis in the thesis-statement-template format: Why did [person/persons] [do /say/write something surprising]? [Plausible explanation], but in fact [better or more complete explanation].
- Explain which dialectic is used from Princeton Guide section on dialectics

Combine these into a single document and post to Bb as an attachment.

### 3. February 10. Stating claims

Read

- Princeton Guide, Part IV. Projects
- A third recent, scholarly journal article of your choosing that will help you in your research. This should be a recent work of history, not a primary source or an article from another discipline. And it should be a work of original scholarship, based on primary sources, not a historiographical essay.

Read the following lightly, focusing on matters of format, not substance.

- Brief of Amici Curiae Historians in Support of Appellees, *Gill v. Whitford*, 585 US \_\_ (2018), [https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legal-work/Gill\\_AmicusBrief\\_Historians\\_InSupportofAppellees.pdf](https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legal-work/Gill_AmicusBrief_Historians_InSupportofAppellees.pdf)
- Christopher W. Wells, "The Road to the Model T," *Technology & Culture* 48, no. 3 (July 2007): 497–523.
- James Keith Colgrove, "Between Persuasion and Compulsion: Smallpox Control in Brooklyn and New York, 1894-1902," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 78, no. 2 (2004): 349–78, doi:10.1353/bhm.2004.0062.
- Ann K. Ziker, "Segregationists Confront American Empire: The Conservative White South and the Question of Hawaiian Statehood, 1947-1959." *Pacific Historical Review* 76, no. 3 (August 2007): 439–65.

Write

Reverse-outline the article of your choosing, the Colgrove, and the Ziker. Follow the model in Princeton Guide, 306-307. Be sure to include the thesis statement and to state the claims, not merely the topics, of each section. 1-2 pages each outline.

Combine these three outlines into a single document and post to Bb as an attachment.

### 4. Week of February 14. Individual consultations. Class does not meet as a group.

- Schedule a Zoom appointment.
- Prior to the appointment, complete as much of next week's research proposal assignment as you can and post to Blackboard.

### 5. February 24. Proposing research. We are back in class.

Post a research proposal. This will include:

- A working title.



- One-paragraph description of the event you will study.
- The chronological scope of your story, and a discussion of whether you will present it as a narrative or a thematic description.
- A cast of characters, whether individuals, groups, or institutions. This needs to be fairly specific. “Women,” “Americans,” or “the general public” won’t work.
- One or more sets or source pools of primary sources. For example, an official report with eyewitness testimony could be a set, or an archival collection, or coverage in one or more periodicals. Explain how the primary sources will present the views of the people you are studying.
- At least five secondary sources about your topic.

### *6. March 3. Tracing debates*

Begin primary research

If you have not done so already, begin intensive collection and note-taking of the primary sources you identified in your research proposal.

Post: Historiographical essay

Write a 500-1000 word discussion of the major questions debated by scholars and the contribution your study can make. See Buck, “The Mortar Between the Bricks,” 186-190 as a model. Post to Bb as an attachment.

Prepare: oral presentations

Please prepare to speak for 5-7 minutes about your topic. Plan to address the existing scholarship, your research question, your main characters, and the primary sources you will use. See AHA Guide to Lightning Rounds <https://www.historians.org/annual-meeting/resources-and-guides/aha-guide-to-lightning-rounds>

### *7. March 10. Primary source workshop*

- Read: Princeton Guide, Part V: Stories
- Read: One or more installments from Organization of American Historians, “Teaching the JAH,” <https://jah.oah.org/teaching-the-jah/>.
- Read: Handout, “How to Share a Primary Source,” on Blackboard.
- Select three primary sources from your research that puzzle you. Format them in 1-2 page handouts, post these to Blackboard as a single document, both to the Assignments page and to your small group’s discussion board. The primary sources in the “Teaching the JAH” installments can serve as models.
- In a separate document, write 1-2 paragraphs on each source, explaining whose story it tells, and how it answers or alters the research questions in your proposal. Post this on Bb as well.

*March 17. Spring Break. No class.*

### *8. March 24. Thesis and outline*

**Post comments on each of your small group member’s primary sources on the discussion board. Please post about a paragraph per source, commenting on both your classmate’s interpretation and the source itself.**

### **Prepare a working outline of your paper.**

The outline should feature:

- Thesis in template form. Why did [person/persons] [do /say/write something surprising]? [Plausible explanation], but in fact [better or more complete explanation]. If you have two alternative explanations but don't yet know which one you find better or more complete, that's fine at this stage.
- 3-5 main sections, with thesis for each. Each section will represent about 12-15 paragraphs. If you can't yet form claims for your sections, then pose questions you hope each section will answer.
- The outline should run about 1.5 to 2 pages total.

See Princeton Guide pp. 306-307 for a model.

### **Prepare a working timeline of the events you will cover.**

Write a timeline featuring the key dates you have so far identified, totalling one-half to two pages.

Post the outline and the timeline both to the Assignments page and to your small group's discussion board.

*9. Week of March 28. Individual consultations. Class does not meet as a group*

**Post comments on each of your small group member's outlines on the discussion board. Please post about a paragraph on each of the following three topics:**

1. Thesis statement. Has the author identified each element of the thesis statement template? Do both alternative explanations seem plausible at first glance, so that showing one to be superior to the other is a worthy project?
2. Overall organization. Has the author divided the project into logical sections by time or theme? Is the amount of space for each topic appropriate, or do some topics need more attention, and some less?
3. One or more individual sections that may require special care.

Individual meetings, Group A students.

All students should post a body section of your paper, based on primary sources, at least 12 paragraphs. Provide a revised outline and timeline, if necessary.

*10. Week of April 4. Individual consultations. Class does not meet as a group*

Individual meetings, Group B students.

All students should post a second body section of your paper, based on primary sources, at least 12 paragraphs. Provide a revised outline and timeline, if necessary.

*11. Week of April 11. Individual consultations. Class does not meet as a group*

Individual meetings, Group A students.

All students should post a third body section of your paper, based on primary sources, at least 12 paragraphs. Provide a revised outline and timeline, if necessary.

*12. Week of April 18. Individual consultations. Class does not meet as a group*

Individual meetings, Group B students.

Group A students should post a complete first draft of their papers on Blackboard both to the Assignments page and to your small group's discussion board.

*13. April 28. Presentations. We are back in class*

Read: How to Discuss a Paper, on Blackboard

Discuss Group A papers. Group B papers due.

Group A critiques due. Group A students should write and post critiques of the drafts assigned to them, both to the Assignments page and to your small group's discussion board.

Group B students should post a complete first draft of their papers both to the Assignments page and to your small group's discussion board.

*14. May 5. Presentations. We are back in class.*

Discuss Group B papers

Group B critiques due. Group B students should write and post critiques of the drafts assigned to them, both to the Assignments page and to your small group's discussion board.

*May 12. 10:15 p.m.*

Final papers due on Bb. Include a revision memo explaining the major changes since your previous draft. See my response on "Interviewing Everyman" (on Blackboard) as a model.

Students are encouraged but not required to deposit electronic copies of their final papers with the library. The form for submitting an electronic copy is online at [https://library.gmu.edu/mars\\_submission](https://library.gmu.edu/mars_submission). Please request that it be included in the collection, History 797: MA Graduate Student Research Seminar

## Administrative information

The **University Catalog**, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

Please visit “Boilerplate for George Mason University courses,” <http://historyprofessor.org/miscellaneous/boilerplate/>, for live links and updated information.

Students must use their **Mason email accounts** to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://mail.gmu.edu> for more information.

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 published in the Schedule of Classes available from the Registrar's Website [registrar.gmu.edu](http://registrar.gmu.edu).) After the last day to drop a class, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons. See the Schedule of Classes for selective withdrawal procedures.

If the campus closes due to **inclement weather**, I plan to hold class by Zoom at the regular time.

### *Student support*

- University Libraries “Ask a Librarian” <http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>
- Disability Services (DS). <http://ds.gmu.edu>. All academic accommodations must be arranged through DS.
- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): 703-993-2380; <http://caps.gmu.edu>

### *Citation and collaboration*

All assignments are governed by the George Mason University **honor code**, which requires students to “pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.” See <https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/> for more information.

Except as instructed, you are expected to work independently and to acknowledge all sources, including assigned texts and materials found online. This course is designed to encourage the kind of collaboration that makes scholarship so much fun. While you are responsible for your own essays, you will get a great deal of help from each other identifying and interpreting primary and secondary sources, and revising your work. Please credit this help as appropriate. You may not submit work based whole or in part on work you have done for credit in **other courses** without written permission of the instructor. *The Chicago Manual of Style* (online via the library) should answer most questions about **citation**, but ask me if you need clarification. In general, any sentence in your work that can be traced to a single sentence in someone else’s work should bear a footnote. Any collaboration, such as consultation with the Writing Center, should also be acknowledged. Violations of academic integrity will be reported to the administration and may result in grade penalties, including failure of the course. **Essays must use Chicago Manual of Style notes and bibliography citation.** Nonstandard citation will not receive full credit.