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HSTA 594.02: Graduate Research Seminar

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HSTA 594: Graduate Research Seminar

Professor Anya Jabour

Class Hours: Wednesdays, 3-5:50 p.m.

Classroom: LA 250

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description:

This research seminar challenges graduate students to conduct original research in primary source material and to translate that research into a substantial essay (30-35 pages) of publishable quality. Students will develop a research project, construct a research proposal, engage in substantial research and reading, and produce multiple drafts of an original research essay. Students also will engage in peer review and professional development, including participating in a professional conference. There is no topical focus; students will develop research topics in consultation with the instructor and their advisor(s).

Goals and Outcomes:

This course hones skills fundamental to the historical discipline: conducting original research in primary sources; making an argument based on analysis of primary sources; engaging with extant scholarship; crafting effective research proposals; presenting research to colleagues; providing and responding to constructive criticism/peer review; and writing clearly and convincingly. Ideally, students will not only refine these skills but also will advance the master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, either by writing a draft chapter or by producing an overview of the thesis or dissertation, and/or publishing an article in a peer-reviewed publication. Finally, students will gain familiarity with the historical profession's conventions and expectations including conference participation and peer-reviewed publication.

Preparation:

This course is designed for graduate students in the History Department's M.A. and Ph.D. programs. Other students may be admitted by the consent of the instructor. All students should have experience working with primary sources and crafting original historical scholarship. If you have questions about your level of preparation, please speak with the instructor immediately.

General Expectations:

Original research and compelling writing are the most important tasks of professional historians. This course should be your top priority this semester. All written assignments should be of professional quality, i.e., typed or word-processed, produced in the proper format, and carefully proofread. See Standard Writing Guidelines and consult style guides such as the *Chicago Manual of Style*, Kate Turabian's style manual, Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*, and/or Lynn Truss's *Eats, Shoots, and Leaves*. You also should prepare carefully for discussions and oral presentations by making notes of the salient points and having your examples and citations ready to share with your colleagues. I strongly encourage you to outline your responses to discussion prompts, mark passages to share, and prepare scripts for oral presentations.

In the historical profession, as elsewhere, the devil is in the details. Be prepared to offer specific examples, buttressed with examples, quotations, and citations, in class discussions as well as in your papers. This means that you must bring marked-up hard copy of reading assignments and/or detailed notes (either in hard copy or on a fully-charged device) to class with you. Both to facilitate class discussion and to prevent entirely predictable "emergencies" with written assignments, you should make a habit of backing up your work in multiple ways—send yourself e-mail attachments, use Dropbox or Google Drive, make hard copies, etc. Technological glitches are not acceptable excuses. Always have a backup plan.

Assessment:

Your performance in this course will be based upon the quality of your participation in oral presentations, class discussions, and peer review as well as the depth of research, clarity of writing, quality of analysis, and overall significance (both historical and historiographical) of your research paper. Timely attendance at all class meetings and timely submission of all assignments is a must. Missing class periods and/or individual meetings, arriving late, and/or leaving early will negatively affect your grade. You must turn in all written assignments to pass this class.

Basic Course Requirements:

1. Attendance & Participation
2. Peer Review
3. Oral Presentations
4. Written Assignments
5. Conference Participation
6. Rough Drafts and Final Paper

Course Readings and Research Costs:

In general, the readings for this course will be your own individual reading of the secondary literature on your topic. In addition, you will read sample papers, your peers' writing, and other readings posted on Moodle. As there are no assigned books for this class, I also expect you to acquire and read style guides (see suggestions above) as well as important books in your field. You may also incur costs related to historical research, such as fees for photocopying, scanning, microfilming, and postage, and to presenting your work at a professional conference.

You will find many useful resources and links on the HSTA 471 [LibGuide](#). Although this guide was designed for a different class, it provides information on the basics of historical research as well as links to many useful digitized sources containing information on a wide variety of topics.

Academic Honesty:

It should go without saying that all the work you do in this course should be your own. Plagiarism, cheating, or academic misconduct will result in a failing grade in the course. More severe penalties, including expulsion from the University, may apply. Ignorance is no excuse for plagiarism. If you have questions, please consult me before submitting an assignment. Note that while in this class, you may be doing work that is related to work for other classes and/or your thesis and/or dissertation, your research paper for this class should not substantially duplicate work done for other purposes. Please discuss what constitutes acceptable overlap with me in advance to avoid academic misconduct.

Standard Writing Guidelines

All written work should be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins, and in a standard font such as New Century Schoolbook, 12 point. Do not insert extra spaces between paragraphs or use title pages. Do include your name, the course information, and the assignment name on the first page of written work. You should provide page numbers on all assignments. Use quote marks—not italics—to indicate quotations. Write about the past in the past tense. You may use the present tense to refer to scholars or to works of art or literature. Avoid passive voice; the easiest way to do this is to construct sentences in S-V-O (Subject-Verb-Object, i.e., The student wrote the paper) format. Provide proper citations; you will find sample style guides and further information about citing sources on the LibGuide.

Course Schedule

The course schedule and assignments outlined below may be modified to meet the group's needs. In addition, further guidelines for assignments will be posted on Moodle. You are

responsible for checking Moodle regularly for any updates. *Unless otherwise noted, all written assignments are due via Moodle by 5 p.m. the Monday before the relevant class meeting.* The course schedule includes reminders about GradCon and Phi Alpha Theta dates. Your abstracts and papers for these conferences must be submitted to the conference organizers according to the conference guidelines as well as via Moodle for class purposes.

January 16: Designing a Research Agenda

Introductions; Pros and Cons of Research Questions; Methodology; Note-Taking Techniques

Reading: Read at least one sample paper at [library guides](#) and be prepared to discuss the paper's sources/methodology; contribution/historiography; argument; organization; evidence; introduction, etc. over the next few weeks. Some of these papers were written by undergraduate students, others by graduate students, but all were completed (or in the case of the published article, drafted and later revised) in the course of a single semester, so they will give you an idea of what is possible. For today, be prepared to answer these questions: *What type(s) of source material—newspapers, organizational records, oral histories, individual papers, family manuscript collections, local records, government documents, etc.—did the sample paper you read utilize? What does this suggest to you about the possibilities for your own research?*

In addition, review the information provided in this LibGuide (on home page and under the tabs) about conducting research in primary sources, using digitized sources, locating secondary sources, using archives & special collections, finding government documents, and using historic newspapers. *Be prepared to discuss which of these types of resources may be useful for your proposed research project.* By next week, you should have actually consulted potentially useful items on the LibGuide (and elsewhere) and be prepared to report on your findings.

Use the library databases to locate this article: Sherry J. Katz, "Researching Around Our Subjects': Excavating Radical Women." Read the article carefully and come to class prepared to answer this question: *What insights does this article offer about how to go about selecting a topic and finding sources (or should it be the other way around)?*

Finally, read your classmates' proposals (which I will post on Moodle upon receipt) and be prepared to discuss them in class. Questions you should consider are: *What are the strengths of this proposal? What sources does the author intend to use? What other sources might the author use? What types of bias or limitations characterize the sources, and what are your suggestions for the author to offset or mitigate these issues? What research questions might the author pose, given the topic and the sources?*

Due: Preliminary Research Proposals Due Friday, January 11

The Preliminary Research Proposal should define your intended topic (including geographical region and time period) and discuss your potential primary sources (including location and accessibility). Be as specific as possible in listing your sources and in indicating their usefulness

and/or limitations and how they work together to provide a full picture of your subject. The point of the proposal is to demonstrate that you have selected a “researchable” topic, i.e., one for which sufficient primary sources exist and are available to you. You also should indicate how your proposed topic relates to your proposed M.A. thesis or Ph.D. dissertation.

To reiterate, your proposal should include:

- *Topic, including time period and geographical region
- *List of primary sources, including where they are and how you will get them
- *Discussion of primary sources
- *Explanation of connection to your thesis/dissertation

GradCon Abstracts Due January 18

January 23: [Using Manuscript and Digitized Sources; Organizing and Evaluating Evidence Meet in Archives & Special Collections from 3-4 p.m. today!](#)

Reading: Prior to the class meeting, review “Resources for Finding Archival and Other Primary Sources,” (Word document on the left-hand column of the 471 LibGuide) AND evaluate the usefulness of several digitally available resources—newspapers, periodicals, government documents, etc. Review handout on note-taking strategies; research potentially useful note-taking/bibliography programs and apps. Read “In the Laboratory with Agassiz” and “Let’s Take Another Look at the Fish.” Be prepared to discuss: *What is “the fish” for your project? What are the previously unnoticed details that careful examination reveals?*

Oral Presentations: The Research Process (discuss your progress since last week; detail any additional types of sources you have located; describe your favorite website or source base; explain your note-taking strategies; identify next steps, keeping in mind that next week you will be presenting your initial findings and handing in your primary source bibliography and methodology statement)

January 29: [Framing an Argument/Answering Historical Questions](#)

Oral Presentations: Initial Research Findings

Due: Primary Source Bibliography and Methodology Statement

February 6: [Making a Contribution/Answering Historiographical Questions](#)

Oral Presentations: Historiography

Due: Annotated Secondary Source Bibliography and Historiography Statement

February 13: [Writing a Research Proposal](#)

Peer Review of Research Proposals

Due: Research Proposal

February 20: [Guiding the Reader/Getting Started](#)

Writing Introductions and Constructing Outlines

Peer Review of Conference Paper Proposals

Due: Conference Paper Proposals for Phi Alpha Theta

Phi Alpha Theta Paper Proposals Due February 22

GradCon February 22

February 27: Individual Meetings

Read: "Shitty First Drafts"

Due: Introductions and Outlines

March 6: Rethinking and Reorganizing

Peer Review of Draft #1

Due: Draft #1

March 13: Condensing Your Evidence and Refining Your Argument

Peer Review of Conference Papers

Due: Draft Conference Papers

March 20: Presenting Your Research

Peer Review of Oral Presentations

Oral Presentations: Conference Papers

Phi Alpha Theta Papers Due March 22

March 27: NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK!

April 3: Re-Writing and Revising

Peer Review of Draft #2

Due: Draft #2

April 10: Individual Meetings

Sign up for 30 minute slot

Due: Revision Plan

Phi Alpha Theta Conference, April 12-13

April 17: Proofreading and Polishing

Peer Review of Draft #3

Due: Draft #3

April 24: Individual Meetings

Sign up for 30 minute slot

Due: Proofreading Checklist

May 1: Finals Week

Due: Final Draft