

HIST 713:001: Historical Research Methods

Spring 2024

Meeting: Thursdays, 4:00 to 6:40 pm in Holton 341

Instructor: Thomas Haigh, Holton Hall 349. Office Hours by appointment. Thomas.haigh@gmail.com

Textbook: Nothing to purchase. All required readings will be made available via Canvas.

Description: Helps graduate students become savvy consumers and effective producers of historical research. The class begins with a look at changing understandings of who writes history and how, before surveying a range of historical narratives telling the stories of different kinds of protagonist, from individuals and ideas to diseases and machines. The middle part of the semester will be spent exploring the production of various kinds of historical writing, from book reviews to digital history projects. Then we turn to the selection and interpretation of historical sources, including digital resources, objects, and images as well as archival collections. Students will put these skills into action in a term project negotiated with the instructor to support their personal development as historians.

Format: This course is essentially a seminar, in that there are no lectures. Students will come to class having done the assigned reading and completed any preparatory assignments. Most of the class time will be spent discussing readings, or sharing things the students have found out or prepared for class.

Learning Goals: History 713 will prepare students to

- Analyze and interpret a variety of historical sources, including texts, images, and data.
- Read and use primary and secondary sources critically and effectively
- Understand history both as a body of knowledge and as an intellectual and social process.
- Use evidence and citations effectively to construct a larger argument.
- Critically read and produce different kinds of historical research products
- Craft historical narratives with different kinds of protagonist
- Plan and execute a historical research project

Assignment of Credit: You are expected to attend and participate fully in each class meeting, having read and analyzed the assigned materials. You will also produce several written assignments in which you apply the skills you are learning. These elements are weighted as follows:

- Four short written assignments submitted through the semester. 10% each (40% total)

- Major assignment for the class – due in exam week. 30%
- Discussion participation (includes preparatory assignments presented in class for some weeks). 30%

Short Written Assignments: The four short assignments will be:

- [An "autopsy" report on a scholarly historical work](#)
- [A publishable book review of a historical book of your choice](#)
- [An essay evaluating a primary source](#)
- [A report exploring several archival collections suitable for a specific research project.](#)

Major Assignment: Students are taking the course at different stages in their studies and with different kinds of research in mind. The assignment that makes sense for a Ph.D. student already planning a dissertation would be different from an M.A. student with no plans to write a thesis. Some students may already have gathered data and want to produce a draft journal article or chapter during the semester, while others may be at the stage where a literature review and archival research plan would be a more appropriate product. So each student will negotiate an assignment with me to best suit their needs. There is no common rubric, but make sure you agree both topic and format (i.e. what you will be producing) with me before getting too far into the project. Some possibilities:

- A draft research paper
- A draft thesis or dissertation proposal (in a short format suitable for fellowship applications)
- A literature review and plan of archival research for a new project
- A public or digital history project to present the results of original research
- A grant or fellowship proposal

Letter Grades Assignment: I will use the weightings given above to turn your performance in each area of the course into a numerical average. This will translate to your overall course grade as follows:

Grade	Lower bound	Upper bound
A	94.00%	N/A
A-	91.00%	93.99%
B+	88.00%	90.99%
B	85%	87.99%

B-	82%	84.99%
C+	79.00%	81.99%
C	76.00%	78.99%
C-	73.00%	75.99%
D+	70.00%	72.99%
D	67.00%	69.99%
D-	64.00%	66.99%
F	N/A	63.99%

Course Specific Policies

- **Attendance:** Attendance will be taken at each class meeting. Everyone is allowed to miss one discussion section. You will be penalized by 3% on your **overall course grade** for your second unexcused absence, and by another 3% for each additional unexcused absence after that. If the absence occurs for reasons outside your control, such as a medical or family emergency, please get in touch with me.
- **Late Work:** All work will be penalized by 5% for each day or part day after the deadline it is received. The maximum reduction will be to a score of 50%. Extensions require a good reason and must be arranged in advance.
- **Academic Misconduct:** This course is subject to the University's Academic Misconduct policy, which can be found on the web [here \(Links to an external site.\)](#). Please read it carefully. Any evidence of plagiarism on the assignments or cheating on the examinations will be punished with a grade of 'F' for the **entire course**. This includes handing in work for which you have received credit in another course (even if it is your work), handing in someone else's work or a portion of their work, cheating on examinations, or failing to acknowledge (cite) your sources. Directly quoted material not placed within quotation marks or indented is also plagiarism, even if you do include a citation.
- **Participation by Students with Disabilities:** If you need special accommodations in order to meet any of the requirements of this course, please contact me as soon as possible.

General UWM Course Policies

All standard UWM course policies apply. These are available at <http://uwm.edu/secu/wp-content/uploads/sites/122/2016/12/Syllabus-Links.pdf>. Do not be fooled by the "2016" in the URL -- this is the latest version (revised 2019 or later).

Week by Week

Note: readings may change and be arranged as the course progresses. Always refer to the current version of the syllabus, in Syllabus tab of the course Canvas site.

1. So, What Is History Anyway? (Jan 25)

- [H. Carr "The Historian and His Facts," ch. 1 of *What Is History?* \(Macmillan, 1961\).](#)
- ["Richard J. Evans. "Prologue: What is History? - Now" in *What is History Now?* Richard J. Evans \(Palgrave, 2002\):1-18.](#)
- [Alice Kessler Harris. "What is Gender History Now?" in *What is History Now?* Richard J. Evans \(Palgrave, 2002\):95-112.](#)
- ["Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt & Margaret Jacob. *Telling the Truth about History* \(Norton, 1994\). Ch. 4 only \("Competing Histories of America"\).](#)
- [Jake Silverstein. *The 1619 Project and the Long Battle Over US History*. New York Times \(November 9, 2021\).](#)

PART 1: Historical Protagonists

2. Histories of people and peoples (Feb 1)

- [Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher. *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812*. \(Knopf, 1990\). Intro & ch. 1 only.](#)
- [Blevins, Cameron. "Topic Modeling Martha Ballard's Diary," *Cameron Blevins* blog, \[Part 1\]\(#\) and \[Part 2\]\(#\).](#)
- [Smith, Sidonie & Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* \(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2nd 2010\). Ch. 9 \("A Tool Kit: Twenty-four Strategies for Reading Life Narratives"\) only.](#)
- [Baptist, Edward. *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*. New York: Basic Books, 2014. Intro & ch. 7 only.](#)

3. Histories of cultures and practices (Feb 8)

- [Darnton, Robert. *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*. \(Basic Books, 1984\). Chapter 2 \("Workers Revolt: The Great Cat Massacre of the Rue Saint-Severin"\) only.](#)
- [Faust, Drew Gilpin. *This Republic of Suffering*. \(Knopf, 2008\). Chapters 3 \("Burying"\) & 7 \("Accounting"\) only.](#)

- [Gilfoyle, Timothy J. *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920*. New York, NY: WW Norton, 1992. Chapters 1-5 only.](#)

(Feb 11 - [Book "Autopsy"](#) Short Assignment Due)

4. Histories of places, landscapes and diseases (Feb 15)

- [Cronon, William. *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* \(Hill & Wang, 1983\). Chs. 1, 7 & 8 only.](#)
- [White, Richard. *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River* \(Hill & Wang, 1995\). Ch. 1. only.](#) White doesn't have chapter-specific notes, but he did offer a [bibliographic essay](#) [Download bibliographic essay](#) instead.
- [Wailoo, Keith. *How Cancer Crossed the Color Line* \(Oxford University Press, 2011\). Introduction only.](#)

5. Histories of technologies, organizations and professions (Feb 22)

- [Monfort, Nick & Ian Bogost. *Racing the Beam: The Atari Video Computer System* \(MIT Press, 2009\). Chs. 1&2 only.](#)
- [Cowan, Ruth Schwartz. "How the Refrigerator Got Its Hum." In *the Social Shaping of Technology*, ed. Donald A. MacKenzie & Judy Wajcman \(Open University Press, 1985\).](#)
- [Friedman, Walter A. "John H. Paterson and the Sales Strategy of the National Cash Register Company, 1884 to 1922." *Business History Review* 72:4 \(Winter, 1998\): 552-582.](#)
- [Numbers, Ronald L. "The Fall and Rise of the American Medical Profession," in Judith Walzer Leavitt & Ronald L. Numbers \(eds.\) *Sickness & Health in America* \(University of Wisconsin Press, 1997\): 225-237.](#)

PART 2: Types of Historical Writing

6. Making a book review or review essay (Feb 29)

- Edwards, Paul N. "How to Read a Book". <http://pne.people.si.umich.edu/PDF/howtoread.pdf>.
- [Blackey, Robert. "Words to the Whys: Crafting Critical Book Reviews." *The History Teacher* 27:2 \(Feb 1994\): 159-166.](#)
- [A package of examples of reviews and review essays to read plus an exercise to prepare before class.](#)

(Mar 3 - [Book Review](#) Short Assignment Due)

7. Making a journal article or conference paper (Mar 7)

- [Haigh, Thomas & Mark Priestley. "Contextualizing Colossus: Codebreaking Technology and Institutional Capabilities" *Technology & Culture* 61:3 \(July, 2020\): 871-900.](#)
- Edwards, Paul N. "How to Give an Academic Talk." <http://pne.people.si.umich.edu/PDF/howtotalk.pdf>
- [A package of supporting materials to accompany "Contextualizing Colossus"](#)
- Preparation for class: Think about a piece of research you've carried out or would like to carry out. What kind of journal might you send this research to, and how would you frame its relevance to the journal's readers in the opening passage? Be prepared to make a short (5 minute) presentation to class with your thoughts.

8. Making a book (Mar 14)

- Kelsky, Karen. "How to Write a Book Proposal," *The Professor Is In* (July 2, 2015): <https://theprofessorisin.com/2015/07/02/how-to-write-a-book-proposal/>.
- A collection of materials related to my 2021 book *A New History of Modern Computing* with Paul Ceruzzi
 - [The proposal we sent to MIT Press](#)
 - [Comments from reviewers](#) on the draft manuscript, plus [our response to the reviews](#)
 - [Proof copy of the book](#) to compare with the proposal and promises we made (needed corrections and an index, but otherwise basically final)
 - [Haigh, Thomas. "Writing the Big Story," in William Aspray \(ed.\) *Writing Computer and Information History: Approaches, Reflections, and Connections*, Rowman & Littlefield, forthcoming 2024.](#)
- A collection of other book proposals from department faculty:
 - [Evans, Christine. Proposal to Yale University Press for "Between Truth and Time: a History of Soviet Central Television."](#)
 - [Evans, Christine & Lars Lungren. Proposal to MIT Press for "Space Bridges: Satellite Communications Networks, Global Media, and the Cold War."](#)
 - [Rothfels, Nigel. Proposal to Johns Hopkins University Press for "Elephant Trails: A History of Animals and Cultures."](#)
 - [Vang, Chia Youyee, Faith Nibbs & Ma Vang. Proposal to University of Minnesota Press for "Claiming Place" \(example of an edited volume\).](#)

- [Haigh, Thomas. Proposal to MIT Press for Artificial Intelligence: A Concise History.](#)

9. Writing a Thesis Proposal (Mar 28)

- Take a look at the resources at <https://www.ncfdd.org/>, particularly the [Dissertation Success Curriculum](#) and the [14 Day Writing Challenge](#). UWM has an institutional membership, so it costs nothing to sign up.
- [Schumway, Rebecca. Handout from proposal workshop for UWM history graduate students.](#)
- [Seligman, Amanda. Guidance for thesis and dissertation proposals, 2022.](#)
- Discuss samples of UWM thesis and dissertation proposals:
 - [Fels, Amy. MA Thesis proposal from 2019 re Oconto and the Wisconsin lumber industry.](#)
 - [Himsl, Jenna. MA thesis proposal from 2016, "Stitched Together: Kompaniya Singer, National Indifference, and Corporate Loyalty, 1914-1930"](#)
 - [Abbot, Catherine. PhD thesis proposal from 2020, "The Women of Jonestown, Waco, and Rajneeshpuram: New Religious Movements in the United States, Post-1945."](#)
 - [Langenfeld, Mark. Ph.D. proposal from 2019, "People from Everywhere: Metis Kinship, Identity and Mobility, 1600-1840."](#)

(Mar 31 - [Primary \(published\) source report](#) Due)

10. Making a popular history or online exhibition (Apr 4)

- [Maza, Sarah. *Thinking About History* \(University of Chicago Press, 2017\). Ch. 4 \("How History is Produced"\) only.](#)
- Danielle McGuire, Andrew Miller, & T. J. Stiles, "Writing History for a Popular Audience: A Round Table Discussion," *The American Historian*, 2016. <https://www.oah.org/tah/issues/2016/august/writing-history-for-a-popular-audience-a-round-table-discussion/>
- Haigh, Thomas. "Hey Google, What's a Moonshot? How Silicon Valley Mocks Apollo" *Communications of the ACM* 62:1 (January 2019): 24-30. <https://cacm.acm.org/magazines/2019/1/233518-hey-google-whats-a-moonshot/fulltext> (example of something for a non-specialist audience written outside my primary area -- we can talk about the differences between this and a history journal article)

- Cohen, Daniel J & Roy Rosenzweig. "Promises and Perils of Digital History" *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web*. (2005) <https://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/introduction/>
- Frederick W. Gibbs, "New Forms of History: Critiquing Data and its Representations," *The American Historian* (Feb. 2016): <http://tah.oah.org/february-2016/new-forms-of-history-critiquing-data-and-its-representations/>

PART 3: Historical Sources

11. Using Archives (Apr 11)

- [Maza, Sarah. *Thinking About History* \(University of Chicago Press, 2017\). Ch. 6 \("Facts or Fictions"\) only.](#)
- [Schmidt, Laura. *Using Archives: A Guide to Effective Research* \(Society of American Archivists, 2011\).](#)
- [Redman, Samuel J. *Historical Research in Archives: A Practical Guide* \(American Historical Association, 2013\). Chs. 3 and 6 only.](#)
- [Robertson, Stephen. "What's Law Got to Do with It? Legal Records and Sexual Histories." *Journal of Human Sexuality* 14:1/2 \(Jan/Apr 2005\):161-185.](#)
- Class Preparation: Spend time with the finding aid of at least one collection of institutional or personal papers (can be one you plan to use in the Archive Report) and prepare a five minute informal presentation discussing some aspects of its content, organization, exclusions or implicit bias in the light of the issues raised in this week's readings.

12. Using organizational and official documents (Apr 18)

- [Dublin, Thomas. *Transforming Women's Work: New England Lives in the Industrial Revolution*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994. Ch. 3 only. Also appendix 3, "Methods of the Millhand Study"](#)
- [Moran, James. "A Tale of Two Bureaucracies: Asylum and Lunacy Law Paperwork" *Rethinking History* 22:3 \(2018\): 419-436.](#)
- [Decker, Stephanie. *The Silence of the Archives: Business History, Post-Colonialism and Archival Ethnography*.](#)

(Apr 21 - [Archive Report](#) Due)

13. Using oral and video history (Apr 25)

- [Portelli, Alessandro. "What Makes Oral History Different," in Robert Perks & Alistair Thomson \(eds.\) *The Oral History Reader* \(Routledge,1998\): 63-74.](#)

- [Ritchie, Donald A. *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* \(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003\). Ch. 3 \(“Conducting Interviews”\) only.](#)
- [Thomson, Alistair. “Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History.” *Oral History Review* 34:1 \(2006\): 49-70.](#)
- Shopes, Linda. "Making Sense of Oral History." *Oral History in the Digital Age* (2012). <http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/2012/08/making-sense-of-oral-history/>

14. Using objects and images (May 2)

- [Miller, Bonnie A. “A Primer for Using Historical Images in Research.” *American Periodicals* 27:1 \(2017\): 73-94.](#)
- [Saffell, Cameron L. “An Alternative Means of Field Research: Extending Material Culture Analysis to Farm Implements.” *Agricultural History* 88:4 \(Fall 2014\): 517-537.](#)
- [Dyer, Serena. "State of the Field: Material Culture." *History* online preview \(January 26, 2021\).](#)
- Exercise: Locate an oral history transcript (reasonably long interview conducted by a trained historian) that is relevant to your research interests. Read through it, to get sense of how well prepared the interviewer was and whether they followed the techniques we read about last week. Also identify a short extract that, if audio and video were available, could be used for a public history project similar to the one I showed in class. Be prepared to make a short (around 5 minutes) presentation of your findings in class.

15. Presentation and discussion of final projects (May 9)

[Major project](#) due May 17 (During exam week, no class meeting).