

# STUDY AND WRITING OF HISTORY

Hands-on exploration of history as a professional field and scholarly discipline

## Course Basics

Meeting: Tuesdays 5-8 pm  
 Instructor: Dr. Tona Hangen  
 Office: Sullivan 327D  
 Contact number:  
 (617) 506-9440 voice or text

## Required Readings

Arnold, John H. *History: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford, 2000 ISBN: 978 0192853523

Cullen, Jim. *Essaying the Past: How to Read, Write, and Think About History*, 3e. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016. ISBN: 978 1119 111900

Maza, Sarah. *Thinking About History*. Chicago: Univ of Chicago, 2017. ISBN: 978 0226109336

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*, 9e. Chicago: Univ of Chicago, 2013. ISBN: 978 0226430577

ISBNs are for paperback edition; ebooks also fine

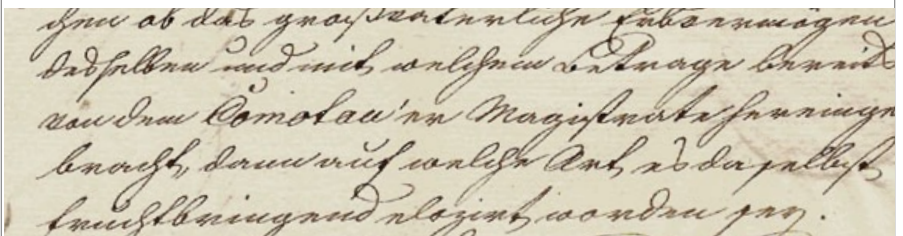
All other course readings will be available on Blackboard



## Course Description

This course is required of all graduate students in the M.A. History program. Learners from other programs are also welcomed. History 910 provides an overview of historiography and methods in history, and offers opportunities to build research, writing, and interpretive skills through intensive work with works of theory, sources, texts, and other historical evidence.

By the end of the course, you will better understand how historians work and how history is made and constructed. You will also feel more confident in approaching your own historical interpretations, having honed the requisite practical skills and methodological tools for masters level history research and writing. Over the course of the semester, you will build and polish a portfolio of your work, creating a solid foundation for more advanced and independent future work in history.





## Course Policies

### Participation and Attendance:

I expect that you will show up for each class session ready to discuss the assigned readings and actively participate.

**Academic Integrity:** All papers and journal entries for this class should be original to this class (it is unethical to submit work you completed for another class), must be your own work, and must be your own writing. When and where you employ the work of others, do so responsibly and cite your sources.

Papers that are clear cases of plagiarism – not inadvertent errors in citation or footnoting – are insults to me and to the class. Plagiarism is also a serious academic offense. Some examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to: copying or only slightly rephrasing passages from books, magazines, journals, or websites and submitting them as your own work; buying papers off the internet; using AI to generate your text. If you submit a plagiarized paper, you will automatically receive a failing grade (an "E") for the course. If you have questions about plagiarism and how to avoid it, please don't hesitate to ask.

The course is divided into three sections, each with a culminating assignment. In the first unit, we explore bias, context, and interpretation (i.e. Historiography), resulting in a well-researched scholarly book review. The middle unit concerns analysis of primary sources as a key method of historical inquiry, with you demonstrating a close reading of one such source. The last unit considers research and modes of historical presentation, with the final assignment being a workable academic conference proposal and annotated bibliography.

## Course Student Learning Outcomes

### Learners in this course will...

- (1) Evaluate historical scholarship through oral and written communication that reflects professional disciplinary conventions.
- (2) Define historiography and apply it as a meaningful analytical framework within context of one's own research, situating oneself within the field.
- (3) Formulate research inquiries that engage with up-to-date scholarship in the field that advances beyond mere historical narrative.
- (4) Create sustained, coherent explanations of and reflections on one's own work, articulating and defending the significance and implications of his or her own work within the field of history.



# Assignments and Assessments

## *Portfolio (Due May 7)*

Your work throughout the semester will be organized into a digital portfolio, which will include informal but polished weekly Portfolio Journals that support and deepen the class activities and readings. Many — but not all — of the prompts will be directly helpful to the writing of your formal assignments. Submit Portfolio Journals through Blackboard for initial grading, and then re-post them (revised, if appropriate) into your finalized portfolio.

Portfolio Journals should include full citations for any material found in your research (this is a good habit to get into, as you will be required to provide citations in your unit assignments). Historians follow Turabian / Chicago Manual of Style (17th Edition), with either footnotes or endnotes. The second half of Turabian's book includes detailed examples for citing different kinds of sources. Use this as your go-to reference in this course and throughout your graduate program.

## *Portfolio Presentation*

On the last day of class, you will give a 10-minute presentation that answers the question, "What kind of historian are you?" This presentation should build upon course work and align with your portfolio, but may go beyond or extend the work we did in this course. The presentation format is up to you and may be prerecorded.

## *Assignments*

You will create three formal written assignments for this course, one at the end of each unit.

### **#1: Monograph Review (1000 words) - February 19**

Most book reviews for scholarly journals are around 500 words long. In this assignment, you will have some additional word count in which to analyze a scholarly book of your choice. It must be a history monograph published by a university press. You should include an annotated bibliography of all sources consulted in the writing of the book review (not included in the word count).

### **#2: Close Reading of Primary Source (1500 words) - April 1**

A "close reading" considers one source in depth, considering elements such as provenance, genre, content, authorship, context, perspective, physical format, and other important attributes. The purpose is to determine what the source can tell you about the people and the period you are studying ... as well as to acknowledge the source's gaps, weaknesses, biases, significance, and potential pitfalls.

## Course Policies, continued

**Student Accessibility:** I am committed to providing a learning environment in which all students can succeed. All disability and academic accommodations requested through Student Accessibility Services will be honored. And if you see ways the course can better accommodate a diversity of students, please let me know.

**#3: Conference Proposal (250 words, plus C.V. and annotated bibliography) - May 7**

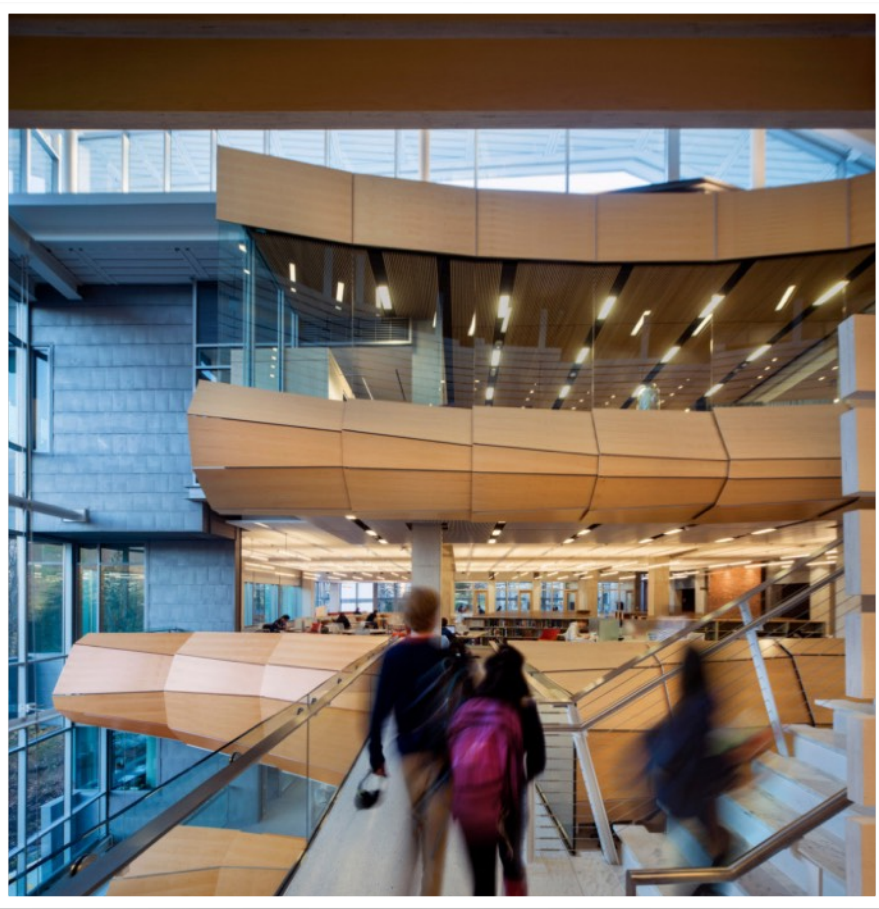
This assignment has two elements: a conference proposal conforming to the expectations of a relevant scholarly society (typically, a title, abstract, and brief C.V.), and a separate annotated bibliography. This final project involves defining a suitable historical research inquiry, situating your question in its broader historical and historiographical contexts, identifying a range of primary and secondary sources essential to your topic, and making the case to peer reviewers for its inclusion in a scholarly conference.

*Assignment Advice*

All assignments should be submitted through Blackboard either in Word or PDF format. You should also plan to incorporate them into your digital portfolio (in PDF format).

For all three assignments, sources and citations are tremendously important. You need to leave a clearly marked trail of your research through your footnotes. Sources for each assignment should be completely documented using standard Chicago Style 17th Edition footnotes. Print sources are relatively easy to cite; when you turn to electronic sources, be sure that you provide accurate and stable permalinks within your footnotes and bibliographies. I will click through to your links!

As you can see, the course’s formal writing output is small in terms of overall volume but each one is high-stakes. This puts a greater responsibility on you for studying the assigned readings and preparing for lively class participation, and writing and revising so that every word counts.



*Grade Breakdown*

Participation	20%
Assignment 1	20%
Assignment 2	20%
Assignment 3	20%
Portfolio	20%

# Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Deadlines

Note: any readings not from the required books are located in Blackboard → Readings

## *Unit 1: Historical Writing and Historiography*

### **Jan 16** Course Introduction

Set ups and Resources for Portfolio and Paper 1; Overview of Library Skills

**Discussion Preparation:** Skim Kate L. Turabian, *Manual for Writers*, especially the front matter and early chapters so that you are familiar with its contents and can refer to it as appropriate throughout the semester. Navigate our Blackboard environment. Read AHA Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct (Blackboard → Readings).

**Journal 1:** Write me a letter or memo of introduction. Please mention your graduate program and where you are in it, your research and/or teaching interests, and what you most hope to achieve from this class.  
**Due Monday Jan 22 by 11:59 pm.**

### **Jan 23** Tropes, Narratives, and Myths

Bring a favorite history book or article to class to share. (A single copy is fine)

**Discussion Reading:** Sarah Maza, *Thinking About History* (TAH), Introduction, Chapter 1 and Conclusion (p. 1-34, 235-238); Jim Cullen, *Essaying the Past* (ETP), Preface and Introduction, Chapter 1, and Appendices (xii-13, 152-184).

**Journal 2:** Describe your past or current research process. What does your typical working process look like? What platforms or systems do you use to organize your research and writing? Are there aspects of your personal process you want to change or improve? **Due Monday January 29 by 11:59 pm.**

### **Jan 30** Long Form Scholarship

**Discussion Reading:** Arnold, *History: Very Short Introduction* (HVSI) Chapters 1, 2, and 5 (p. 1-34, 80-93); Cullen ETP Chapters 2-3 and 6 (p. 14-28, 44-56); TAH Chapters 1-2 (p. 10-82); Book Review Guidelines in Blackboard → Readings.

**Journal 3:** What will be the topic of your first paper? Make sure you have obtained the monograph you'll be writing about. Locate a historiographical essay related to your topic. Introduce both of them in your writing this week. **Due Monday Feb 5 by 11:59 pm.**

**Feb 6** Historiography and Schools of Thought

**Discussion Reading:** Maza TAH Chapters 2-5 (p.45 - 198); Megill, “Coherence and Incoherence in Historical Studies,” *New Literary History* 35 (2): 207-231; Kerwin Lee Klein, “The Rise and Fall of Historiography,” in *From History to Theory*.

**Journal 4:** Locate 3 book reviews related to your topic. They should not be reviews of the book you are writing about, and they need not be all focused on the same book. A single review essay of multiple books is also acceptable, i.e. similar to the *American Quarterly* piece in this week’s assigned readings. Share and comment on them in your writing this week, perhaps on the level of your research process, on the level of the review’s content, or on the level of how they structure and support a scholarly argument. **Due Monday February 12 by 11:59 pm.**

**Feb 13** How Historians Argue

**Discussion Reading:** Cullen ETP Chapters 7-8 (p. 59-73); Reviews of *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. Hagen, “When Radio Ruled: The Social Life of Sound” *American Quarterly* 66 (2): 465-476.

**Assignment #1 due February 19 by 11:59 pm – Book Review**

*Unit 2: Working Better with Primary Sources***Feb 20** Unit 1 Debrief / Going Deeper with Source Work

Bring an example of a primary source you’d like to explore more deeply (one copy or a link is fine).

**Discussion Reading:** Turabian, *Manual for Writers*, Chapters 1 and 2; Arnold HSVI Chapter 7 (p. 110-123); Kate Stewart, “The Secrets of Archival Research” (5-part online essay); Robert Karl, “Research Methods for Historians: Digitizing and Organizing Archival Sources” video

**Journal 5:** Visit (virtually, most likely) a scholarly or university archives and access a Finding Aid for a collection that looks interesting to you. What did you select, and why? **Due Monday February 26 by 11:59 pm.**

**February 27** Encountering the Archives

Meet in the WSU Archives, LRC 328-A for the first 45 minutes of class.

**Discussion Reading:** Arnold HSVI Chapters 3-4 (p. 35-79); Julia Clancy-Smith, “Locating Women as Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Tunis,” in Nupur Chaudhuri, et al, *Contesting Archives: Finding Women in the Sources*, (p. 35-55); Daren Hussein, “Thinking Through Fragments: Speculative Archives, Contested Histories, and A Tale of the Palestine Archaeological Museum,” in *FUTURE/PRESENT: Arts in a Changing America*, p. 354-358.

**Journal 6:** Locate a collection of primary sources. This could be one you’ve already used in your own prior research or teaching, or something that’s new to you. Discuss the set or collection — what kinds of

sources does it contain? Who assembled it? Is it a physical or virtual collection? How is it organized? What historical questions might it answer? **Due Monday March 4 by 1:59 pm.**

### **March 5** Source-aPalooza

**Discussion Reading:** Cullen ETP Chapters 9-16 (p. 74-148); Omnia El Shakry, “History Without Documents’: The Vexed Archives of Decolonization in the Middle East,” *American Historical Review* June 2015, 920-934.

**Journal 7:** Choose one primary source, preferably one you’re less familiar with. Try something new (for you) in your approach to analyzing this source. Introduce the source, offer a short close reading or analysis, AND reflect on what you did differently with it. **Due by Monday March 11 by 11:59 pm.**

### **March 12** Doing Stuff With Primary Sources

**Discussion Reading:** Colleen McDannell, “Religious History and Visual Culture,” *Journal of American History* June 2007, 112-121; Alan Trachtenberg, Prologue to *Reading American Photographs: Images as History from Matthew Brady to Walker Evans*, p. 3-20; Drafting the Past podcast episode 21, “Andrew Simon Listens to History” (online link); “Document Box,” in *Artists’ Things: Rediscovering Lost Property from 18th Century France*, p. 99-104; Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, “Molly Ocket’s Pocketbook: Bethel Maine, 1785,” in *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth*, p. 248-276.

**No Journal prompt this week**

*No Class Meeting March 19 — Spring Break Week*

### **March 26** Research Questions

**Discussion Reading:** Cullen ETP Chapters 4-5 (p. 29-36); Turabian, *Manual for Writers*, Chapters 1 and 2; Alex Ross, *The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (p. xv - xviii); Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Phillip’s War and the Origins of American Identity* (p. ix - xxiii); Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (p. viii - xvii).

**Assignment #2 due April 1 by 11:59 pm – Primary Source Analysis**

## *Unit 3: Researching and Presenting History*

### **Apr 2** Scholarship’s Cutting Edge

**Discussion Reading:** Maza, TAH, Ch. 6 (p. 199 - 234); Mary Rizzo, “History at Work, History as Work: Public History’s New Frontier,” *American Quarterly* March 2016, p. 205-218; Program of a recent scholarly conference, TBA.

**Journal 8:** Choose a scholarly journal where your Assignment 3 topic might be covered, and choose a 3-year span to examine (most journals publish 4 times a year). Write an analysis of “Three Years in [Journal

of Your Choosing],” in which you identify key trends in the historiography of this journal. Did certain questions, topic, subjects, or theories get more attention? What topics were largely, if not completely, ignored? **Due Monday April 8 by 11:59 pm.**

### **Apr 9** The Knowns and Unknowns

Before class, find and prepare to share a Call for Papers (current or past) that relates to your Assignment 3 topic.

**Discussion Reading:** Jill Lepore, “Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography,” *Journal of American History* June 2001, p. 129-144; other readings as assigned.

**Journal 9:** What are some of the “settled questions” in your field or area of research interest? What are unresolved questions or “hot topics”? What are, in your view, some of the “unknown unknowns” yet to be discovered, or some of the most promising new directions? **Due Monday April 15 by 11:59 pm.**

### **Apr 16** Entering the Conversation

**Discussion Reading:** Karen Kelsey, “How to Write a Paper or Conference Proposal Abstract” (online); other reading as assigned.

**Journal 10:** “Converse” with a scholar of your choice. If you could interview them in person, what would you ask? What would they say in response to your questions (either using quotations from their actual work, or how you think they would be likely to answer). Or, what has this person written or said that you find confusing ... problematic ... freaking brilliant ... and what would you say to them directly, if you could? **Due Monday April 22 by 11:59 pm.**

### **Apr 23** The Importance of Theory

**Discussion Reading:** Peter A. Coclanis, “Atlantic World or Atlantic/World?” *William and Mary Quarterly* October 2006, p. 725-742; Michael McDonnell, “Paths Not Taken, Voices Not Yet Heard: Rethinking Atlantic History,” in Curthoys and Lake, eds., *Connected Worlds: History in Transnational Perspective*, p. 45-62; Andrew Zimmerman, “Africa in Imperial and Transnational History: Multi-Sited Historiography and the Necessity of Theory,” *Journal of African History* 2013, p. 331-340.

**Journal 11:** What theories in history (or that historians employ) are you drawn to? Provide a couple of examples. What appeals to you about them? **Due Monday April 29 by 11:59 pm.**

### **April 30** Course Wrap-Up and Presentation Day (*last class meeting, no Journal this week*)

**Discussion Reading:** TBA, as assigned.

**Assignment #3 due May 7 by 11:59 pm – Conference Proposal and Annotated Bibliography**

**Portfolio due May 7 by 11:59 pm**