

History Honors (HITO 196)
Fall 2012 Thursday 4-6:50PM
HSS 6008
Ryan Jordan- ryanjordan@sandiego.edu
Office Hours: Thursday 2-4PM

Course Description and Grading: This course is intended to help students begin to write a senior honors thesis by exploring the mechanics of historical writing, while also addressing the varying methodologies employed by professional historians. The eventual thesis is due at the end of the winter quarter and should be approximately 30-50 pages in length. Students are expected to come to each seminar prepared to discuss the assigned readings, and are expected to complete all written assignments (see below).

Books available at UCSD Bookstore and on Reserve

Richard Marius, *A Short Guide to Writing about History*, 4th ed. (Longman, Addison-Wesley)
Gordon Harvey, *Writing With Sources: A Guide for Students*
Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection*, 6th edition (McGraw- Hill)
Georg Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific History to the Post-Modern Challenge* (Wesleyan University)
Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Harvard)
Sarah Schneewind, *A Tale of Two Melons*
Ryan Jordan, *HITO 196- Course Packet*

Writing Assignments:

One research journal (20+ pages): This should be composed throughout the quarter as you write responses to all of the relevant material you are reading for your thesis. An important aspect of doing historical writing is actively taking notes when reading either primary or secondary sources. This journal is due at the last seminar meeting.

One 2-3 page paper introducing your likely topic: This paper, due in the fourth week, will explain what topic you are interested in, and will explain how this topic can be effectively researched and written in a few months. This paper should explain what primary and secondary sources you will be using for your project.

A Bibliography of source materials (multiple pages in length): This can include a discussion of the kinds of sources being used, and some reflections on your part regarding why you have chosen these sources.

One 4-6 page précis of your likely topic: This is a more refined combination of the first two exercises in which you begin to think about the layout of your eventual paper.

Syllabus

September 27- Practicing History- **COME PREPARED HAVING DONE MARIUS AND DAVIDSON/LYTLER READING**

Marius, *A Short Guide to Writing about History*, chs.1-3

Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, Intro, prologue, and chapter 1

Assign Davidson/ Lytle for oral reports on one chapter and CD documents

October 4- Mechanics of Writing History

Marius, *A Short Guide*, chaps. 4-8, pay special attention/critique writing sample,

Appendix A

Write one paragraph commenting on writing sample

Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, chaps. 2-3

October 11- Methods of American Historians

Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, chaps. 4-5

Wood, Thornton, Pearson, and Smith interpretations of Stono [course reader]

October 18- Methods of American Historians in the 20th century-**2-3 page write-up of paper topic due for discussion with the seminar**

Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, chaps. 6-7

Jordan, "The Dilemma of Quaker Pacifism in a Slaveholding Republic" [course reader]

October 25- Big Picture and Guiding Paradigms

Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, chaps. 8-9

Iggers, *Historiography in the 20th Century*

November 1- **Bibliography due for discussion with the seminar**

Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, chaps. 10-11

November 8- Memory and Story-Telling in History

Schneewind, *A Tale of Two Melons*

November 15- Extrapolation and Interpretation

Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*; Finley/Davis Debate on JSTOR, *American Historical Review* 93:3 (June 1988), 553-603

November 29- **3-5 page précis of your topic due for discussion with the seminar**

Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, chaps. 12-15

December 6- **research journal for the quarter (at least 20 pages) and outline of paper due**

HITO 196- Honors Seminar- Some Suggestions on Reading and Writing for a Thesis

- For all of the reading for this course, especially readings that relate to your area of interest, try to keep your own project in mind. How do the methodologies or questions being asked by a given historian relate to your work? Is the historian (or are the historians) missing something either in terms of evidence or argument that would include in your own thesis?

- When reading other historians, try to make a concerted effort to examine the footnotes, to understand and critique exactly how a historian builds his or her own case- what are the sources being used? Are there significant omissions? What kind of sources would you prefer he or she look at? Is the historian asking a question that you think is important (why or why not?)

- You also should read the assigned secondary source material as quickly and efficiently as possible- again- with an eye to understand and critique the methods used by these historians. You should not read these books as though I am going to examine you on the details.

- Also make a point of looking up book reviews on JSTOR (or another search engine, such as scholar.google.com) in order to help you understand how professional historians critique their colleagues. This will give you a good idea both about methodological or theoretical concerns (what questions they think are important), and also help you learn the tools of a professional historian so that you can see the limitations of a given work.

- Make a point of taking notes on all of the reading throughout the semester (try not to read without taking notes), and make sure to be constantly writing down ideas about your own project- you will not be able to remember everything (!)

- Please do not forget that the process of writing is about revision (and vice versa). The sooner you get ideas to paper, the better.

- Even as you want to focus your project around a certain specific set of primary sources, you also need to be constantly thinking about new ways to connect your project to broader themes in

the historiography of your time period or subject. You may be surprised how many different subject areas relate to your thesis. In my experience, it takes time to draw these connections, and they normally arise out of the process of writing and revising, when you focus in on what your exact argument (or intervention into the existing source literature will be.) Oftentimes we spend so much time in the more narrow aspects of a project that it is hard to see the larger picture.