

Methodist University
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HIS 210-01
Spring 2009
MWF 2-4; TTh 3:30-4:30

Historian's Apprenticeship

As part of the history minor or major, this is the class where we start to give some serious thought to what it means to be a historian. We will read some examples of history (modern Africa this term) and also some discussions about what is and should be happening when people do history. Our primary goal is to get a sense of the relation between history and historiographies: the 'facts' and various definitions of and approaches to the 'facts'.

Practical course goals are to develop broad understanding of historical causation and pattern, as well as abilities in historical interpretation and analysis. We will cultivate critical thinking, writing, presentation, and discussion skills. Ethical course goals are to learn actively, to understand before judging, to cope graciously with uncertainty, and to appreciate and respect the dynamic complexity, diversity, and dignity of human communities, including all of those represented in the classroom.

READINGS (required – get them)

- 👉 Pierre Bayard, *How to Talk About Books You Haven't Read*
- 👉 Odhiambo and Cohen, *Burying SM*
- 👉 Harlow and Carter, eds., *Archives of Empire: Volume 2, The Scramble for Africa*
- 👉 Jules R. Benjamin, *A Student's Guide to History*

REQUIREMENTS

Reading: This class is reading intensive and you will be responsible for learning independently. We may not discuss at length all of the books you are assigned in class. You are expected to **include relevant insight and content from them in your work** for the class anyway.

Historical essays: ~33% of course grade combined.

During most of the term we will go through the course texts, absorbing and discussing what they have to tell us about the materials and practices of History. Using **course texts** and **only** course texts (no outside sources), you will write three **3-5 page** essays.

Essay #1: based on *Burying SM*. Topic to be discussed. **Essay #1 is due no later than Friday, February 6th.**

Essay #2: based on *Archives of Empire*. Topic to be discussed. **Essay #2 is due no later than Friday, February 27th.**

Essay #3: based on your own research. Topic to be discussed. **Essay #3 is due no later than Friday, March 27th.**

Your goal in these papers is to develop a historian's ethic and practice to reflectively interpret the past. To succeed you will need to develop and improve your abilities to identify resources; gather, sift, categorize, and prioritize information; and distinguish between fact and interpretation in order to make an informed and compelling analysis. Much of your grade will depend on how well you work independently within general guidelines; how effectively you adopt and adapt course instruction to your own work; how widely you seek relevant information within the course texts; how thoughtfully you focus your essays; and how effectively you relate your specific focus to more general contexts, issues and perspectives.

Rewrites:

I expect college-level work. I will stop reading and assign an F to papers that show a consistent pattern of errors or that are just generally sloppy. Papers will also generally fail for rating "1"

for any of the categories of the “History Essay Rubric.” Failed papers may be reworked and re-submitted within a week for a possible passing grade.

Anyone may rewrite **essay #1** to improve it (and the grade). Rewrites should reflect thought about course requirements, instruction, and the marginal comments from the first version. I recommend that you stop by office hours for clarification of my remarks. Always **hand in the old version with the rewrite**, so I can track and assess the changes accurately. You may not rewrite the later papers (unless they fail), because I expect you to apply what you learn from essay #1 to them.

Papers turned in after the week they are due will be penalized according to my mood, which tends to get worse as time passes. **No late papers or rewrites will be accepted the last full week of class or after.**

Field Journal and Archive: ~33% of course grade.

In this class we are making history. Imagine a historian five hundred years from now studying higher education in early 21st century North America. She got her education by taking knowledge pills, so she has no idea what our classes were like. Then, buried under centuries of dirty laundry and magazines in an abandoned residence hall, she finds your journal....

The journal and archive are an opportunity to turn the class into a total learning experience that goes beyond the dry facts of history; and to become a source of history yourself. The journal should contain your observations and reflections about the process of the class as a social setting and learning environment. The less you take for granted, the more you notice and discuss, the better. The archive should include any other materials that might help the future historian understand your experience. Images, printouts, objects – what are the historical artifacts of our lives and times? These should be catalogued and explained in the journal.

Final exam — research paper: ~34% of course grade.

Based in part on your short papers you will write a longer one – **8-12 pages**. Topic options will depend on what you do for the short papers. For this paper you **must do additional research** and write a whole **new paper**. Citations and bibliography must include relevant material from the **course texts** and at least **three other significant sources**. A significant source is one that specifically, substantively (more than a few pages), and authoritatively addresses your topic. A book or academic journal article would be an example of a significant source; an encyclopedia entry, while helpful to get started, would not be. I intend for you to do your research in the Library. Google does not normally produce significant sources by college research standards.

The purpose of this assignment is to further develop the skills of research, analysis, and presentation that you have worked on in the earlier papers. This assignment requires a synthesis of your previous analyses in which you combine old and new information and thoughts to create a whole greater than the sum of the original parts.

The paper can be handed in any time up to the last class meeting.

Portfolio: Turn in all of your prior work for the class with your final paper and journal. (These packets will not be returned, so you may wish to make personal copies for your own records.) I will use these portfolios to assess your learning and performance during the term and to aid my determination of the appropriate course grade. They will also assist me in evaluating my own performance and developing my teaching for future classes.

Academic honesty: Cheating is wrong, and it is also an ugly way to live (for those of you taking philosophy: it is both ethically and aesthetically repulsive). Your work should be *your* work. Please review Methodist University's Honor Code in the catalogue. Learn, and use, proper references to credit your sources. This is **your responsibility**. Work based on uncredited sources will be considered plagiarized, will receive an F, and will be reported to the Honor Board. Plagiarized final papers will result automatically in failure of the class.

Grading: See also “Assessment” and the rubric sections below. All work will be assigned a letter grade based on my judgment of how well it accomplishes the criteria discussed in the “Essay Tips” and “History Essay Rubric” pages of this syllabus. It is my policy to seek out the strengths in all work and grade it accordingly. Work with some good things about it and no fatal flaws will get some kind of **C**; work that is pretty good overall will get some kind of **B**. The grade of **A** is for work that is at least good in every way and excellent in some important respect(s). I do not use a curve, so if every student performs excellently, every student will get an A.

My policy for determining the course grade is to eyeball your performance as a whole in the course. I will look at your work, think about what you contributed to and what you got from the course, and assign the grade that best sums up what you have done. Students who instead prefer a strict numerical calculation should inform me in writing (a short note is sufficient) during the last week of class.

Students with Disabilities: If you are a student with a disability, please contact the Center for Personal Development in Pearce Hall at 630-7402 as soon as possible in order to make the necessary arrangements.

QEP: Methodist University has a **QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN**, and we’re asking students to—

Get Between the Covers!

**Improving Student Reading Skills by
Developing a Culture of Reading**

I. Methodist University General Education/Core Curriculum Goals

Students who complete the General Education core will be able to demonstrate:

1. the skills needed for advanced studies: in written and oral communication, mathematical reasoning and the use of computers;
2. basic knowledge of the fine arts, fitness and wellness, humanities, mathematics, natural science and social science; and
3. the ability to think critically about complex subjects.

Methodist College Academic Catalog, 2006-2007

II. General Education/Core Classes in History

General Education/Core Classes in History address the following Methodist University GenEd/Core goals: (1) in terms of written and oral communication, (2) in terms of humanities and the social sciences, and (3) in terms of critical thinking.

III. History Department Goals:

Goal 1.) Students will develop a thoughtful understanding of historical causation and pattern in history and will gain an appreciation of the dynamic complexity and diversity of human communities.

Goal 2.) Students will demonstrate an ability to conduct basic historical analysis using documents, media, and textbooks and to perform written analysis.

Goal 3.) Students will develop basic skills in analytical thinking, research methods, including computer technology, oral presentations and written communication in order to be prepared for employment and/or advanced study.

IV. Student Learning Outcomes:

Students will display familiarity with a general chronology of the period and geographic contexts covered in the course and a deeper understanding of specific topics, events and movements within the stated focus of the course. This outcome addresses Dept. Goal 1.

Students will be able to identify specific themes and issues common to human experience. This outcome addresses Dept. Goal 1.

Students will learn to use primary and secondary readings to evaluate the roles played by economy, politics and social forces in historical developments. This outcome addresses Dept. Goals 1 and 2.

Students will demonstrate an ability to conduct basic historical analysis of documents and media. This outcome addresses Dept. Goals 2 and 3.

Students will demonstrate basic skills in analytical thinking, research methods (including computer technology), oral presentations and written communication. This outcome addresses Dept. Goals 2 and 3.

V. Assessment:

Students' familiarity with general chronology and context will be assessed through their framing and execution of the course papers and through seminar discussion.

Students' deeper understanding of specific topics, events and movements will be assessed progressively for specific aspects of historiographical practice, as chosen by the students, through the sequence of papers culminating in the final paper.

Students' ability to identify specific themes and issues common to human experience will be assessed through their performance of that task for diverse historical factors in all of their papers, and synthetically in their final papers and the journal/archive project.

Students are required to use primary and secondary readings, to conduct basic historical analysis of documents, and to demonstrate basic skills in analytical thinking and research methods for all of their course work, written and oral.

Essay Tips:

A good historical essay makes a point and provokes thought rather than merely presenting information. In history, like life, facts become meaningful through interpretations, perspectives, and controversies. A good essay is interesting because it is possible to disagree (unlike an encyclopedia entry, for example). Its purpose is to convince someone else, by means of evidence and logical argument, that your interpretation of the issue at hand is a correct or useful one.

1. Introduction and thesis statement

The first paragraph introduces your topic and states your thesis. The ideal structure is like a funnel. Start with a general topic area and explanation that sets the scene in time and place. Then focus on a specific question, issue, or problem about that topic. Mention what sort of evidence you'll be using to support your analysis. End up with a statement — your thesis — of the exact point, interpretation, or perspective you will be arguing in the paper. Your thesis statement should be a direct statement of the one thing you want every reader to learn from the paper.

Example (by Carl Dyke, 10/7/02):

Traditional family structures in China tended to reflect the general Confucian emphasis on harmony, order and hierarchy. Power and protection flowed downwards from men to women and elders to youngers, while obedience and service flowed upwards. As a consequence, family elders could expect to receive the respect and support of the younger generations, an arrangement that assured harmony and order throughout the extended family. [<--topic] Because of the subordination of women to men, however, the burden of this harmony was disproportionately borne by women who were expected to devote their lives to the care and service of others. [<--issue] As shown by a young woman named Ming's "Recollections" [<--evidence] the Communist revolution only gradually opened up opportunities for women to pursue more individual goals, and even through the 1980s women continued to be subject to the needs and wills of elders, fathers, and husbands [<--thesis].

2. Body of the paper

"Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not to their own facts." Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan

The body of the paper should prove your point, so it should flow logically from the thesis paragraph. Present and analyze ('break down') evidence. Explain how it demonstrates and supports your thesis. Evidence may consist of quotations, paraphrases, statistics, examples from historical events, arts, or archaeology. 'Primary' sources (for example, quotations of Ming's own words) are the strongest, most convincing evidence because they come direct from the place and time in history you are studying. Every time you use any type of evidence, you must CITE your SOURCE, right there where you use it. You must also cite any 'secondary' source interpretation of historical events, such as a textbook or the editors of a document reader.

Note: Beliefs and feelings are part of perspective and bias in historical sources. Because we too live in history, we must become aware of how our own beliefs and feelings create perspective and bias by shaping how we see the past. Good papers also assess the perspectives and biases of sources (like Ming). You can even make your sources' perspectives and biases your topic!

Note: Correct, clear writing affects your credibility and is therefore a basic requirement.

3. Conclusion

Summarize your evidence briefly and nail down exactly how it shows that your thesis was correct or useful. Leave readers happy to have learned something from your fine research and reasoning.

Rubric Explanation: History 210 is a departmental writing-intensive course. The purpose of writing in History is to develop and effectively communicate understanding of the past. For instruction and assessment in the History Department's writing-intensive courses this purpose can be broken down into six overlapping areas, in the following order of relative importance:

- 1.) **Content and concept.** Insightful understanding of the past is at the core of any good writing in History. Elements of good historical understanding include awareness of diverse perspectives and historical contexts and relation of specific facts and situations to bigger patterns, ideas and dynamics. Excellent historical writers also interpret reflectively, understand themselves to be situated within history and correct actively for their own resultant biases.
- 2.) **Analysis and argument.** A pile of raw facts is not history (the name for such writing is "chronicle"). While all historical writing contains historical facts, better historical writing interprets and makes a point (thesis) about them. The thesis should be interesting, clearly asserted, amply developed and persuasively supported with appropriate reasoning and evidence.
- 3.) **Organization.** Effective communication depends on organization. In good historical writing there is a clear, concise introduction that fully outlines the subsequent content. Each sentence and paragraph has a clear, focused purpose and coherent relation to the whole. An effective conclusion sums up the writing's logic and persuasive value.
- 4.) **Evidence.** In good historical writing accurate evidence directly and persuasively supports the argument. A broad spectrum of appropriate sources is visibly used; and/or a broad spectrum of interpretive strategies is used for each source. Sources are assessed for bias and placed in their larger historical context.
- 5.) **Source handling and citation.** All facts in history must be placed in an interpretive framework to become significant. Facts' meaning and value are dependent on the nature and quality of that framework. It follows that to assess the quality of historical writing it must always be possible to backtrack facts to their original source through each intervening interpretive step. Therefore, in good historical writing it is especially important that every point, statement of fact, paraphrase and quotation is reliably attributed and helpfully documented.
- 6.) **Writing.** All of the above are in principle more important in the assessment of historical writing than ordinary writing mechanics. However, the best ideas are of no value if they are not effectively communicated. Reliably clear and correct writing in the appropriate vocabulary is the means of effective communication in History.

HISTORY ESSAY RUBRIC

Copy and attach to each essay submitted

1) Content and Concept	2) Argument/ Analysis	3) Organization	4) Evidence	5) Source Handling/Citation	6) Writing
5 – Shows insight, understanding, awareness of perspectives and historical contexts; develops reflective interpretation relating specific facts and situations to bigger patterns, ideas and dynamics.	5 – Contains an interesting central point, clearly asserted in the thesis, that is amply developed and persuasively supported with appropriate reasoning and evidence.	5 – Thesis and introduction are clear, concise and address the assignment. Each paragraph has a clear, focused purpose and coherent relation to the whole. Effective conclusion; logical and persuasive overall.	5 - Broad spectrum of appropriate sources visibly used. Accurate evidence directly and persuasively supports the argument. Sources are assessed for bias and placed in larger historical context.	5 – Every point and statement of fact is reliably attributed. Every fact, point, phrase and quotation derived from any other source is completely and helpfully documented.	5 – Reliably clear and correct. Reveals a mastery of appropriate vocabulary.
3 - Particular ideas or events are adequately described but poorly understood; OR broad perspective is attempted without adequate foundation in specifics.	3 – Too much summary or assertion, too little supporting analysis or evidence.	3 – Structure is evident but inconsistent. A little difficult to follow; may be jumpy, clumpy, choppy, rambly.	3 – Contains relevant evidence but lacks breadth, context or persuasive focus.	3 – Citations are mostly complete, but some are sloppy. There is some confusion about the source of ideas or information.	3 - Writing is substantially technically correct. Occasional minor errors may be present, but prose is generally at college level.
1 – Simplistic; narrow; without context, perspective or interpretive depth.	1 - Lacks a clear point and coherent reasoning.	1 – Lacks logical structure and flow; random or disjointed; makes little sense.	1 - Lacks relevant evidence, reveals incomplete knowledge and contains inaccuracies.	1 – Elements of the paper meet the definition of plagiarism.	1 - Major pattern of errors or many sloppy errors.
Original					
Rewrite					