

**Department of History  
University of Pennsylvania  
SENIOR HONORS SEMINAR IN HISTORY  
Hist-4998-301  
Fall 2024  
Wednesday 3:30-6:30**

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Office Hours: Tues. 10:30-12:00, or by appointment

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This semester of the Honors Seminar is devoted to completing your thesis. You have all made an excellent start, with working papers that identify your topic and address the historiography. Over the summer, you should have completed the vast bulk of your primary and archival research. Now your main task is to write, edit, and revise your chapters into a thesis. The goal of this seminar is simple: each student will complete an honors thesis based on research in primary sources, drawing on careful analysis of the evidence and presented in a clear, organized, argument-driven exposition. Experience suggests, however, that reaching this goal will be anything but simple. It will require an unusual commitment of time and effort. We will keep to a strict schedule of deadlines (see below) to ensure that the writing process begins early in the semester—even before all research is fully completed—and continues on track to meet the final due-date of **Friday, December 20**.

Even more so than last semester, you will be working independently and intensively. It is important that you check in with your faculty advisor and with me often. This is especially the case if you find yourself blocked or spinning your wheels: talking over the analytical and writing problems will help you find a path forward. You are required to meet all deadlines for chapter drafts and the completed thesis. You are expected not only to submit the drafts of chapters on time, but to work independently to revise your chapters during the semester.

**We will not meet every week, but attendance is required at scheduled class meetings.** If you cannot attend on a specific day, please inform me in writing in advance of the meeting. There are two purposes in our schedule of meetings. First, it's important that everyone stays on track. The meetings can help you structure your work, keep your momentum, and discuss issues related to research and writing. Second, and perhaps more important, these meetings will provide a forum for you to share constructive criticism with your fellow class mates.

Please note, regarding weeks when we have no scheduled meeting: I want to reserve the right to call a meeting if there are issues we should discuss together. Please keep these times open.

Presentations and participation in class (especially the peer critiques) will be 15% of your semester grade. The rest will be based on your completed honors thesis.

### **COURSE MATERIALS** (already purchased in spring 2024):

Richard A. Marius & Melvin E. Page, *A Short Guide to Writing About History*, 9th edition (2014)

Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed. (2007)

As you write, use this manual as a guide for proper citation forms. Use correct style from the outset. This is essential!

For classic advice on how to write clearly and effectively, see William Strunk and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style* (available at bookstores, in used book websites, and in electronic edition).

### **GRADING**

Presentation, Participation, and Peer Review	15%
Completed Honors Thesis	85%

Honors theses are generally between 60 and 90 double-spaced pages in length, not including back matter. (A longer thesis is not necessarily a better thesis. Indeed, sometimes to the contrary, a longer work can indicate a lack of careful edits or choices about content. Conversely, it is easy to imagine a thesis being too short if it does not explore issues, provide proper context, or illustrate arguments adequately. In the end, there is no formula that can apply across different works. As you write and workshop your work, you'll develop a clear sense whether you're hitting a sweet spot in terms of length.)

This course schedule is designed for theses that will contain three chapters, an introduction and a conclusion. If you choose four chapters, please meet with me to discuss a revised schedule for completion.

### **CLASS SCHEDULE**

**Aug 28** Organizational meeting and status updates on summer research

\*On Aug. 30 by 4:00 PM, post to canvas a report on your summer research (max 1000 words) and a preliminary chapter outline

*For tips on storyboards and outlines, consult Turabian, sections 2.3 and 6.2.1*

**Sept. 4** Research Workshop

Marius and Page, *A Short Guide to Writing About History*, 88-143

Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers*, 62-130

**Sept. 11** No Class: POST ONE CHAPTER TO CANVAS BY 4:00 PM

**Sept. 18** Peer critique session (We will divide into two smaller groups. One group will meet from 3:30 to 5:30; the other from 6:00-8:00)

**Sept. 25** No Class

**Oct. 2** No Class: POST ONE CHAPTER TO CANVAS BY 4:00 PM ON WEDNESDAY, OCT 2

**Oct. 9** Peer critique session (We will divide into two smaller groups. One group will meet from 3:30 to 5:30; the other from 6:00-8:00)

**Oct. 16** No Class

**Oct. 23** No Class: POST ONE CHAPTER TO CANVAS BY 4:00 PM  
For everyone: 6:00-8:00 pm: dinner/bull session/group therapy/pep rally/faith healing (location TBA)

**Oct. 30** Peer critique session (We will divide into two smaller groups. One group will meet from 3:30 to 5:30; the other from 6:00-8:00)

**Nov 6** No Class: POST INTRODUCTION OR CONCLUSION TO CANVAS BY 4:00 PM on Wednesday, Nov. 6

**Nov 13** Peer critique session (We will divide into two smaller groups. One group will meet from 3:30 to 5:30; the other from 6:00-8:00)

**MONDAY NOV 18: POST INTRODUCTION OR CONCLUSION TO CANVAS BY 4:00 PM**

**Nov. 20** Peer critique session (We will divide into two smaller groups. One group will meet from 3:30 to 5:30; the other from 6:00-8:00)

**MONDAY NOV 25: DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF PENULTIMATE DRAFT OF YOUR THESIS, TO BE SENT TO YOUR THESIS ADVISOR AND THESIS PROGRAM DIRECTOR.**

**Nov. 27** No Class: Happy Thanksgiving!

**Dec. 2-5: Individual meetings with instructor to discuss penultimate drafts**

**Dec. 4** Brief Class Presentations  
The whole group will participate in this session together

**FRIDAY DEC. 20: COMPLETED THESIS DUE**

*LATE SPRING: Senior Honors Symposium in 209 College Hall (details to follow)*

**\*\*CLASS DINNER TO BE SCHEDULED IN DECEMBER**

**\*\*Please note: it is your responsibility to meet regularly with your faculty advisor and to revise your chapters throughout the semester as you receive feedback.**