**History 201, Critical Skills for the History Major**

**Master Syllabus, Cluster Requirement 1C: Intermediate Writing**

Submitted August 2013

**Course Overview and Rationale:**

The purpose of HST 201 is to prepare the student for advanced courses in History, especially the Seminar required of all majors and generally taken in the junior or senior year. Accordingly, this course acquaints the student with the necessary skill set for success in advanced courses. Most who teach the course will utilize primary and secondary sources from an area of their scholarly expertise, in order to help students read, understand and interpret historical texts and ideas.

Early weeks of the course stress readings and exercises to develop the students’ understanding that History is largely the art of effective argument. Students learn how history is crafted; how to identify historical arguments; how to think critically about such arguments, and how to develop their own. In subsequent weeks students learn to use library and internet resources effectively for research, and to identify and analyze primary and secondary source material. The latter weeks of the course emphasize organization and presentation of student research, and refining students’ historical writing skills.

As should be clear from above, HST 201 clearly matches the desired learning outcomes for Cluster 1C, Intermediate Writing.

**Course Catalog Description:**

Focuses on developing student facility with historical sources, sharpening analytical skills, and utilizing traditional library and internet research methods, with special emphasis on technical writing skills for the discipline.

**Learning Outcomes:**

**Course-specific/HST Department Learning Outcomes:**

Specific objectives for students completing the course include the ability to:

1. Collect historical data in printed and electronic forms
2. Use bibliographic tools and data bases
3. Analyze primary and secondary sources (Identify chronological and geographical patterns, identify issues and problems in the past, formulate historical questions, interrogate historical data and sources, support interpretations with historical evidence, and evaluate major debates among historians.)
4. Write historical arguments in essay exams and papers.
5. Conduct research and write a paper in support of a thesis

**US Learning Outcomes, Cluster 1C:**

1. Read with comprehension and critically interpret and evaluate written work in discipline-specific contexts.
2. Demonstrate rhetorically effective, discipline-specific writing for appropriate audiences.
3. Demonstrate, at an advanced level of competence, use of discipline-specific control of language, modes of development and formal conventions.
4. Demonstrate intermediate information literacy skills by selecting, evaluating, integrating and documenting information gathered from multiple sources into discipline-specific writing.

**HST 201 and the ‘Intermediate Writing’ Criteria**

**Intermediate Writing courses employ writing as a method of deepening student learning.** Writing assignments in HST 201 will connect to the reading and class discussions, and give students the opportunity to dig more deeply into and reflect upon the issues raised by them. For example, students will be asked to describe an author’s thesis/argument in writing, and to identify research questions that may have guided the historical work assigned in a given week. There will be a focus on writing in these paper assignments, but the papers are also key to furthering students’ understanding of the issues raised in readings and discussions.

**Faculty provide feedback, on-going guidance, and clear expectations for ‘effective’ written response.** The "capstone" project for this course is either a "typical" term paper of ca. 10 pages length, incorporating the historical writing skills and documentation methods covered in the course; or a project prospectus of similar length/complexity, with clearly stated paper proposal, thesis, outline, and annotated bibliography. In either case, students will be guided through the process of framing, researching, organizing, and executing a successful history paper in stages, receiving input and correction at each stage of the process. Some faculty will also use peer review. The purpose of this step-by-step process is to help students develop an appreciation for method and careful preparation in crafting well-written, well-supported, and persuasive essays.

**Writing accounts for 40-60% of the final grade.** All sections of HST 201 use writing-based assignments to account for a minimum of 40% of the final grade.

**Students must complete at least 20 pages of writing.** The combined length of the writing assignments in HST 201 will exceed 20 pages of writing. Generally half of this will be the final ‘capstone’ assignment. If one includes the various drafts and stages of this capstone assignment and smaller writing exercises that involve students in describing and analyzing scholarly arguments, the total amount of writing in HST 201 will exceed 20 pages.

**Intermediate Writing courses should have a lower number of students, in the 20-25 range.** Multiple sections of HST 201 will be offered each semester, and each will be capped at 25 students. The course is usually taken in the sophomore year.

**Examples of Texts and/or Assigned Readings:**

*Books – writing and research guides:*

Benjamin, Jules. *A Student’s Guide to History,* 11th edition. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010

Berry, Thomas.  *The Most Common Mistakes in English Usage.*

Presnell, Jenny L. *The Information-Literate Historian: A Guide to Research for History Students*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Rampolla, Mary Lynn. A Pocket Guide to Writing in History (latest edition)

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations.* 7th Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007

*Books – topical/thematic:*

Boahen, Adu A. *African Perspectives on Colonialism.* The John Hopkins University Press, 1987.

Boyer & Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974).

Brown, Victoria and Timothy Shannon. *Going to the Source: The Bedford Reader in American  History, Volume II, Since 1865*, 2nd edition. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008

Carlson, Elof Axel. Unfit: A History of a Bad Idea. (Cold Springs Harbor, NY: Cold  Springs Harbor Laboratory Press, 2001).

D’Antonia, Michael. The State Boys Rebellion (Simon & Schuster, 2004)

Trevor R. Getz and Liz Clarke. *Abina and the Important Men: A Graphic History*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

Godbeer, *Escaping Salem: The Other Witch Hunt of 1692* (Oxford, 2005).

Kevles, Daniel J. In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity   (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985).

Parker, Robert  *The Second World War. A Short History.*

Philbrick, Nathaniel, *In the Heart of the Sea*. Penguin, 2001.

*Articles:*

Joanne Melish, “Recovering (from) Slavery: Four Struggles to Tell the Truth” (excerpt), in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*, eds. James ). Horton and Lois E. Horton (New York: The New Press, 2006), 103-114.

Marcus Rediker, “`Under the Banner of King Death:’ The Social World of Anglo-American Pirates, 1716 to 1726,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 38/2 (April 1981), 203-227.

“An Act Against Conjuration, Witchcraft, and Dealing with Evil and Wicked Spirits.”  [**www.corvardus.f9.co.uk/religion/wicca/witch1736.htm**](http://zimbra-mb3.umassd.edu/service/extension/convertd/convertd/60/www.corvardus.f9.co.uk/religion/wicca/witch1736.htm)

**Example Assignments:**

1. Two/three -page discussion: In light of Boyer & Nissenbaum’s Salem Possessed, why is Godbeer’s much slimmer volume [Escaping Salem] important for our understanding of witchcraft belief and prosecution in New England? I.e. what is he adding or arguing? For this assignment, use at least 2 brief quoted passages from each, and footnote them according to Rampolla’s directions. **CLUSTER 1C1, 1C2, 1C3, 1C4**
2. **Write a** 1-page précis of **David** Hall’s article“A World of Wonders.” What does his discussion tell us about the mental world of people who believed in, and prosecuted, witches? **CLUSTER 1C1, 1C2**
3. Read “A Wrestler with the Angel.” Come to class prepared to discuss the following questions: **CLUSTER 1C1**
   * What does Boorstin mean by this statement: “the historian is both discoverer and creator.” (3). How does the historian “create” history?
   * Boorstin discusses some of the problems historians face in reconstructing the past. He uses the term “biases of survival” to show that our understanding of history is influenced by various factors. Identify these factors or “biases.”
   * What does the term “social science” mean? What are the social sciences?
   * How has the rise of the social sciences influenced the writing of history?
   * What, in Boorstin’s view is the most “demanding of the arts of the historian.” (22)
4. Read “The Truth About Textbooks: Indians and the Settlement of America.” Come to class prepared to discuss: **CLUSTER 1C1**
   * The differences in each of the text selections
   * specific examples of these differences
   * the perspectives of the authors
   * explanations for their different perspectives
5. Identify 5 primary sources available in our library, through interlibrary loan, or via the Internet that you could, or expect, to use for your term paper, with a sentence or two for each explaining why you think it will be useful to you. Use proper bibliographic form so that anyone could find these sources. **CLUSTER 1C2, 1C3, 1C4**
   * Get a mix of documents if possible: print, graphics, song lyrics, etc.
   * Attach an image of one primary source document you found particularly useful or interesting for class discussion.
6. Read selected chapters from The Nazi Connection. Hand in a précis of the book. **CLUSTER 1C2**
   * A précis is a very concise summary. Historians (like all thinking persons) must learn to “read for argument.” When you read a book or article, you need to understand the author’s main point (the “thesis”). Historians don’t just list “facts”! They interpret evidence and propose arguments to explain what the “facts” mean. Writing a précis of an article, chapter, or book requires that you grasp the author’s main point and boil it down to a few paragraphs of summary. (See Rampolla 3a and 3b-1).
   * Without quoting the author at all, you must explain his thesis in one or two paragraphs.
   * Begin your paper by stating as clearly as possible the fundamental question that the author is trying to answer.
   * Then explain as clearly as possible the main point the author makes to answer that question.
   * Take good notes/underline when you are reading and remember to explain the thesis. Don’t simply describe the topic of the book.
7. Capstone assignment: Research Paper Proposal and annotated bibliography (minimum ten pages in length) **CLUSTER 1C2, 1C3, 1C4**
   * Think of your proposal as a description of your research project, which you will be submitting to a committee for approval. In this case a committee of one—your professor!
   * In order to receive the go-ahead on your research, your proposal must contain the following:
     + A Good Title—choose a title that is specific and informative.
     + A Review of the historiography of your subject. In order for me to have confidence that you are aware of the important issues surrounding your topic, I want to know that you have read the work of scholars whose work relates to your topic. This section of your proposal should identify those scholars and their central arguments.
     + A statement of your thesis, i.e., “This paper will show that……….”
     + A description of how your work fits into the existing scholarship. Will it add to or support the arguments of particular scholars? If so, be specific here. Who are the scholars you agree with whose work your research will support? Will your research contradict or differ in some way from existing scholarship? How so?
     + Devote several paragraphs to background/history of your subject. Introduce me to this subject since I may have only a tangential understanding of it.
     + Identify the questions that have arisen as you have read the secondary and primary sources on your topic.
     + Describe what your own research will do (i.e., I will explore eugenicists’ understandings of the multiple meanings of science from 1910 to 1950)
     + Describe how you will do this: a) identify the sources both primary and secondary that are most important for your research; b) explain your main points and how you will support them; c) identify your tentative conclusions and the reasons why you have come to them.
     + Throughout your proposal, you will refer to primary and secondary sources and use properly-formatted footnotes within the body of your text.

* Annotated Bibliography
  + Divide your bibliography into two sections--one for primary sources and one for secondary sources.
  + Secondary Sources. Write a brief summary of the source and its usefulness to you. Sources include secondary scholarship found on websites.
  + Primary sources. Write a brief description and summary of the source, and its usefulness to you.

**Sample Course Outline for HST 201:**

Unlike the vast majority of history classes, HST 201 isn’t arranged chronologically or thematically. The structure will vary greatly from professor to professor, and more so than any other class we offer. For this reason, the Course Outline below has been reduced to the lowest common denominator. Each section of HST 201 will cover the broad themes listed below, though the emphasis will vary some, and the approach still more. In most cases, each Theme will occupy 2-4 weeks of the semester. There is no set order, so the sequence selected below is essentially random. In each case – particularly in Theme 4 – instructor will often use case studies and specific collections of primary and secondary sources, to help students pursue the relevant learning objectives.

Theme 1: What is history as a discipline?

* How does history differ from other disciplines?
* What is the ‘history of history’?

Theme 2: What do historians do?

* Possible career paths in history (this is sometimes paired with service learning)
* What role does history (and the work of historians) play in public discourse?

Theme 3: The basic skills of the historian and history student

* Library skills
* Finding sources
* Topic selection and thesis development
* Citation and bibliography

Theme 4: Working with and interpreting sources

* Analyzing evidence
* Recognizing, critically assessing, and developing arguments
* HST 201 professors will often utilize historical themes and specific primary and secondary sources from their own areas of expertise, to give students hands-on practice in analyzing sources and developing arguments.
* Students will complete a 10 page Capstone assignment – either a research paper, or a research proposal, with an annotated bibliography

Theme 5: oral presentations

* Since HST 201 is preparation for the Capstone HST seminar (in which a presentation is required), students will receive practice and instruction in the oral presentation of arguments and evidence. In this case, they will make a presentation on their capstone assignment for HST 201.