

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
Department of History
Semester I, 2002-03

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Office Hours - M & F 10:00 to 11:30

History 600
Advanced Seminar in History

Required Text:

Marius, Richard, *A Short Guide to Writing about History*

During the semester you are enrolled in this course, you will write an extended (30 page) historical essay based upon primary research in the State Historical Society or the University Archives. All of the course work (the assigned readings, periodic writing assignments, and even the schedule of class meetings) is designed to facilitate this research and writing project.

Attendance: The schedule of meetings is given below. During the first few weeks, we will tour instructional and research facilities on campus and read the better part of *A Short Guide to Writing about History*. For the remainder of the course we will meet to talk about the shared challenges of researching, organizing, and writing your papers. Students are expected to attend all scheduled class meetings. If illness or some other misadventure causes you to miss class, please let me know as soon as possible.

On weeks the class does not meet, I will be available to meet with students in my office during the normally scheduled class hour.

Readings: Richard Marius's *A Short Guide to Writing about History* describes what a research project entails and how to go about it. You are encouraged to consult Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers* for the nitty gritty questions, such as when, where, and how to footnote and how to assemble a bibliography. Another text, *The Elements of Style*, is a very brief primer that you might find invaluable as you pen those final drafts.

Research paper: You may select any topic you wish so long as your paper:

1. deals with Wisconsin history between 1830 and 1990;
2. incorporates original research in primary documents. Primary documents include just about anything written at the time (letters, diaries, newspaper accounts, business records, or government reports); and
3. has an argument or point of view.

Grades: 30% of your grade will be based upon class attendance, participation, and meeting the deadlines for the various stages of your paper. Your paper will count 60%. Comments on two other student papers will constitute the last 10% of your grade.

To insure that you make reasonable progress, I am setting a sequence of deadlines for various stages of the research paper. A one page description of the topic with a brief bibliography is due by the fourth week, a two page progress report identifying the argument by the sixth week, an outline of the paper by the ninth week, a complete first draft by the eleventh week, and a final draft on the last day of class.

Meeting schedule:

Sept. 4: Introduction to the course. Students must get email accounts, since additional instructions about the assignments will be emailed to you from time to time.

Sept. 11: Introduction to Historical Society staff, tour of the State Historical Society, and a brief description of bibliographic aids. Read: *Writing about History*, pp. 72-97.

Sept. 18: Discussion of possible paper topics. Read: *Writing about History*, pp. 1-71.

Sept. 25: Discussion of selected paper topics. Students will submit a one page description of their topics with a brief bibliography. This bibliography should identify the primary documents you will use and secondary works written on your topics.

Oct. 9: Discussion of research to date. Two page progress reports with a description of the thesis or argument is due.

All students must meet with me individually to discuss their papers sometime between Oct. 14 and Oct. 28.

Oct. 30: Paper outline due. Read: *Writing about History*, pp. 97-188.

Nov. 13: Completed first draft due.

Nov. 20, 27, Dec. 4 and 11: Discussion of papers. Each week we will discuss four papers. The author of the paper will provide a brief (ten minute) discussion of his or her paper, emphasizing the paper's argument and conclusion. Then two students will comment on the paper, identifying strengths and offering suggestions for improvement. To assure sufficient time for the commentators, copies of your paper must be given to them by the Friday before your presentation.

Dec. 13: Final drafts of papers due.