

Department of History  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
College of Letters and Science

**HONORS THESIS COLLOQUIUM /  
SENIOR THESIS COLLOQUIUM**  
History 680/690  
Section 1

Spring 2007  
Tuesdays, 1:20-3:20  
2625 Humanities Building

Professor Sarah Thal  
(4118 Humanities Building)  
thal@wisc.edu  
Office Hours: Thursdays, 1-3  
and by appointment

Course Description

This course is designed to help you write your senior thesis by giving you opportunities to present to your peers and work out organizational and argument problems (“Presentation Sessions”), with hands on training to improve your writing (“Writing Workshops”), and by giving you a set of deadlines to ensure that the paper actually gets written. Three times during the semester you will be paired with a peer to read and give constructive feedback on paper drafts (“Peer Paper Swap”). We end the course with a class conference, where you will present your papers in a public forum designed after a professional history conference.

Peer Paper Swap

At three points in the semester you will be paired with another student from the class to swap papers and give your partner critical and constructive feedback. We will be discussing strategies for peer review in our first Writing Workshop and will come up with a set of guidelines together as a class. Together with those guidelines, constructive feedback involves: reading the draft through; writing up a set of brief comments; meeting to explain and elaborate your comments.

Writing Workshops

There will be three writing workshops held over the course of the semester. I have noted some topics for the Writing Workshops. Please feel free to suggest additional topics you would like us to address.

Presentation Sessions

We will break into smaller groups for discussion of challenges that you are facing as you work. Bring a sentence outline of your thesis and a short outline of your presentation to distribute to the class. Keep your presentation to a five-minute limit.

### Rough draft deadlines

Let us assume your paper will be between 30 and 50 pages in length (though this is a matter between you and your primary advisor). Rough drafts of the first 10-15 pages (or the first third of your paper) are due **February 20**, of the first 20-40 pages (or the first two thirds) are due **March 13**, and of the entire 30-50 pages (the entire draft) are due **April 10**. (If you would like to relax over spring break, the effective deadline for your full rough draft is March 27.) **Your faculty advisor may give you an earlier set of deadlines.**

### Care and Feeding of Advisors

It is important that you remain in regular contact with your thesis advisor, especially in this last stage of the writing process. If you are sensitive to the fact that s/he is in the same position you are in – overworked and staggering under the relentless press of deadlines –you can manage the relationship more effectively. Plan well, give plenty of advance notice when you will need some thing from them, and observe the following basic rules to get the most out of this important relationship.

- Make regular appointments.
- Come to appointments with a written list of specific questions/ issues to discuss.
- Work out with them a set of deadlines for intermediary drafts, or give them the deadlines established for this class.
- Email them a week in advance of each deadline, alerting them that you will have a draft in to them and ask for an appointment a week later to discuss your draft.
- Thank them profusely. Gratitude is free and everyone likes to be appreciated.

### Student Conference

The Student Conference will be held during the final three class sessions. Everybody will circulate to the class a five-page abstract of their paper and an outline. Each student will give a brief presentation of their paper and be assigned a peer to provide a comment on the paper. Students will have the opportunity to respond to the comment and field questions from the floor. **Abstracts and outlines should be submitted to the class list by Friday at 5 pm the week before you will present.**

### Evaluation

Since the goals of this course are to 1) provide a forum for working issues out with your peers, 2) help you improve the ease with which you write large research papers, and 3) facilitate the timely completion of an excellent senior thesis, the bulk of the grade for this course will be based on attendance, participation, and the timely meeting of deadlines. The quality of your presentations, drafts, and especially feedback to your peers, will of course also influence the grade.

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|---|------------|
| Attendance and Participation  | 30%        |
| 2 Presentations   | 10%        |
| Draft Deadlines and Timely Feedback to Peers  | 30%        |
| Conference (circulation of written materials,<br>presentation, and comment on peer's paper) | <u>30%</u> |
|   | 100%       |

## Course Schedule

- 1/23 Introduction
- 1/30 Writing Workshop I: organization and argument
- Writing with outlines
  - Working critically with sources
  - Tools for peer review
- 2/6 Presentations I: Group I-A
- 2/13 Presentations I: Group I-B
- 2/20 No meeting.  
Professor Thal is available for appointments. (E-mail by Sunday night.)  
**Rough draft deadline I/ peer paper swap**  
E-mail your draft to your assigned peer and to thal@wisc.edu
- 2/26 **Peer comments due** (with a copy sent to thal@wisc.edu)  
Professor Thal is available for appointments. (E-mail by Sunday night.)
- 2/27 Writing Workshop II: writing in depth
- Style and word choice
  - Effective use of evidence
- 3/6 Presentations II: Group I-A
- 3/13 Presentation II: Group I-B  
**Rough draft deadline II/ peer paper swap**  
E-mail your draft to your assigned peer and to thal@wisc.edu
- 3/20 **Peer comments due** (with a copy sent to thal@wisc.edu)  
Professor Thal is available for appointments. (E-mail by Sunday night.)
- 3/27 No meeting.  
Professor Thal is available for appointments. (E-mail by Sunday night.)
- 4/3 SPRING BREAK
- 4/10 **Rough draft deadline III/ peer paper swap**  
E-mail your draft to your assigned peer and to thal@wisc.edu  
Writing Workshop III: Effective Revisions
- Reverse outlines
  - Introductions and Conclusions
  - Follow-up: improving your writing style

- 4/17 **Peer comments due** (with a copy sent to [thal@wisc.edu](mailto:thal@wisc.edu))  
Professor Thal is available for appointments. (E-mail by Sunday night.)
- 4/24 Class Conference Session I
- 5/1 Class Conference Session II
- 5/8 Class Conference Session III