

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN--MADISON
Department of History
Semester I, 1986-87

History 827

Research Seminar in Latin American History

Stern

Course Description

This is a research seminar which focuses on the practice of the historical craft. Its main purpose is to sharpen the practical skills associated with doing historical research and analysis, and to provide a collective workshop setting whereby students may deepen and extend their acquaintance with various kinds of historical research. The seminar focuses neither on historiography (what historians write about history), nor on theory (the abstract models we use to enhance our understanding of data, and of reality), although we will on occasion bring up and discuss matters of historiography and theory. The instructor offers other graduate seminars which focus on historiography or theory.

Although Unit II emphasizes colonial documents, students will be free to focus on any period of Latin American history for their research projects.

The semester schedule is divided into three parts. Part I discusses various approaches to the historical craft, and basic skills required to design significant and viable research agendas. Part II consists of a series of workshops in which we will analyze together various types of historical documentation. On occasion, the instructor will expand the range of documentation discussed by making complementary presentations, towards the end of the seminar sessions in Unit II, on further types of documentation and their uses. Part III will consist of formal presentations of student research projects. In the case of students working on an M.A. thesis or Ph.D. thesis, the research project requirement will be a negotiated agreement to present all or part of the thesis (depending on particular circumstances) in relatively polished form.

Schedule (tentative)

UNIT I. APPROACHES TO HISTORICAL RESEARCH.

Week 1. Introduction. Sept. 5.

Organizational meeting. Begin selection of research areas and topics. Begin next week's readings.

Week 2. History as Philosophy and Practice. Sept. 12.

Rdng: 1/2 of the class:

E. H. Carr, What is History? (New York, 1961).

G. R. Elton, The Practice of History (New York, 1967).

1/2 of class:

Marc Bloch, The Historian's Craft (New York, 1953).

Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions
(Chicago, 1962).

I will be happy to provide additional readings for students who request further bibliography on this topic.

Week 3. The Historian as Detective. Sept. 19.

Rdng: Friedrich Katz, "Pancho Villa and the Attack on Columbus, New Mexico," American Historical Review 83:1 (Feb., 1978), 101-130 (xerox packet).

Exchange between James A. Sandos and Katz in Ibid. 84:1 (Feb. 1979), 304-307 (xerox packet).

DOCUMENT Set #1 ("The Downfall of Don Francisco Chocata"; xerox packet). Discuss approaches to documentary analysis.

Task: Begin work on library research practicum, complete definition of research projects.

Week 4. Library Research Practicum. Sept. 26.

Task: Presentation of results of library research practicum. Presentation by instructor on designing significant and viable historical research proposals.

Week 5. Research Proposals. Oct. 3.

Task: We will read and discuss critically the dissertation research proposals of 3rd-year students. If we do not have a sufficient number of research proposals to discuss, we will use some proposals from previous years.

Other students will briefly present the topics of their research projects, a description of the primary sources they will use, and of their strategy for identifying relevant secondary sources.

By this point, student research projects should be well under way. Complete research during Unit II of the course. Begin writing before the end of Unit II.

UNIT II. WORKSHOPS ON PRIMARY SOURCES.

Week 6. Chronicles and Eyewitness Accounts. Oct. 10.

Rdng: DOCUMENT Set #2 (Sigüenza y Góngora's account of the 1692 riot in Mexico City; xerox packet).

Week 7. Notarial Records. Oct. 17.

Rdng: DOCUMENT Set #3 (Notarial records of conquistadors; xerox packet).

DOCUMENT Set #4 (Testaments of Culhuacán Indians; xerox packet).

Lyman L. Johnson, "Manumission in Colonial Buenos Aires, 1776-1810," Hispanic American Historical Review, 59:2 (May, 1979), 258-279.

Task: Presentation by instructor on record linkage methods and sources.

- Week 8. Census and Administrative Account Records. Oct. 24.
Rdng: DOCUMENT Set #5 (Census of Lima in 1613, Indian population; xerox packet).
Task: Presentation by instructor on the perils and promise of administrative accounting records.
- Week 9. Private Papers and Reports. Oct. 31.
Rdng: DOCUMENT Set #6 (Internal papers on labor and related matters, Cayalti sugar plantation, late 1800s/early 1900s; xerox packet).
Task: Class identification of as many possible types of primary sources for Latin American history that our imagination allows us to perceive.
- Week 10. Litigation and Legal Proceedings. Nov. 7.
Rdng: DOCUMENT Set #7 (Trials of prisoners in the Túpac Amaru insurrection; xerox packet).
Task: Presentation by instructor on visual sources.
By this point, research should be wrapped up, and writing under way.

UNIT III. RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS.

Weeks 11-15. Presentations of research papers. Depending on time and student interest, the instructor may also present a research paper.

Grades and Credits

Since this is a research seminar, the bulk of the grade will derive from the quality of the research papers. I will weight grades in the course as follows: two-thirds = research papers
one-third = oral participation.

Students taking the course for less than three credits will work out individual contracts on the nature of their work in the course. Students will normally take the course for three credits.