

AMH4930.8LN2 (10344)
From Headlines to Histories
Fall 2020

Course Meets: Thursdays via Zoom, periods 7-9 (2-5pm) Instructor:
Dr. Louise Newman, lnewman@ufl.edu
Office hours: Held via Zoom, hours to be determined

The Research Seminar

For most students, a research seminar is the “capstone” of their undergraduate experience and is intended to give students an opportunity to do what professional historians do: make sense of the past (in our case the very recent past) by composing historical accounts based on primary sources, informed by historiographic and public discourse. You should expect this course to be intellectually challenging and demanding in terms of your time and effort: unlike other history offerings, you will not have to memorize facts and dates. Instead you will be asked to demonstrate that you understand how historical accounts are created by composing one yourself.

Description of the course topic

It is sometimes helpful to think of history as the collective memory of a society, and academic historians as having a professional responsibility for deciding what memories should be preserved for future generations. This course examines the present moment in an effort to determine what occurrences have larger historical significance (as opposed to passing interest). Thus we begin with reportage-- what have contemporary journalists identified as culturally significant?-- and consider first whether these phenomena are important enough, profound enough, to warrant a fuller historical treatment. The next step, of course, is to investigate and write up the history that has informed the events under consideration, in order to place those events in a larger historical context so that we have a better understanding of why, or how, they happened.

In other words, the course poses a series of fundamental questions for examination: 1)

How can past events help us understand present-day events?

2) How do current actors (politicians, journalists, activists, and others) use or misuse historical information?

3) What role might historians play in analyzing the significance of current events?

Students will be choosing topics to investigate from news' headlines during the first month of the course. Some topics will require little by way of justification. For example, the upcoming Presidential election of 2020; the Covid-19 pandemic; and the Black Lives Matter movement are all topics clearly worthy of historical treatment, although each of these topics would have to be narrowed significantly. For example, to narrow the reporting on Covid, those students interested in sports might choose to examine the reorganization of competition in a particular professional or college sport (e.g., baseball, basketball, football, hockey). Those students interested in law might choose to examine the debates over exempting businesses from liability during Covid; those students interested in medicine might examine the struggles of one particular hospital to meet the needs of a community; or might look at the ways that the government is supporting fundamental research into creating an effective vaccine, etc.

But students may also explore further afield, examining areas of special interest to them, areas which now may be overshadowed by the reporting on Covid-19, but which are certain to re-emerge as soon as people feel that the worse of the pandemic is behind them. These issues may include such topics as:

- the U.S.'s present role in global affairs (conflict with China, Russia, trade wars, tariff policies, Middle-eastern conflicts)
- immigration policies and concern over undocumented residents
- economic developments (deindustrialization, globalization) that have led to increasingly large disparities in wealth
- changes in electoral policies (voting by mail, gerrymandering, voter suppression, foreign influence in elections, increased role of corporate finance, *Citizens United*) that are impacting recent elections
- responses to sexual, gender, and racial forms of discrimination (Me Too Movement, trans rights, Black Lives Matter, mass incarceration)
- ongoing changes in drug laws (permitting the medical and/or recreational use of marijuana)
- concerns about environmental disasters (past and future), etc.

Course objectives

- Become proficient with the basic steps in researching and writing an original research paper on an historical topic, including identifying a topic, formulating a historical question about that topic, identifying and analyzing relevant primary sources to help answer the question, coming up with a hypothesis (an answer to the question) and “proving” the hypothesis by supporting it with relevant information and persuasive argumentation

- Experiment with creative and effective ways to present historical information and analysis to a lay audience (use of powerpoint and other software, creating electronic archives/websites, etc.)
 - Learn how to follow the protocols of the historical profession in order to present historical work in a professional manner
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Seminar Meetings and Preparation

How this course is structured

- For the most part, this course proceeds asynchronously, which means students can complete the components of each module at different times during any given day so long as they meet the deadlines for the discussion posts, quizzes and assignments. The workload varies, but students can expect to spend roughly 6 hours per week on the course-- with substantially more time needed during the weeks leading up to the submission of the final assignment. During the first half of the course, students will be doing short exercises and grading their own work (in accordance with rubrics distributed by the instructor), while the instructor will be focused on providing constructive feedback. In the second half of the course, students will be researching and drafting historical accounts based on the primary and secondary sources they have located.
- The assigned meeting time-- Thursdays from 1:55-4:55 p.m.-- should be made available for a variety of activities. Most weeks, some part of this meeting time will be used to hold virtual Office Hours, which means that students will be able to have a live one-on-one Zoom conference with the instructor (on a first-come first-served basis). Once every few weeks, there will be a short live Zoom lecture, with the expectation that everyone will be in attendance. Periodically over the semester, students will be participating in Group work, scheduled during this class time.

Core (common) readings

The core readings that are selected by the professor include historical monographs (secondary sources)-- i.e., academic books and scholarly articles published in anthologies or professional journals-- as well as journalistic and/or sociological accounts written for popular audiences that are published by trade presses or on websites. Every student will be responsible for selecting a common reading at least once during the semester. In addition, we will analyze primary sources in myriad forms (newspaper articles, speeches, websites, photographs, etc.)

The following are required core readings. Texts are listed in the order in which they will be read.

- **Jacobson**, Matthew Frye. *The Historian's Eye: Photography, History and the American Present*. University of North Carolina Press, 2019. E-book available from Course Reserves. Excerpt assigned.
- **Clark**, Anna. *The Poisoned City: Flint's Water and the American Urban Tragedy*. Metropolitan Books & Henry Holt, 2018. This book must be purchased. \$18.21 on Amazon Prime. Used copies available for significantly less.
- **Sander**, Richard H., et. al., *Moving Toward Integration: The Past and Future of Fair Housing*. Harvard University Press, 2018. E-book available from Course Reserves. Excerpt assigned.
- **Rampolla**, Mary Ann. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. Bedford/St Martins, any edition is fine.

Writing Guides

- <https://courses.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/reading/how-to-read-a-primarysource/> (Links to an external site.)
- <https://pitt.libguides.com/citationhelp> (Links to an external site.)
- https://college.lclark.edu/departments/history/student_resources/reading.php (Links to an external site.)
- <https://hist.ucalgary.ca/atimm/writing-advice/useful-writing-links>

Material accessed from Websites and on-line Archives

In addition, students will be working on research projects that will require that they identify, locate and read additional primary and secondary materials.

Documentaries (Students may choose one from this list or come up with one of their own.)

- *Inequality for All* (Robert Reich's analysis of the 2008 recession)
- *Inside Job* (2010; Charles Ferguson's analysis of the 2008 recession)
- *An Inconvenient Truth* (Al Gore's discussion of global warming)

Graded assignments

Graded assignments include a wide variety of assignments, including note-taking, short writing exercises, a research prospectus and a full-length research paper (10-15pp).

Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments must be typed and presented formally. Points will be deducted for not following exactly the verbal or written instructions concerning the presentation and submission of an assignment.

- Written instructions for major assignments (those worth more than 100 points) will be distributed at least one week before the assignment is due.
- Students should keep both hard and electronic copies of all their work in case there are any problems in the submission, grading, or the recording of the grading of assignments.

Grading Scale

Letter grades for the course will be assigned according to the following point scale:

Letter Grade	Total Points	GPA Equivalent
A	940-1000	4.0
A-	900-939	3.67
B+	875-899	3.33
B	840-874	3.0
B-	800-839	2.67
C+	775-799	2.33
C	740-774	2.0
C-	700-739	1.67
D+	675-699	1.33
D	640-674	1.0
D-	600-639	0.67
E	<600	0

Policies regarding attendance, participation and assignments

- Unlike most other history courses offered by the University of Florida, this course has a significant “workshop” component, which requires students’ presence in a Zoom class every time one is scheduled.
- Students are expected to have completed all reading and writing assignments by the beginning of class on the date specified on the syllabus.
- In general, no late work will be accepted unless accompanied by documentation from the Dean of Students or Health Services of a serious illness. However, in the

case of exceptional or unforeseen circumstances, students needing an extension of a deadline may request one from the instructor, preferably in advance of the deadline.

General course policies

- Students are expected to be attentive and respectful during class, and remain until class is dismissed. Requirements for class attendance and assignments in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the Undergraduate Catalog <<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>>.
- Students requesting accommodation must register with the Dean of Students Office (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/>) and obtain proper documentation to be submitted to the instructor during the first week of the semester. **Instructors are not obligated to grant accommodations after the first week of the semester.**
- Students in this class are participating in the pilot evaluation of the new course evaluation system called GatorEvals. The new evaluation system is designed to be more informative to instructors so that teaching effectiveness is enhanced and to be more seamlessly linked to UF's CANVAS learning management system. Students can complete their evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https3A__ufl.bluera.com_ufl_&d=DwIGaQ&c=sJ6xIWYx-zLMB3EPkvcnVg&r=1qtWVKU2uNohMAWR5pYYVu0F_ty9jxk4wIDcSEfmKub76k8eaDIYyGQkZMpCQZ6&m=KCQMaruvDccGkQ95LBWWejChKpHpd3olzGps63zo0Ao&s=2ry1lk1Sd2MT9xMTXgaRslOLmzE7-Mky8W2E_HUO3wQ&e= . Please note your other classes this semester may be evaluated in the current GatorRater online evaluation system at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu><<https://evaluations.ufl.edu/>> . Thank you for serving as a partner in this important effort.
- All students must adhere to the University of Florida's standards of academic honesty. UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code." A copy of the student code of conduct may be found at <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code>.

The student code of conduct also forbids plagiarism, which includes the following:

- Turning in a paper that was written by someone else (i.e., papers written by another student, a research service, or downloaded off the Internet); or written by you for another course.
 - Copying a significant portion of work written by another author without using quotation marks and without acknowledging the source through a commonly accepted style of footnoting.
 - Paraphrasing text written by another author without referencing that author within the text and by using a commonly accepted style of footnoting.
 - Using someone else's unique idea or concept without acknowledging the original author and source in the text and by using a commonly accepted style of footnoting.
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Schedule is available on Canvas website.