

# HIST 3300: Historical Methods and Research

Tuesday-Thursday, 2:00-3:20 in CAS 104  
Fall 2025

**Instructor:** Prof. [Matt Stith](#)  
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**Office:** CAS 127  
**Office Hours:** Tuesday, 3:30-5:30; Thursday, 12:30-1:30; Or by appointment.

## Course Description:

Historical Methods and Research is a required course for history majors at the University of Texas at Tyler. It is designed to familiarize students with how historians research, interpret, and write history—how, that is, to be an historian. Although the most important part of the class will center on researching, writing, and presenting an original primary-source based research paper, we will also explore many themes regarding the state of the field and possible futures in history: including graduate school, public history, archival work, history in the classroom, and history applications in a variety of other fields.

## Important Note:

I encourage you to meet with me regularly to discuss or clarify lecture, discussion, or reading—or to talk about history in general. My job (and joy) is as much to work with students on an individual basis as it is to lecture and facilitate discussion. Please keep this in mind throughout the semester.

## Paper Topics:

You are free to choose a paper topic within American history (1500s-1900s) or modern European history (1700s-1900s) so long as your central focus is **an organism or a virus**. All topic proposals are subject to instructor approval.

## Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a strong understanding of historical research and methods through verbal and written exercises.
2. Develop analytical skills through thinking deeply, reading actively, researching thoroughly, and writing carefully about the past.
3. Gain a strong sense of scholarly skepticism by balancing everything with hefty amounts of context and perspective.
4. Appreciate and understand that accurate interpretations (see above) can only rest on ample and sturdy evidence.

## Reading:

### Required

- Sarah Maza, *Thinking About History* (University of Chicago Press, 2017)
  - o ISBN: 978-0226109336
- Zachary Schrag, *The Princeton Guide to Historical Research* (Princeton University Press, 2021)
  - o ISBN: 978-0691198224
- “Turabian Citation Quick Guide,” <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/turabian/turabian-notes-and-bibliography-citation-quick-guide.html>

## Assignments:

All assignments in this class are geared toward the final research paper by means of research, writing, and revising.

- Participation (50 points)
  - o Active and meaningful participation is a key component to a successful class. Your participation grade will be based on two factors: 1) Your in-class interaction, and 2) your attendance. For the

latter, your third and each subsequent *unexcused* absence will result in a 20% (10 pt) drop in your participation grade.

- Preliminary Research Exercise (20 points)
  - o Students will answer a series of ten brief research questions—two points each.
- Topic Proposal (10 points):
  - o The paper topic must adhere to the topic guidelines above. Please write a 700+ word essay in which you carefully and thoroughly explain what you hope to write about and why. Consider the following: 1) Are there enough accessible primary sources to form the core of the paper? 2) Is the topic sufficiently narrow so that you can potentially say something new or approach it from a unique angle? 3) Are you truly interested in the topic? In other words, is it something you will be comfortable working with for an entire semester? 4) Cite and explain at least one secondary source book that, thus far, seems to be especially helpful. I reserve the right to veto or edit any proposed topic. **NOTE: This is one of the most important assignments for the entire semester. Think *very* carefully about what you hope to write about and how you plan to do it successfully.**
- Citation Quiz (20 points)
  - o You will be given an in-class citation quiz that will require you to correctly cite books, articles, MA theses, and PhD dissertations.
- Annotated Bibliography (50 points):
  - o Construct a professional bibliography of primary and secondary sources. The bibliography must contain a minimum of **seven** primary sources, **seven** professional journal articles, and **ten** secondary books—all of which must be relevant to your topic. **\*\*Ten percentage points will be deducted for each missing source in each category.\*\*** It **MUST** reflect a rigid adherence to the Turabian bibliography format.
  - o Each source must have a *minimum* of three sentences explaining its value to your project—or it will not count.
- First Draft: Research Paper (50 points):
  - o A 6,000+ word paper (exclusive of footnotes/bibliography) based on original research. This is not a “rough” draft. It should be the very best draft *you* can deliver.
- Final Research Paper (100 points):
  - o A polished and edited 6,000+ word paper (*exclusive* of footnotes/bibliography) based on **original research** with a corrected (and non-annotated) bibliography.
- Research Presentation (50 points):
  - o You will create and deliver a 10-minute presentation in which you address: 1) Your argument; 2) How it squares with relevant historiography; 3) If and how that argument evolved as you researched; 4) At least three main points you made to back up your argument; 5) The research process—surprises, difficulties, discoveries, etc.

### Attendance and Participation:

Attendance is mandatory. Two or more un-excused absences will result in the drop of a letter grade. Every subsequent absent will result in another letter grade drop. *Active class participation is critically important.*

### Point Breakdown:

- Participation	50 pts
- Prelim. Research Exercise	20 pts
- Topic Proposal	10 pts
- Citation Quiz	20 pts
- Annotated Bibliography:	50 pts
- First Draft:	50 pts
- Presentation:	50 pts
- <u>Final Draft:</u>	<u>100 pts</u>
Total:	350 pts

### Grade Scale:

- A = 350-315 (100-90%)
- B = 314-280 (89-80%)
- C = 279-245 (79-70%)
- D = 244-210 (69-60%)
- F = 209-000 (59-0%)

### Make-up Policy:

If you miss an assignment due to an **emergency**, talk with me as soon as you return.

### Grade Grubbing:

Except for legal university accommodations, there will be no special circumstances offered to any *individual* student with respect to increasing their grade (such as extra work, bonus opportunities, or similar requests) beyond what is offered to the *entire* class. This is especially important to remember at the end of the semester. The best way to make the grade you want to make is to do your very best on the work required throughout the semester and to ask for honest help on assignments—not bonus points or favors after all assignments are finished. It is bad practice and unethical to request that professors offer you something that isn't offered to the entire class.

### Academic Honesty [\*\*\*IMPORTANT\*\*\*]

Cheating of any kind, including plagiarism or the use of AI, will result in immediate failure of the class and possibly further disciplinary measures from the University of Texas at Tyler. Plagiarism, put simply, is using another's work as your own without proper citation or usage. This includes everything from copying and pasting from the Internet to failing to cite an idea from another source that you put in your own words. I strongly recommend reviewing the university policy for cheating and academic dishonesty at the following website:

<http://www.uttyler.edu/judicialaffairs/scholasticdishonesty.php>. **AI is not permitted in this course.** All work students submit for this course should be their own. Using ChatGPT or any other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for any stages of the work process is expressly forbidden. Deviations from these guidelines will be considered a violation of UT Tyler's Honor Code and academic honesty values.

### Class Schedule (subject to change):

- Week 1 (August 26-28)
  - o Introduction; How to choose a good research topic; How to construct a paper proposal.
  - o **Reading:** [Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct--American Historical Association](#) (pdf on Canvas); [Careers for History Majors](#); [National Council on Public History--Careers](#); [K-12 Jobs--Region 7 \(TX\)](#)
- Week 2 (September 2-4)
  - o Doing History: Fields of the Craft; Effective Research Strategies
  - o Tuesday, Sept. 2: [Haley Gallagher--History Librarian](#) Presentation
  - o Thursday, Sept. 4: NO CLASS
  - o **Reading:** [History Research Guide--UT-Tyler Library](#)
- Week 3 (September 9-11)
  - o Doing History: Fields of the Craft; Effective Research Strategies, cont.
  - o Paper Proposal Due / Preliminary Research Exercise Due
- Week 4 (September 16-18)
  - o Making Sense out of Chaos: Framing a Research Project
  - o How to construct a bibliography
  - o Bib. Quiz (Tuesday, Sept. 16)
  - o Thursday, Sept. 18—NO CLASS
- Week 5 (September 23-25)
  - o Effective Writing; Narrative and Analysis; Historiography
  - o ["Positioning Your Argument in a Wider Literature"](#)
- Week 6 (September 30-October 2)
  - o Proper Citations; Avoiding Plagiarism
- Week 7 (October 7-9)
  - o Maza Discussion
  - o Annotated Bibliography Due
- Week 8 (October 14-16)
  - o No Class Meeting: Library/Independent Work

- Week 9 (October 21-23)
  - o Spring Break!
- Week 10 (October 28-30)
  - o Group Meetings (TBA)
- Week 11 (November 4-6)
  - o Group Meetings (TBA)
- Week 12 (November 11-13)
  - o In-Class Meeting/Debriefing
  - o **First Drafts Due** (Tuesday, April 2)
- Week 13 (November 18-20)
  - o Presentations TBA
- Week 14 (November 25-27)
  - o **Thanksgiving Break**
- Week 15 (December 2-4)
  - o Presentations TBA
- Week 16 (December 9)
  - o **Final Drafts Due**