

HIST 3300: Historical Methods and Research
Wednesday, 2:30-5:15
RBN 2007
 Spring 2015

Instructor: Prof. Matt Stith
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Office: BUS 238
Office Hours: MWF: 11:10-12:10; Or by appointment.

Ms. Vicki Betts, MLS
 vbetts@uttyler.edu
 Muntz Library
 By appointment

“Doubt is not a pleasant condition, but certainty is absurd.” ~ Voltaire

Course Description:

Historical Methods 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 a 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 including graduate school, public history, archival work, history in the classroom, and history applications in a variety of fields. Students are free to choose a research topic within the geographical and chronological confines of America’s middle period (1848-1877). All topics must be approved by the instructor.

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 satisfaction) 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.

Reading:

Books:

Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8th edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013)

James M. McPherson, *The War that Forged a Nation: Why the Civil War Still Matters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015)

Internet Links: See below

Library Work:

Each student will hold at least one mandatory research conference with Ms. Vicki Betts—the professional librarian who oversees all history-related research at the Muntz Library. You will need to set aside *at least* 30 minutes to meet with Ms. Betts. Go to the meeting well-prepared with as much material and ideas concerning your topic as possible. These research conferences are designed to give you an opportunity to take full advantage of the library’s resources and to familiarize you with working in a library environment alongside research professionals. Your meetings should take place before Wednesday, September 23.

Assignments:

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

- Preliminary Research Exercise (20 points)
 - o Students will answer a series of ten brief research questions—two points each.
- Topic Proposal (20 points):
 - o The paper topic must fall within 1848-1877 America. Please write a 600+ 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 with working on for an entire semester? 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.**

- Transcription Exercise (20 points)
 - o Transcribe the Mary Louise Herndon Civil War letter (on Blackboard), and write a 300-word essay in which you consider the following:
 - How does the letter reflect society in East Texas during the Civil War?
 - More generally, what are the scholarly benefits of using letters as a source? What are the potential problems?
- Book Essay (20 points)
 - o Write a 600+ word essay in which you carefully and clearly identify, consider, and evaluate the general arguments and conclusions made by James McPherson in his *The War that Forged a Nation*. Based on your careful reading, what are the major trends in Civil War historiography?
- Cemetery Exercise (20 points)
 - o Visit a local cemetery (ideally an older one like Oakwood Cemetery in Tyler) and construct a 500-word essay addressing the following questions:
 - Generally speaking, how might cemeteries be a useful historical source for historians?
 - How might cemeteries be a problematic source?
 - How did your cemetery visit inform the first two questions above?
 - Based on “reading” the cemetery as a source, what did you learn?
- Bibliography (25 points): [Hard Copy—STAPLED]
 - 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 every missing source in each category. It **MUST** follow the bibliography format shown in Chapter 17 of Turabian.
- First Draft: Research Paper (50 points): [TWO HARD COPIES—STAPLED]
 - o A 6,000+ word paper (exclusive of footnotes/bibliography) based on original research. This is not a “rough” draft. It should be polished.
- Peer Review (20 points)
 - o Please write a 600-word professional, fair, and balanced critique of your colleague’s first draft. Consider the following: 1) What is the argument? 2) Is it adequately proven with sufficient use of primary sources? 3) What is the most intriguing/important thing that you gained from the paper? 4) What should the author consider doing to improve the paper? 5) What is good/promising about the paper?
- Final Research Paper (100 points):

A polished and edited 6,000+ word paper (exclusive of footnotes/bibliography) based on **original research** with a corrected bibliography.

- Presentation (25 points):
 - o A 20-30 minute presentation of your research. As you put together your presentation, be sure to address all of the following: 1) Why you became interested in history; 2) Why you chose your topic; 3) Your argument; 4) If and how that argument evolved as you researched; 5) At least three main points you made to back up your argument; 6) 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 critical.*

Point Breakdown:

- Prelim. Research Exercise	20 pts
- Topic Proposal	20 pts
- Transcription Exercise	20 pts
- Book Essay	20 pts
- Cemetery Exercise	20 pts
- Bibliography:	25 pts
- First Draft:	50 pts
- Peer Review:	20 pts
- Presentation:	25 pts
- <u>Final Draft:</u>	<u>100 pts</u>
Total:	320 pts

Important Dates:

Sept. 9:	Proposal & Research Exercise Due
Sept. 16:	Transcription Exercise Due
Sept. 23:	Book Essay Due
Sept. 30:	Bibliography & Cemetery Exercise Due
Nov. 11:	First Drafts Due
Nov. 18:	Peer Reviews
Dec. 9:	Final Drafts Due

Make-up Policy:

If you miss an assignment due to an **emergency**, talk with me as soon as you return. Exclusive of mutually agreed emergencies, 10 percentage points will be deducted for every day something is late.

Academic Honesty:

Cheating of any kind, including plagiarism, will result in immediate failure of the class and possibly further sanctions 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/>

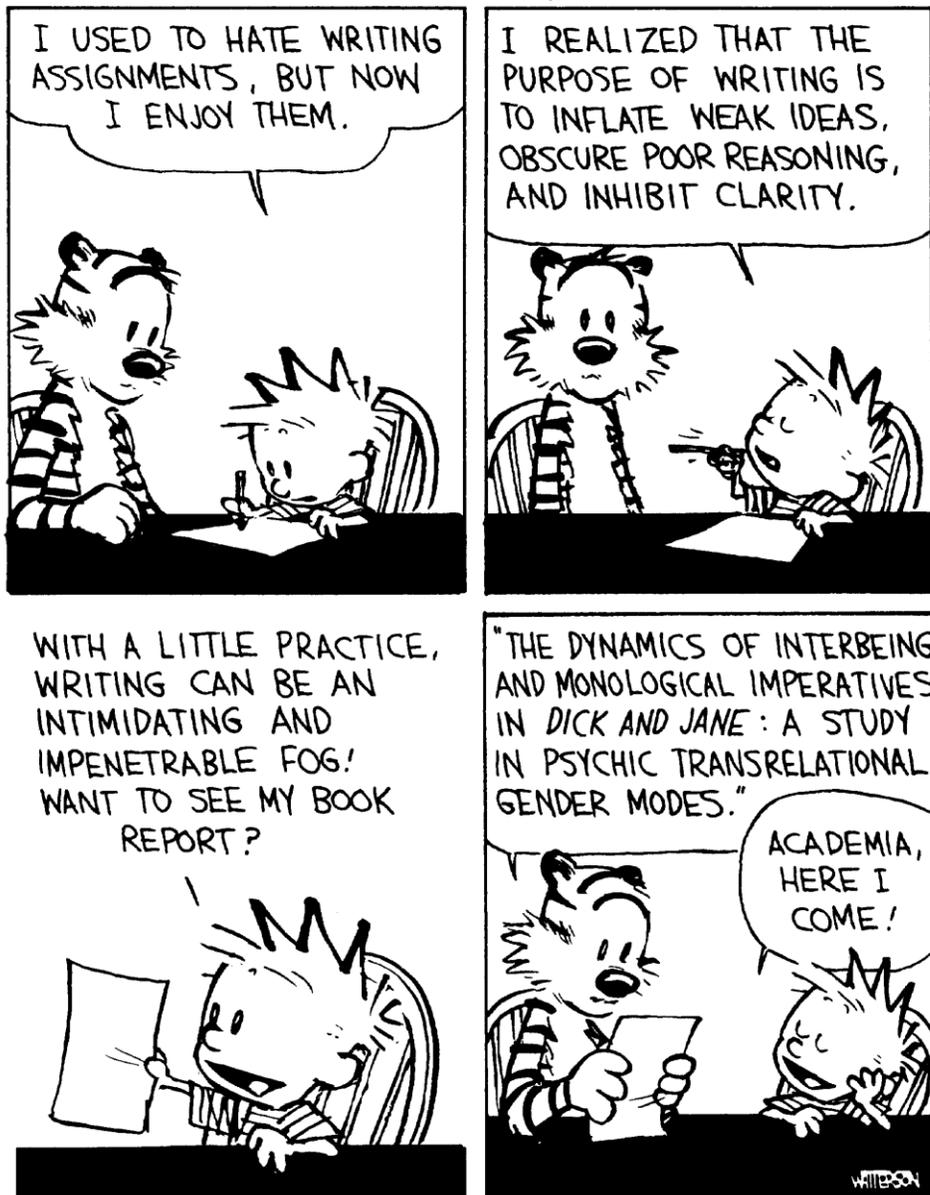
Class Schedule (subject to change):

- Week 1 (8/26)
 - o Introduction; How to choose a good research topic; How to construct a paper proposal.
 - o **Reading:** ["Ethics for Historians" by Catherine Denial and Devin Harvie](#); ["Careers for Students of History" \(American Historical Association\)](#); ["Careers in Public History" \(AHA\)](#); ["Resources for History Graduate Students and Early Career Professionals" \(AHA\)](#)
- Week 2 (9/2) **MEET IN LIB 422**
 - o Library Orientation
 - o **Reading:** ["American Civil War Research Guide"--Vicki Betts](#)
- Week 3 (9/9)
 - o Doing History: Fields of the Craft; Effective Research Strategies
 - o Paper Proposal Due / Preliminary Research Exercise Due
- Week 4 (9/16)
 - o Making Sense out of Chaos: Framing a Research Project
 - o How to construct a bibliography
 - o Theory and Philosophy of History
 - o Transcription Exercise Due
- Week 5 (9/23)
 - o Effective Writing; Narrative and Analysis; Historiography
 - o ["Positioning Your Argument in a Wider Literature"](#)
 - o McPherson Book Essay Due
- Week 6 (9/30)
 - o Proper Citations; Avoiding Plagiarism
 - o **Reading:** Turabian, Chap. 17 (again)
 - o Cemetery Exercise Due; Bibliography Due (MUST use Turabian, Chap. 17)
- Week 7 (10/7)
 - o Mid-Semester Debriefing
 - o **Reading:** ["Drafting, Revising, and Editing"](#)
- Weeks 8-10 (10/14, 10/21, & 10/28)
 - o Library Research and Writing
- Week 11 (11/4)
 - o In-Class Meeting/Debriefing
- Week 12 (11/11)
 - o First Drafts Due in class, STAPLED
 - o Read Introductions to Class
- Week 13 (11/18)
 - o Presentations
 - o Peer Reviews Due
- Week 14 (11/25)
 - o Thanksgiving
- Week 15 (12/2)
 - o Final Drafts Due
 - o Presentations

“Not one of your pertinent ancestors was squashed, devoured, drowned, starved, stranded, stuck fast, untimely wounded, or otherwise deflected from its life's quest of delivering a tiny charge of genetic material to the right partner at the right moment in order to perpetuate the only possible sequence of hereditary combinations that could result -- eventually, astoundingly, and all too briefly -- in you.”

~ Bill Bryson, *A Short History of Nearly Everything* (New York: Broadway Books, 2003), 4.

Don't let this be you!



<https://cgi.duke.edu/web/sciwriting/index.php?action=ivoryTower>

Students Rights and Responsibilities

To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link:

<http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>

Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies

Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at <http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar>. Each semester's Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar.

Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract.

The Census Date is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions that students need to be aware of. These include:

Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.

Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)

Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a "W" grade)

Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment

Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid

State-Mandated Course Drop Policy

Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date).

Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

Disability/Accessibility Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including non-visible a disability diagnosis such as a chronic disease, learning disorder, head injury or ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment you are encouraged to contact the Student Accessibility and Resources office and schedule an interview with an Accessibility Case Manager. If you are unsure if the above criteria applies to you, but have questions or concerns please contact the SAR office. For more information or to set up an appointment please visit the SAR webpage (<http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices/>) or the SAR office located in the University Center, Room 3150 or call 903.566.7079. You may also send an email to saroffice@uttyler.edu.

Student Absence due to Religious Observance

Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester.

Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities

If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

Social Security and FERPA Statement:

It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

Emergency Exits and Evacuation:

Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor's directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.