HISTORY 251: HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION
Fall, 2006, UNLV
David M. Wrobel, david.wrobel@unlv.edu

Course Information:
Section 1: T, 2:30-5:20, FDH 216
Section 3: W, 11:30-2:20, WRI B326
Credits: 3. Prereq.: 3 credits HIST

Instructor Information:
Office: Wright, A320
Phone: 895-0810
Hrs.: T, TH 12:45-2:15
W, 10:15-11:15

Course Description:
The course provides an introduction to the basic concepts and techniques of historical investigation and writing. Topics covered include: the philosophy of history, historiography—the history of historical writing and thinking—and different approaches to historical research. The case studies that we will examine are drawn largely from the field of American/US history, though there are a few drawn from the fields of European and World history. The course aims to encourage you to think like a historian and master the skills for historical inquiry—historiographical understanding, research methods, critical thinking, and construction of clear and complex arguments. In addition, the course aims to help improve your writing and oral presentation skills. To be effective, historians need to know how to address difficult problems through careful research and critical thinking and they need to be able to clearly present their findings in oral presentations and written work (and often through visual presentation too). These skills—critical thinking, research, oral and written communication—are applicable to all kinds of professions such as the law, business, marketing, government service, etc. The good historian helps us better understand our own world through an understanding of the past.

Required Course Readings:


+ Historical Investigation: A Digital Reader (articles and essays in pdf file format).

Requirements and Grading:
First short paper- --------------------------------------------------------------10%
Second short paper-------------------------------------------------------------10%
Third paper (medium)----------------------------------------------------------20%
Fourth paper (long)------------------------------------------------------------40%
Discussion (of course themes and required readings) + in-class tests-----------20%
Grading Scale:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>C-</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>60-66</td>
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<td>E</td>
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Paper Due Dates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Rewrite Week</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Short Paper</td>
<td>Sept. 19th/20th</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Oct. 3rd/4th</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd Short Paper (Group A)</td>
<td>Oct. 3/4</td>
<td>Six</td>
<td>Oct. 10th/11th</td>
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<td>2nd Short Paper (Group B)</td>
<td>Oct. 10/11</td>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>Oct. 17th/18th</td>
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<td>2nd Short Paper (Group C)</td>
<td>Oct. 17/18</td>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>Oct. 24th/25th</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd Paper (Medium)</td>
<td>Oct. 31st/Nov 1st</td>
<td>Ten</td>
<td>Nov. 14th/15th</td>
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<tr>
<td>4th Paper (Long)</td>
<td>Dec. 12th/13th</td>
<td>Finals</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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Discussion:

A full 20% of the grade for the course is based upon your contributions to class discussion. Obviously, the first prerequisite for effective involvement in discussions will be reading the assigned materials. While spontaneous oral contributions are certainly not discouraged, contributions based upon your careful reading of the assigned texts are greatly encouraged and are generally more substantive. With a comfortable classroom environment everyone should be willing to get involved. Feel free to drop by my office, or contact me by phone or E-mail to discuss any questions or relating to the course.

Exams:

While there are no formal examinations in the course, I will periodically administer short exams during class time as a way to gauge the degree to which you have familiarized yourself with the assigned course readings. Your performance on these in-class tests will count toward your grade for class discussion.

Papers:

Four papers are required for successful completion of the course. The first two papers are short (2-3 page, 600-900 word) analyses of required course readings. The third paper also draws solely on required course readings and should be approximately 5-6 pages (1500-2100 words). The final paper is a historiographical essay of 8-12 pages (2400-3000 words) which requires you to draw on outside readings on a topic that I will help you choose. Thus, you are required to complete approximately 20 pages of written work.

All papers for the course must be typed (double-spaced) and carefully proofread prior to submission. If you have concerns about the quality of your prose, then take a draft of your paper to the Writing Center or bring a draft to me to look over. Do not turn in poorly written work with the explanation that writing is not your strong point. Instead, take the time to make strong writing a hallmark of your papers. Regardless of the strange opinions of some contemporary educational theorists, form and content are inseparable. If your writing is weak then your ideas and arguments will lack clarity and, as a consequence, they will appear weak too.
You may rewrite two of your first three papers based upon my comments, corrections, and suggestions. The grade earned on the rewritten paper will be the one counted toward your final grade for the course. Merely correcting the grammatical errors in your paper does not constitute effective rewriting. Please make a careful note of the submission dates for rewrites; these dates are clearly listed in the Tentative Course Schedule and Readings section of the syllabus.

As you prepare to write your papers you should take the following steps:
1) Clear your topic with me first.
2) Develop a key theme or argument.
3) Think of an appropriate title that reflects the paper’s key theme/argument.
4) Introduce your topic clearly in the opening paragraph/s.
5) Present evidence to support your argument.
6) Design a strong concluding paragraph for your paper.
7) Proofread your paper carefully for grammatical, typographical, and spelling errors.
8) Go through the stages of Pre-Writing, Draft Writing, and Re-Writing before submitting your paper.
9) Submit your paper early or on time.
(Also, see Appendix 1: Effective Paper Writing)

Effective Reading:
Take the time to read the assigned materials carefully. It is often helpful to make marginal comments in the books. If you do not fully comprehend a particular point the author is making then write a note to that effect in the margin and raise the matter in the next class. You will find it helpful to write a brief summary of each chapter when you finish reading it. As you read each chapter ask the following questions:

1) What major points is the author trying to make?
2) What evidence does the author use to support those arguments?
3) What is the author's perspective or “point of view”?
4) How do the author's coverage and perspective differ from that of class lectures and other readings?

Also, you should consider writing a brief summary of each book when you complete your reading of it. These summaries of whole books and book chapters will be of great benefit to you when you write your papers.

Plagiarism & Other Unethical Behavior:
As stated in Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language (Cleveland, 1964), plagiarism is “to take and pass off as one’s own the ideas, writings, etc. of another.” Plagiarism is easy to spot and, more importantly, it is ethically unsound. Plagiarism on a paper or any other unethical conduct will, at the very minimum, result in an “F” for that assignment, and more likely will result in the administering of a grade of “F” for the class and further disciplinary action. The category of “unethical conduct” includes cheating on an exam, turning in a paper you have previously submitted for another class, copying another student’s paper, and “acquiring” a paper, or a portion of a
paper, through the Internet. Unethical conduct should have absolutely no place in an institution of higher learning.

For further details please refer to the Student Handbook. If you have any uncertainties about what constitutes plagiarism or other kinds of academic dishonesty, be sure to seek clarification from me; claims of ignorance about these matters will not be deemed acceptable as excuses. To reinforce the vital importance of the issue of plagiarism to historians, we will devote one of our weekly sessions to a discussion of recent cases of plagiarism by professional/popular historians. We will also devote class time to appropriate quotation and citation style.

Attendance:
Attendance is expected in this class. Absence renders you unable to contribute to class discussions and your grade will be lowered accordingly for unexcused absences. You may be administratively dropped from the course if you have more than two unexcused absences. Each absence results in missing a whole week of the course content. I expect you to attend every class session. If you have good reason for missing a class, then let me know, so your absence can be excused. Please do not invent reasons for absences that have little basis in reality; honesty is always the best policy.

Religious Holidays:
Students who miss a class assignment because of observance of a religious holiday shall have the opportunity to make up missed work. In order to be assured of this opportunity, it is the student’s responsibility to inform me of anticipated absences by the last day of late registration, January 24, to be assured of this opportunity.

Extracurricular Activities:
Students representing UNLV at any official extracurricular activity shall have the opportunity to make up assignments, but must provide official written notification at least one week prior to the missed class(es).

Disabilities:
If you have a documented disability that may require accommodations, you will need to contact the DRC for the coordination of services. The DRC is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC), Room 137, and the contact numbers are: VOICE (702) 895-0866, TTY (702) 895-0652, FAX (702) 895-0651. For additional information, please visit: <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/disability/>.
TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS:

Readings: No Reading!

Week Two: Sept. 5/6: What Is History? Part II: Discussion
Readings: Gilderhus, Chapters 1-3; Digital Reader, Chapters 1-2

Readings: Gilderhus, Chapters 4-6; Digital Reader, Chapters 3-4

Week IV: Sept. 19/20: Historical Research, I: Overview of History Sources
Readings: Gilderhus, Chapters 7-8; Digital Reader, Chapter 5

Readings: Davidson and Lytle, Prologue and Chapters 1-5

Readings: Davidson and Lytle, Chapters 6-11

Readings: Davidson and Lytle, Chapters 12-17

Week VIII: Oct. 17/18: The Art of Historical Detection: European Case Study

Week IX: Oct. 24/25: The Art of Historical Detection: European Case Study
Readings: Digital Reader, Chapters 6, 7, & 8

Week X: Oct. 31/Nov. 1: History, Historiography & Memory
Readings: Digital Reader, Chapters 9, 10, 11, and 12

Week XI: Nov. 7/8: History & Honesty: The Problem of Plagiarism
Readings: Digital Reader, Chapter 13

Week XII: Nov. 14/15: History & Its Publics
Readings: Digital Reader, Chapters 14, 15, & 16

Week XIII: Nov. 21/22: Historical Research II: Historiographical Horizons
Readings: No Reading: 1st Historiography Presentation

Week XIV: Nov. 28/29: Historical Research III: Special Collections/Archival Research
Readings: No Reading: 2nd (final) Historiography Presentations

Week XV: Dec. 5-6: A Future in the Past: Careers in History
No Readings: 2nd (final) Historiography Presentations

Finals Week: Dec. 12/13 Final Paper Due

Paper 1

Paper 2A

Paper 2B

Paper 2C

Paper 3
APPENDIX A: HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION: A DIGITAL READER

PART ONE: HISTORY & OBJECTIVITY


PART TWO: HISTORY & CREATIVITY


Chapter Eight: Joan Scott, “Gender a Useful Category for Historical Analysis,” American Historical Review, 91 (December 1986): 1053-1075.

PART THREE: HISTORY & MEMORY


Chapter Eleven: David Blight, “________________,” in Reconstruction and Reunion: ____________________

Chapter Twelve: David M. Wrobel, “Competing Interpretations: Four Case Studies”
PART FOUR: HISTORY & HONESTY

PART FIVE: HISTORY & THE PUBLIC
Chapter Fourteen: Patricia Melvin Moody, ____________________________________

Appendix B: Writing Techniques:

I: Theme Development (Pre-writing):
Essays should be driven by a key theme or argument. Effective theme construction is possible only after reflection on the topic.

1) Consider what you want to say before you begin; do not “make it up” as you go along.

2) Consider developing a paragraph-by-paragraph outline for the paper.

3) Think of an appropriate title. Considering titles can assist in theme construction and development.

4) Do not worry if there are loose ends in your thought processes before you begin writing. Writing the paper is part of the creative process, too.

II: Draft Writing:
Having reflected on the theme of your paper and appropriate content coverage, and having constructed a detailed outline, you should begin writing a first draft.

1) Make sure your opening paragraph clearly outlines both the scope of your paper (the general content/issues to be covered) and its central theme or argument.

2) If your essay draws on the work of other scholars, then be sure to demonstrate to the reader that you understand the themes/arguments presented in those works.

3) The bulk of your paper should present the relevant information/evidence necessary to flesh out the theme, or lend weight to the argument that you are making.

4) This presentation of evidence may include quotations from the sources. Effective quotation requires great care. To quote a few lines from a source simply because they sound good, without fully comprehending their meaning or context, is very unwise.
Instead, you should quote material that provides a sure indication of the point of view, or of some key point, or integral element of the argument of the author. Avoid long block quotations whenever possible. Short quotations, interspersed into your own narrative are effective because they do not break up your narrative flow.

5) As you write the final paragraphs of your paper, make sure you have developed a strong conclusion. A concluding paragraph is most successful when it succinctly summarizes the information presented in the paper without sounding repetitious, and then closes with a strong, even memorable, sentence or two.

III: Rewriting:
Having reflected on the paper's theme and content and written a draft, you may be two-thirds of the way through the assigned task. Rewriting is the next vital stage.

1) Set aside your first draft for a day or two, or even an hour or two, and then come back to it. Distancing yourself from the paper will better enable you to assess its merits.

2) Read through the draft and check each of the guidelines under section II (above): Is your opening paragraph clear and effective? Have you demonstrated an understanding of the sources you draw on? Have you presented sufficient evidence/information to support your argument/develop your theme? Does the quoted material serve its proper purpose, i.e., does it illustrate key points/arguments/points of view? Does the paper's conclusion still seem convincing to you?

3) If you find any shortcomings in the draft then correct them. This redrafting process may include a thorough rewriting of the whole paper, or of a few sections, or the re-ordering of certain paragraphs. You may even find that you need to reconsider your title. You are correcting a draft, so be hard on yourself, find every weakness you can. Consider all the possible criticisms of your paper and how you can deflate them.

4) Also check the draft carefully for grammatical shortcomings. Use the spell check function on the computer, but remember that computerized spell checkers are unreliable; you should also proofread a printout of your paper. Are your tenses consistent? Is your sentence construction effective, i.e. do your sentences read smoothly and make perfect sense? Have you carefully divided material into paragraphs? Do you have strong transitional sentences to lead the reader from one paragraph to the next?

5) Now you should have a complete second draft of your paper in front of you. You could submit the second draft of you paper or go through the above process again. Generally, the more drafts a paper goes through, the more effective it becomes.