

## HIST 421: HONORS HISTORICAL METHODS

### COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is designed to introduce history honors students to the methods of historical research and writing in preparation for writing an honors thesis. The course is divided roughly into two halves. In the first part of the semester students will explore together a variety of approaches, methods, genres, and problematics in historical practice. Students will consider and discuss the kinds of conceptual and methodological questions that animate the contemporary historical profession, including how and why we write the histories we do. At the same time, we will discuss concrete elements of thesis writing, from finding valid primary and secondary sources to the construction of arguments and the habits of good writing. We will meet with history graduate students, archive and library faculty, and new history department faculty who will address your questions about how to engage with historical research and the historical profession more broadly. Students are required to identify a topic for their honors thesis and a faculty mentor who agrees to guide them during the spring semester (History 422: Honors Thesis in Historical Research). The second half of the semester will focus on locating primary and secondary sources for your individual projects, building a bibliography, and writing a prospectus. Students will present this work to the class at the end of the semester.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this course, you will:

1. Be able to critically analyze historical scholarship and write review essays that articulate the author's thesis, argument, and evidence, and the work's strengths and weaknesses.
2. Develop research skills through using Purdue library resources and other relevant online databases, demonstrated in a lengthy bibliography in correct Chicago Style.
3. Secure the mentorship of a history faculty member to guide the student's thesis work.
4. Demonstrate the capability for independent thinking and historical scholarship by devising an original thesis project.
5. Construct and revise, on the recommendation of a review committee, a short research funding proposal for travel to archives.
6. Demonstrate oral communication skills in engaged and respectful discussion, and in the formal, professional presentation of a thesis prospectus conveying a thesis, argument, evidence, and research plan.
7. Be fully prepared to research and write a thesis of original scholarship that adheres to professional standards of methodology and writing.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

- *Historiography: An Introductory Guide*, Eileen Ka-May Cheng (Continuum, 2012)
- *How to Write a BA Thesis: A Practical Guide from Your First Ideas to your Finished Paper*, Second Edition, Charles Lipson (University of Chicago Press, 2018)
- *Thinking About History?* Sarah Maza (University of Chicago Press, 2017)

All books are available at the University Bookstores and online. **All the reading assignments listed in the course syllabus are required** and it is important that you complete each week's reading before you come to class.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**GRADE BREAKDOWN:** The following elements will constitute your final grade:

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| <b>Attendance and Participation</b>                   | (15%)          |
| <b>Reading Responses</b>                              | (25%: 5% each) |
| <b>Secondary Source Assessment</b>                    | (5%)           |
| <b>Primary Source Assessment</b>                      | (5%)           |
| <b>Prospectus Presentation</b>                        | (25%)          |
| <b>Thesis Prospectus and Bibliography (7-8 pages)</b> | (25%)          |

### CLASS ATTENDANCE

This course follows the University Academic Regulations regarding class attendance, which states that students are expected to be present at every meeting of the classes in which they are enrolled. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class and lateness will be noted. When conflicts or absences can be anticipated, such as for many University-sponsored activities and religious observations, you should inform me of the situation as far in advance as possible. For unanticipated or emergency absences when advance notification is not possible, contact me as soon as possible by email or phone. For absences that do not fall under excused absence regulations (see below), this course follows the following procedures: 1. Do not come to class if you are feeling ill. I do not need details about your symptoms. Just let me know if you are feeling ill and cannot come to class. If it is an emergency, please follow the University regulations on emergent medical care (see Brightspace).

Unless it falls under the University excused absence regulations (see below), any work due should be submitted on time via our course Brightspace. If that day's class involves assessed work such as a test or presentation, you and I will plan if and how you can make up the work, following the assignment guidelines. This plan must be done before the next class period, so again, email me immediately when you know that you will miss class. The most important consideration in any absence is how it will affect your achievement of the assignment objectives and the course learning outcomes. For cases that fall under excused absence regulations, you or your representative should contact or go to the Office of the Dean of Students (ODOS) website to complete appropriate forms for instructor notification.

Under academic regulations, excused absences may be granted by ODOS for cases of grief/bereavement, military service, jury duty, parenting leave, or emergent medical care. The processes are detailed, so plan ahead.

### **READING RESPONSES**

Whenever we have assigned discussions of the Cheng or Maza texts (underlined in the reading assignments section of the syllabus), each student will post **two questions for discussion** and a **one paragraph (between 100-125 words) response to one of those questions on the class Brightspace site by 7pm the evening before the class meeting**. I will use your questions to curate our discussion of these texts. Your cumulative score on all five of these responses will account for **25% of your final grade** for this semester.

### **SECONDARY SOURCE ASSESSMENT & PRESENTATION**

Each of you will give a short 5-minute presentation, comparing two secondary sources related to your thesis topic. In your presentation you should address the following questions: (did I say these should be 5 minutes, because these presentations are to be 5 minutes, and if they are longer than 5 minutes, I will stop you cold after 5 minutes):

Briefly introduce, explain, and contextualize both of your sources. Who wrote them? When were they written? How were they published, and how reliable is that publisher? What is the author's main argument or thesis, and who is the main audience? What kind of sources does the author use, and how do those sources affect their argument and its validity? How does the author's argument augment, challenge, or change the arguments of others? How does your contribution to this research area relate to this author's argument? What do you think you are adding to their contribution? How are you challenging it?

### **RESEARCH FUNDING PROPOSALS**

You will submit a short two-page grant proposal for funding to travel to archives relevant to your thesis research, even if actual travel to archives is not possible. There may be the possibility of limited funding for domestic archival trips, but funding is not guaranteed. These proposals are ungraded.

### **PRIMARY SOURCE ASSESSMENT & PRESENTATION**

Each of you will give a short 5-minute presentation, comparing two primary sources related to your thesis topic. Your sources can be anything at all (letters, music, art, video, memos, photographs, etc.) if they are relevant to your research. You should plan to display your primary sources either digitally or as handouts/paper copies.

In your presentation you should address the following questions: (did I say these should be 5 minutes, because these presentations are to be 5 minutes....) Briefly introduce, explain, and contextualize both of your sources. What are these sources? Who, what, when, and where are they from? What do they both illustrate about your topic? Why did you choose these sources? Briefly compare both of your sources. What does comparing these sources reveal about your topic? What does comparing these sources reveal about each source? Briefly explain why you think these sources are important to your topic and your research.

**PROPOSAL PRESENTATION**

You will each present your thesis proposals in class. These presentations will be 10 minutes long with time for a Q&A discussion at the end.

I will talk more about what is required closer to the presentations, but in general you should prepare to address the following questions: What research problem or question do you intend to address in your paper? Why is this an interesting question? Why is it problematic? Why is it significant? What are you contributing to the existing literature on the subject? How does your work augment, challenge, or change existing interpretations. How far are you in your thinking and research? What do you expect to discover? Are you ready yet to formulate a thesis statement? If so, what is it? You should also plan to invite your mentors to this presentation so that they can also ask questions.

Attach or include a working bibliography of the sources you have used so far and intend to consult. Separate them into two categories (secondary sources and primary sources) and use the Chicago Manual of Style to format the entries. You should also submit your draft proposal and bibliography on the day of your presentation (or earlier if you wish). This will give me time to make comments before you submit the final proposal on Monday, December 15.

**PROPOSAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHY**

By the end of the semester, you should have chosen a topic for their thesis, a faculty mentor, and a second reader. You will also have completed a proposal (7-8 pages) detailing what you intend to investigate and how you will proceed during the spring semester, with an extensive bibliography of at least 25 primary and secondary sources. Submit your final paper proposal and bibliography to me and your primary mentor on Monday, December 15.

**CHEATING / PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism refers to the reproduction of another's words or ideas without proper attribution. University Regulations contain further information on dishonesty. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious offenses and will be treated as such in this class. **You are expected to produce your own work and to accurately cite all necessary materials.** Cheating, plagiarism, and other dishonest practices will be punished as harshly as Purdue University policies allow. Any instances of academic dishonesty will **result in a grade of F for the course** and notification of the Dean of Students Office. Please make sure that you are familiar with Purdue's academic integrity policies: <https://www.purdue.edu/provost/teachinglearning/honor-pledge.html>

**“As a boilermaker pursuing academic excellence, I pledge to be honest and true in all that I do. Accountable together - we are Purdue.”**

**AI/Chatbot use is forbidden in this class.** Submitting AI-generated writing or research as your own is academic dishonesty and carries the same penalties as plagiarism. If any portion of your assignment was generated by a chatbot, you are in violation of the academic integrity expectations of this course and the university. Your case will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities for further review of your status at this University.

**DISCLAIMER**

In the event of a major campus emergency, the above requirements, deadlines, and grading policies are subject to changes that may be required by a revised semester calendar. Any such changes in this course will be posted once the course resumes on Brightspace.

**SEE THE CLASS BRIGHTSPACE PAGE  
FOR FURTHER EXPLANATIONS OF UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

## **DISCUSSION TOPICS & READING ASSIGNMENTS**

- Tues. Aug. 26: **Introductions**
- Thurs. Aug. 28: **How to Write a History Honors Thesis: Groundwork**  
Lipson, 3-37
- Tues. Sept. 2: **The History of Whom and The History of Where?**  
Maza, pp. 1-82
- Thurs. Sept. 4: **How to Write a History Honors Thesis: Secondary Sources**  
Lipson, 41-75
- Tues. Sept. 9: **How to Write a History Honors Thesis: Primary Sources & Framing**  
Lipson, 77-126
- Thurs. Sept. 11: **Meet with Kristin Browning Leaman, Library Liaison for History**
- Tues. Sept. 16: **The History of What, and Who Decides?**  
Maza, pp. 83-156
- Thurs. Sept. 18: **History Honors Homecoming & Reception**
- Tues. Sept. 23: **Causes, Meanings, and Objectivity?**  
Maza, pp. 157-240
- Thurs. Sept. 25: **Archives Visit**
- Tues. Sept. 30: **Archives Campus Tour**
- Thurs. Oct. 2: **Historiography Part I**  
Cheng, 1-90
- Honors Contracts Due by Friday, October 3**
- Tues. Oct. 7: **Meet with Current Graduate Students (meet in regular classroom)**
- Thurs. Oct. 9: **Historiography Part II**  
Cheng, 91-203
- Tues. Oct. 14: **OCTOBER BREAK: NO CLASS**
- Thurs. Oct. 16: **Meet with New Faculty Members (meet in regular classroom)**

Tues. Oct. 21:       **How to Write a History Honors Thesis: Primary Sources & Framing**  
                               Lipson, 77-126

**Secondary Source Assessment Presentations in Class**

Thur. Oct. 23:       **Research and Writing Lab:**

Fri. Oct. 24:       **Tentative date for Trip to Newberry Library in Chicago**

Tues. Oct. 28:       **Research and Writing Lab:**

Thur. Oct. 30:       **Research and Writing Lab:**

Tues. Nov. 4:       **Research and Writing Lab:**

Thurs. Nov. 6:       **Research and Writing Lab:**

**I will not be present since I am at a conference**

Tues. Nov. 11:       **Research and Writing Lab:**

Thurs. Nov. 13:       **Research and Writing Lab:**

Tues. Nov. 18:       **How to Write a History Honors Thesis: Writing**  
                               Lipson, 127-208

**Primary Source Assessment Presentations in Class**

Thurs. Nov. 20:       **No Class: Work on Presentations**

Tues. Nov. 25:       **THANKSGIVING BREAK-NO CLASS**

Thurs. Nov. 27:       **THANKSGIVING BREAK-NO CLASS**

Tues. Dec. 2:       **Student Presentations (Submit Draft Proposal)**

Thurs. Dec. 4:       **Student Presentations (Submit Draft Proposal)**

Tuesday. Dec. 9:     **Student Presentations (Submit Draft Proposal)**

Thursday Dec. 11:   **Student Presentations (Submit Draft Proposal)**

**Monday Dec. 15:    Final Proposals Due via Email by 5pm**

## **GRADE SCALE**

|           |               |
|-----------|---------------|
| <b>A</b>  | <b>93-100</b> |
| <b>A-</b> | <b>92-90</b>  |
| <b>B+</b> | <b>88-89</b>  |
| <b>B</b>  | <b>83-87</b>  |
| <b>B-</b> | <b>82-80</b>  |
| <b>C+</b> | <b>78-79</b>  |
| <b>C</b>  | <b>73-77</b>  |
| <b>C-</b> | <b>72-70</b>  |
| <b>D</b>  | <b>60-69</b>  |
| <b>F</b>  | <b>0-59</b>   |

## **UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

### **GRIEF ABSENCE POLICY**

Purdue University recognizes that a time of bereavement is very difficult for a student. The University therefore provides the following rights to students facing the loss of a family member through the Grief Absence Policy for Students (GAPS). Students will be excused from classes for funeral leave and given the opportunity to complete missed assignments or assessments in the event of the death of a member of the student's family.

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Accessibility and Accommodations Syllabus Statement: The DRC recommends the following statement be included in your syllabus. "Purdue University strives to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, you are welcome to let me know so that we can discuss options. You are also encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center at: drc@purdue.edu or by phone: 765-494-1247."

<http://www.purdue.edu/drc/faculty/syllabus.html>

### **NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY STATEMENT**

Purdue University is committed to maintaining a community which recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The University believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life.

Purdue University prohibits discrimination against any member of the University community on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, disability, or status as a veteran. The University



will conduct its programs, services and activities consistent with applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and orders and in conformance with the procedures and limitations as set forth in Executive Memorandum No. D-1, which provides specific contractual rights and remedies.

### **VIOLENT BEHAVIOR POLICY**

Purdue University is committed to providing a safe and secure campus environment. Purdue strives to create an educational environment for students and work environment for employees that promote educational and career goals. Violent behavior impedes such goals. Therefore, violent behavior is prohibited in or on any university facility or while participating in any university activity.

### **MENTAL HEALTH STATEMENT**

If you find yourself beginning to feel some stress, anxiety and/or feeling slightly overwhelmed, try WellTrack. Sign in and find information and tools at your fingertips, available to you at any time. If you need support and information about options and resources, please contact or see the Office of the Dean of Students. Call 765-494-1747. Hours of operation are M-F, 8 a.m.- 5 p.m.

If you find yourself struggling to find a healthy balance between academics, social life, stress, etc., sign up for free one-on-one virtual or in-person sessions with a Purdue Wellness Coach at RecWell. Student coaches can help you navigate through barriers and challenges toward your goals throughout the semester. Sign up is free and can be done on BoilerConnect.

If you're struggling and need mental health services: Purdue University is committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of mental health support, services are available. For help, such individuals should contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 765-494-6995 during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or by going to the CAPS office on the second floor of the Purdue University Student Health Center (PUSH) during business hours.

Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. There is no appointment needed and Student Support Services is available to serve students 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

**EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES are based on a simple concept – if you hear a fire alarm inside, proceed outside. If you hear a siren outside, proceed inside.**

**Indoor Fire Alarms** mean to stop class or research and immediately **evacuate** the building. Proceed to your Emergency Assembly Area away from building doors. **Remain outside** until police, fire, or other emergency response personnel provide additional guidance or tell you it is safe to leave.

**All Hazards Outdoor Emergency Warning Sirens** mean to immediately seek shelter (**Shelter in Place**) in a safe location within the closest building. o “Shelter in place” means seeking immediate shelter inside a building or University residence. This course of action may need to be taken during a tornado, a civil disturbance including a shooting or release of hazardous materials in the outside air. Once safely inside, find out more details about the emergency\*. **Remain in place** until police, fire, or other emergency response personnel provide additional guidance or tell you it is safe to leave.

*\*In both cases, you should seek additional clarifying information by all means possible...Purdue Home page, email alert, TV, radio, etc...review the Purdue Emergency Warning Notification System multi-communication layers at [http://www.purdue.edu/ehps/emergency\\_preparedness/warning-system.html](http://www.purdue.edu/ehps/emergency_preparedness/warning-system.html)*

### **EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROCEDURES:**

- Review the **Emergency Procedures Guidelines**  
[https://www.purdue.edu/emergency\\_preparedness/flipchart/index.html](https://www.purdue.edu/emergency_preparedness/flipchart/index.html)
- Review the **Building Emergency Plan** (available from the building deputy) for:
  - o evacuation routes, exit points, and emergency assembly area
  - o when and how to evacuate the building.
  - o shelter in place procedures and locations
  - o additional building specific procedures and requirements.

### **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AWARENESS VIDEOS**

- "Shots Fired on Campus: When Lightning Strikes," is a 20-minute active shooter awareness video that illustrates what to look for and how to prepare and react to this type of incident. See: <http://www.purdue.edu/securePurdue/news/2010/emergency-preparedness-shots-fired-on-campus-video.cfm> (Link is also located on the EP website)

### **MORE INFORMATION**

Reference the Emergency Preparedness web site for additional information:  
[http://www.purdue.edu/emergency\\_preparedness](http://www.purdue.edu/emergency_preparedness)