History 4385.001: Historical Research and Writing

Instructor: Dr. David Blanke  
Office Hours: MW 3:20-5:00pm; F 11am-12pm 
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Course Description
This is the “capstone” course for history majors and certifying teachers in or nearing their final semester of undergraduate coursework. In addition to introducing students to the study of history itself, it will focus on the production by each student of an original historical research paper of at least twenty-five pages. In sum, it seeks to equip students with the skills in research, writing, communication, and interpretation necessary to become effective and productive historians.

Writing a research paper will be for many a new and challenging experience. As such, it is imperative that you meet amongst yourselves and with me as frequently as you desire or deem necessary. I encourage you to visit me during my office hours, or by appointment. The worst mistake that you can make in this course is not getting started early enough, because you will never catch up.

Student Learning Outcomes
Students who successfully complete this course will:
• Understand the broad contours of historiography from antiquity to the present, including its major concepts, themes, methods, and theoretical approaches. Measure: exams, discussion participation.
• Learn the mechanics of historical research and writing, including identifying and locating electronic, print, and archival sources, constructing clear and persuasive arguments, and using the scholarly apparatus required by the discipline. Measures: short assignments, sources/working thesis assignment, research paper.
• Learn and practice the art of primary research, understanding how historical sources are used to interpret the past and using such sources to develop their own interpretations on their chosen topic. Measure: discussion participation, research exercises, research paper.
• Understand that all historical arguments are embedded in a scholarly context, and develop the unique context of their own interpretations and arguments. Measure: discussion participation, interpretive context exercise, research paper.
• Acquire an in-depth knowledge of a particular subject of interest. Measure: short topic assignments, individual consultation, research paper.

Books
Gilderhus, Mark. History and Historians: A Historiographical Introduction (7th ed.)
Strunk, William E., Jr., and E. B. White. The Elements of Style (4th ed.)

Course policies
Attendance and Conduct - I operate on the following assumptions: that you are bona fide students interested in honing your skills as historians; that you are mature enough to conduct yourselves with the appropriate behavior in class; that, as adults, you are best capable of managing your time wisely and productively. Nonetheless, a lack of regular attendance is a clear indication that you do not have a seriousness of purpose and should drop this course. Attendance will also be a factor in determining your class participation grade. Graded in-class assignments cannot be “made-up” and will count as a zero if missed.

supplemented by Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers* (7th edition). YOU MUST NOT USE PARENTHEtical REFERENCES IN THIS CLASS. Parenthetical references work well in some disciplines (such as Psychology, and, in some instances, English). However, they do not work with History, and you must not use them. All work must be in a 12-pt. font (no specialty or cursive fonts), double-spaced, single-sided, pages numbered, using 1-inch borders. Graphics or other images should not be included unless they are used in your paper as primary source material.

**Submitting assignments** - Please feel free to ask questions, seek out information, and keep me posted as to your progress via e-mail. However, you must turn in a paper (“hard”) copy of all your class assignments.

**Late work** – All work must be submitted at the beginning of the class on the day it is due. All work submitted after this time will be penalized 10 points for each class day it is late (i.e., if a paper is due on a Thursday class at 5:30, it will be penalized 10 points if it is submitted any time on Thursday after the beginning of class, and at any time before class on Tuesday).

**Plagiarism and academic dishonesty** - Plagiarism is theft, and those who commit plagiarism will receive, at minimum, a grade of zero on the assignment. Cheating on an examination will result in the same penalty. Extreme cases of plagiarism will result in failure of the course and a letter being written to your permanent file. This includes work that you have submitted, are submitting, or will submit to another class (you cannot receive credit for work in more than one class!). All direct quotations of five or more successive words taken from another source must be placed in quotation marks. Proper credit for ideas and quotations must be given in footnotes or endnotes. See the most recent University handbook and website for rules on academic integrity and academic honesty. See also Turabian, ed., *Manual for Writers*, pp. 77-80.

**Using the Internet** - You must provide a completed Internet Services Permission Form for every internet-based source that you use in your research paper (one form per internet source). The ONLY internet-based sources that do not require a Permission Form are:

- H-Net: (http://www.h-net.org/)
- The Library of Congress (http://www.loc.gov/index.html)
- All electronic databases provided through TAMU-CC’s Bell Library
- Those sources listed on the Internet Sources handout.

Under no circumstances are you allowed to include, as either a primary or secondary source, the following:

- Print or electronic encyclopedias, including Wikipedia.com
- Print or electronic dictionaries
- Print or electronic textbooks
- Commercial websites (usually indicated by domain names ending with “.com” “.co” or “.net”)

Rare exceptions can be made based on the subject of your research. For example, it may be necessary to use dictionaries to cite the ways that word meanings have changed over time. Or, your paper may examine how textbook authors change their representation of certain events over time. These exceptions will be made on an individual basis and in consultation with the instructor. In these cases, I will provide written confirmation that you are allowed to use these sources. This confirmation must accompany your final paper.

A Permission Form for all internet-based sources must be included with your complete draft and final paper. These forms do not count toward your final page total. Each unique internet-based source must have its own unique Permission Form. For each instance that an electronic source is used without a Permission Form or a disqualified source is included in your paper, your assignment will be lowered by a full letter grade.
GRADE APPEALS PROCESS: Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamu.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.

**Course Grade**

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Historiographical Paper</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sources-Working Thesis</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpretive context</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I’m continuing to write my paper” assignment</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complete draft</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>50%</td>
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**Historiographical Paper** - The paper will focus on one historian of note. Specific information about the paper will be distributed in class. In essence, the assignment will require you to (a) describe and accurately cite the major published works by this historian and (b) describe the conclusions of at least one historiographical essay related to this historian.

**Class Participation** - Class participation grades will be based upon the quality of your participation throughout the semester. Particularly important will be attendance; contributions made during discussions of historiography, research, and writing; short assignments; and the quality of comments made when assessing the rough drafts of fellow students. Your presence and active participation is expected, and there are NO make-up opportunities for missed assignments regarding class participation.

**The Research Paper** - Most of the course will focus on the production of an original research paper, which will need to be twenty-five pages in length (including text, footnotes or endnotes, and a bibliography). This project must be substantively different from others you have written, are writing, or will write for any other class. No written work may duplicate anything you have done, are doing, or will do for another class. Materials based upon research from primary sources must comprise the bulk of the paper. Topics will be decided upon by each student in consultation with me. I must approve all paper topics.

Creating a good research paper involves many contributing steps that are sometimes not evident to the reader of a final, published work. There are several steps you will need to engage in as you write your paper for this class.

**Sources-Working Thesis Paper** - This paper consists of two elements: a one page proposal in which you describe your topic, briefly explain your working thesis, and describe problems that you foresee. This exercise is designed to encourage you to get starting writing about your project, and to begin thinking seriously about the arguments you may make. Attached to this you must include a bibliography containing at least twenty sources that deal with the approved paper topic. You must divide all of the materials in your bibliographies into two categories – primary and secondary. At least ten of these sources must be primary; of these, no more than five may be electronic (web-based). Of the minimum of ten secondary sources, at least five must be from scholarly journals. Your citations must follow the proper format.

**Interpretive Context** - This is a four page essay in which you discuss the methodological approach you plan to take, survey what other historians have said about your topic, and describe the contributions to this debate that you hope to make. It should be written in clear prose style. Although some of the particular questions and issues you deal with will probably change, you should be able to incorporate much of this into your final paper.
“I’m continuing to write my paper” assignment – Five pages of typewritten, double spaced text. I have two goals in making this a requirement. First, it gives me an opportunity to see an early sample of your writing, thus enabling me to make early suggestions that should be helpful to you. Second, it forces you to get started writing your paper early. You will be graded on the basis of having written at least five pages of text, with accompanying endnotes or footnotes. This material must not duplicate the subject matter included in your earlier interpretive context essay. Although some of the details of this may very well change, you should be able to incorporate much of this into your final paper.

Complete Draft – Make three copies of your completed draft. Keep one for yourself, and turn two in. Grades will be based upon the completeness of the product. A complete first draft must include at least twenty-five typed, double spaced pages, including text, endnotes or footnotes, and bibliography. A completed text must include some form of introduction, interpretive context, thematic development, evidence, interpretations, footnotes or endnotes, and conclusions. Footnotes and bibliographies must use proper citation styles. Page numbers must be listed at the bottom of every page, and right margins must not be justified. To receive full credit, each of these components must be fully developed—not simply listed, implied, or suggested. The professor and fellow students will make suggestions for additional research, emphasis, and rewriting at that time, but grades for drafts will be based upon the completeness of the product. Copies of drafts will be exchanged among fellow students, who will then read these drafts and comment in written and verbal form. These comments are intended to provide additional input to students, and to provide each student with greater perspective on the entire research and writing process. They will follow a guide, based upon what manuscript readers for scholarly journals and university presses comment on, which I provide. I will follow the same format when I make my own reader’s report on each of your paper. You must provide one “Internet Source Permission Form” for every electronic database cited in the paper (one citation per unique source provider is fine). This section does NOT count toward the 25 pages.

Final Paper - Final papers must include a cover sheet, at least twenty-five pages of text, endnotes or footnotes, and a complete bibliography. All papers must be typed and double-spaced, with page numbers at the bottom of every page. The use of word processors is encouraged, but the right margin of the text must not be justified.

A good paper is set effectively within a broader interpretive context, incorporates significant primary research from a range of sources, is supplemented by secondary research, is effectively written, and contributes to our knowledge and understanding of whichever topic the student has selected. It is built upon the assumption that writing is a process, and that such a process begins well before the final paper is submitted.

The most important thing about your paper will be its content. You have to have something to say, and you must be able to convince your reader that you have done enough research so as to merit serious consideration of your work. However, considerable attention will also be given to matters of style. Even the most informative and exhaustively-researched work will be doomed to obscurity if you don’t write clearly.

You must provide one “Internet Source Permission Form” for every electronic database cited in the paper that is not on the approved list (one citation per unique source provider is fine). This section does NOT count toward the 25 pages.

Key factors in grading the final paper will include:
1) quality and depth of research;
2) quality and depth of analysis and interpretation;
3) effectiveness of organization, style, and proofreading, in the text as well as the accompanying footnotes/endnotes and bibliography;
4) effectiveness in developing the interpretive context;
5) effectiveness in following the directions outlined above.

**Students with Disabilities** - Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in Driftwood 101, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

**Veterans** - If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at 825-5816.

**Academic Advising** - The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College's Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS (subject to change)**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jan.</th>
<th>22</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Topics, Thesis, and Preparing a bibliography; <em>A Manual for Writers</em>, 141-215; Bring <em>A Manual for Writers</em> to class!</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Sources</td>
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<tr>
<th>Feb.</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Writing, notetaking, and refining your topic; <em>A Manual for Writers</em>, 36-47</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short Assignment 1 due</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>The Historian’s Craft, I; <em>History and Historians</em>, 1-49</td>
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<td>Short Assignment 2 due</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Careers in History</td>
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<td>Short Assignment 3 due</td>
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<td>12*</td>
<td><strong>Sources-Working Thesis Paper due</strong>; mandatory student/instructor conferences. Bring all notes and research materials that you have done so far with you (no photocopies allowed!)</td>
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<td>17*</td>
<td><strong>Sources-Working Thesis Paper due</strong>; mandatory student/instructor conferences. Bring all notes and research materials that you have done so far with you (no photocopies allowed!).</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>The Historian’s Craft, II; <em>History and Historians</em>, 50-85</td>
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<td>Short Assignment 4 due</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>The Historian’s Craft, III; <em>History and Historians</em>, 85-125</td>
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<td>26*</td>
<td>Library research</td>
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<th>Mar.</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>The Historian’s Craft: Summing Up</th>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Historiography</td>
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Spring break

10-14 Spring break

17 Footnotes and citations, *A Manual for Writers*, 133-59; Bring *A Manual for Writers* to class!

19 **Interpretive context assignment due**; Thinking About Your Argument

24 Organization, Introductions, and Conclusions

26* Mandatory student conferences

31* Mandatory student conferences

Apr. 2 **I’ve started to write** assignment due

7 A Few Basic Rules of Writing; Bring *Elements of Style* to class!

9* Optional Student Conferences

14 Last day to drop a class

16 **Complete Draft due**

21* Optional student conferences

23 Complete Drafts returned; Revising My Paper; Bring *Elements of Style* to class!

28 Revising My Paper; Bring *Elements of Style* to class!

30* Optional student conferences

May 5* Optional student conferences

Final Papers due in my office, Friday, May 9, by 5:00 pm. There will be no final exam.

* Dates marked with an asterisk (*) will have no formal class meeting. I will be in my office (or helping students in the library; if I’m doing that, I’ll post a sign to that effect on my door) during our class time. It’s a good idea to use me as a resource during these times.