# Spring 2020: Historical Research and Writing

**History 4385.001: Historical Research and Writing**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Instructor:</th>
<th>Dr. Robert Wooster</th>
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<tr>
<td>Office:</td>
<td>FC 269</td>
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**Office Hours:** M 3:30-5:15  
T 3:30-5:15  
W 3:30-5:15  
and by appointment

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## Course Description

This is the “capstone” course designed for history majors and certifying teachers in or nearing their final semester of undergraduate coursework, as well as for those students seeking to improve their research and writing skills. It will focus on the production by each student of an original historical research paper of at least twenty-two pages of text, footnotes/endnotes, and bibliography. 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 rarely be able to catch up.

## Student Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete this course will:

- 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: all assignments.
- 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. Measures: all assignments.
- Understand that all historical arguments are embedded in a scholarly context and develop the unique context of their own interpretations and arguments. Measures: all assignments except career assignments.
- Acquire an in-depth knowledge of a particular subject of interest. Measures: all assignments.

## Books


## Course Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thinking about a topic assignment</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Thesis/Preliminary Bibliography</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive context</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I’m continuing to write my paper” assignment</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete draft</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revising style assignment</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>50%</td>
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**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 research and writing; quality of daily work; evidence of research provided during our first individual conference; and 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 must be at least twenty-two pages of text, notes, and 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; because of the scarcity of materials accessible from our library, all papers must focus on issues after 1500. Each student will decide upon her/his topic 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. You will need to engage in several steps as you write your paper for this class.

Thinking about a Topic Assignment – This will be a one-page form in which you discuss a potential topic.

Working Thesis/Preliminary Bibliography - This assignment consists of two elements. First is a one-page proposal in which you describe your topic, briefly explain your working thesis/hypothesis, 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. Second is 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, at least five must be from traditional print/manuscript materials (i.e., not from the internet). Of the minimum of ten secondary sources, at least five must be from scholarly/academic journals referenced in either the America: History and Life database or the Historical Abstracts database. The remainder of your secondary sources must be scholarly/academic books. Your citations must follow the proper format.

Interpretive Context - This is a four-page essay in which you survey what other historians have said about your topic, describe the contributions to this debate that you hope to make, and in some cases the methodological approach you will be using. 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 most of this assignment into your final paper.

“I’m continuing to write my paper” assignment – Six 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, enabling me to make early suggestions that should be helpful to you. Second, it forces you to get started writing your paper. You will be graded on the basis of having written at least six pages of text (including endnotes/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. No bibliography is necessary.

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-two typed, double spaced pages of text, notes, and bibliography. A completed text must include some form of introduction, interpretive context, thematic development, evidence, interpretations, footnotes/endnotes, and conclusions. To receive full credit, each of these components must be fully developed—not simply listed, implied, or suggested. Footnotes/endnotes and bibliographies must use proper citation styles. Your name must be on every page. Each page must be numbered at the bottom, and right margins must not be justified. 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. Students will exchange copies of drafts, 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 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). Internet permission forms do NOT count toward the twenty-five page minimum.

Revising Style assignment – This assignment will require you to identify and apply stylistic lessons and guidelines to selected segments of your own writing.

Final Paper - Final papers must include a cover sheet, at least twenty-five pages of text, notes, and 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. Papers longer than thirty pages of text will not be accepted.

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 is its content. You must 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). You must also submit a bibliography that follows the appropriate guidelines. Neither your internet permission form nor your bibliography counts toward the twenty-two 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.

Course policies

You must bring the Storey, Turabian, and the History Area Style Guide to every class meeting.

Student groups 1 and 2 – Because of the large size of the class, on February 1 I will divide you into 2 groups, organized roughly according to subject interests students express in their Thinking About a Topic assignments. Doing so will enable me to return your assignments in a reasonable amount of time.

Attendance and Conduct - I assume 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 capable of managing your time wisely and productively. 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; only one unexcused absence is allowed without penalty, after which every unexcused absence ill result in 10 points being taken from your class participation grade. Excused absences must be arranged before class.

Style and Format - For all matters of style and format, follow the rules set forth in the History Area Style Guide, located on the history area website. In cases of very specialized citations, this should be supplemented by
Kate L. Turabian, et. al., *A Manual for Writers* (8th 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, and with your name on every page. Graphics or other images should not be included unless they are used in your paper as primary source material, and those images do not count toward the minimum page requirement.

**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 weekday it is late (i.e., if a paper is due on a Monday class at 5:30, it will be penalized 10 points if it is submitted any time on Monday after the beginning of class, and at any time on Tuesday).

**Plagiarism and academic dishonesty** - Plagiarism (which includes using the work of another as your own, using resource materials without correct documentation, and failing to use quotations when required) is theft, and those who commit plagiarism will receive, at minimum, a grade of zero on the assignment. 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 Storey, *Writing History*, pp. 49-51; and University Procedures, 13.02.99.C3.01, “Procedure for Academic Misconduct,” described at [http://studentaffairs.tamucc.edu/AcademicMisconduct.html](http://studentaffairs.tamucc.edu/AcademicMisconduct.html).

**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:

- All collections from the Library of Congress ([http://www.loc.gov/index.html](http://www.loc.gov/index.html))
- All electronic databases provided through TAMU-CC’s Bell Library
- 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, especially 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**.
Statement of Civility
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

Statement of Academic Continuity
In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi, this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

Classroom/professional behavior
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS (subject to change) – Remember to bring Storey and the History Area Style Guide to every class

Jan.      22  Plagiarism, and choosing a beginning and an end to your topic; Storey, Writing History, 49-51, 101-5
          27  Preparing a Bibliography; Storey, Writing History, 1-27, 30-31, 60-61
          29  Using the Bell Library

Feb.      3   Using the Internet; Storey, Writing History, 18-26
          5   Elements of a thesis
          10  Writing, notetaking, and refining your topic; Storey, Writing History, 32-42
          12  Careers in History

17*  Group 2 Sources-Working Thesis/Preliminary bibliography due; mandatory student/instructor conferences. Bring all notes and research materials that you have done so far with you (no photocopies allowed!). Your notes and research materials will be assessed as part of your class participation grade.

19*  Group 1 Sources-Working Thesis/Preliminary bibliography due; mandatory
student/instructor conferences. Bring all notes and research materials that you have done so far with you (no photocopies allowed!). Your notes and research materials will be assessed as part of your class participation grade.

24  Footnotes and citations; Storey, *Writing History*, 52-61

26  **Interpretive context assignment due**; Thinking About Your Argument
    Storey, *Writing History*, 62-77

Mar.  2*  Group 2 Mandatory Student Conferences

  4*  Group 1 Mandatory Student Conferences

  9-13  Spring break

16  **I’ve started to write assignment due** Organizing; Storey, *Writing History*, 78-89

18  A Few Basic Rules of Writing; Storey, *Writing History*, 43-51

23  Introductions, and Conclusions; Storey, *Writing History*, 89-101

25*  Optional Student Conferences

30  Group 1 Complete Drafts Due

Apr.  1  Group 2 Complete Drafts Due

  6*  Optional Student Conferences

  8  Group 1 Complete Drafts Returned

10  **Last day to drop**

13  Group 2 Complete Drafts Returned

15*  Group 1 Mandatory student conferences

20*  Group 2 Mandatory student conferences

22  Revising My Paper; Storey, *Writing History*, 106-31

27*  Optional student conferences

29  **Revising Style Assignment due**

May  4*  Optional student conferences

  6*  Optional student conferences

Final Papers due in my office, Friday, May 8, 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. I encourage you to drop by and use me as a resource during these times.

**Disabilities Accommodations**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

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 (361) 825-5816.

**Grade Appeals**

As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C0.03, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C0.03, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught or the Office of the Provost. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at: [http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf](http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf).

**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. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

**Dropping a Class**

I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. **Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course.** Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. The last day to drop a class for the spring semester is April 10, 2020.