

Honors in History

HIST691H, Fall 2017, Wednesdays 2:30-5:20 p.m., HM 517

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What is to be done?

Welcome to History 691, the first semester of the history honors thesis seminar. Your honors thesis will be one of the most demanding experiences of your college education and, I hope, one of the most rewarding. You will employ all the skills of a professional historian: original research, creative thinking, complex analysis, and intensive writing and rewriting. By the end you will have produced an impressive work of historical scholarship.

The honors thesis is a polished work of research and argument, usually 50 to 75 pages long. It will include three chapters flanked by an introduction, conclusion, and bibliography. I recommend reading some past UNC History honors theses (available online through UNC Library).

Over the summer you should have begun your secondary and primary research, as you outlined in your summer plan. Now that you know something about your topic and what previous historians have written about it, in the next few weeks you need to focus your topic and begin to construct the arguments you intend to make about it. A good start is crucial to the rest of the process.

Of course, your research will continue as you begin your analysis. The majority of your remaining sources should be available nearby. There are some limited funds for traveling to distant archives.

How will you do it?

Responsibility for structuring and developing your project rests primarily in your hands, but you will be doing this work in collaboration with others. Our seminar will be both a research seminar and a writing workshop. I will guide you during your weekly seminars, confer with you outside of class, and evaluate your writing. Your classmates will provide critical advice and support (intellectual as well as personal).

Your advisor will provide expertise on your particular topic as well as assist in your process of analysis and writing. I urge you to establish a good working relationship with your advisor as soon as possible. Draw up a mutually satisfactory schedule for meeting, and keep your advisor informed of the semester's timetable. Don't be shy about asking for guidance and advice. Your advisor wants to help you.

It is easy to get sidetracked during the long and difficult process of writing an honors thesis. I have therefore scheduled deadlines to keep you progressing through the stages of your project. You should have completed one chapter in October and another by the end of November.

How will you be evaluated?

I will evaluate your seminar participation and the writing that you do this semester. At the end of the semester, I will consult with your advisor to determine a final grade. Students who complete the first semester but do not continue in the spring will receive course credit for History 691.

Reading

Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research*, 3rd or 4th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008/16) (available at the bookstore & on reserve)
The Class Schedule (later in this syllabus) lists reading assignments from *Craft of Research* and from other sources that are available online.

I also strongly recommend that you use handouts from the Writing Center:

<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/>

Remember, the Writing Center helps advanced writers as well as struggling ones!

About Your Professor

Kathleen DuVal is a professor in the UNC History Department and a historian of early America, specializing in the history of interactions among American Indians, Europeans, and Africans. Professor DuVal is the author of many books and articles, including *Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution* (2015) and *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (2006).

Please see our Sakai site for additional documents, including academic and wellness resources and the Honor Code.

Class Schedule

August 23—The Big Picture

Assignments:

By class time, send to your advisor and me (Prof. DuVal): a two-page abstract on the field(s) of historiography that are important for your thesis, citing relevant major works/scholars, including at least one book and one article. (Email my copy as a pdf and ask your advisor's preference.)
Booth et al., *Craft of Research*, chs. 2-3

August 30—Finding Evidence

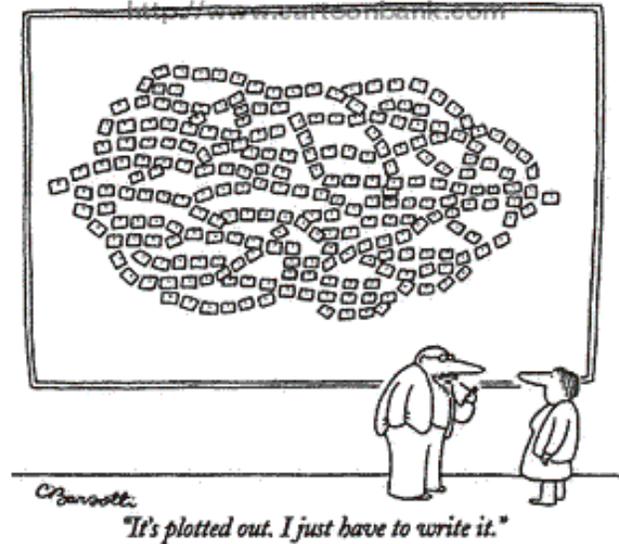
For the first hour of class, we will meet with a UNC Research Librarian.
Please meet in Davis Library room 246 *promptly* at the start of class.

Assignments:

Select three primary sources that seem useful to your first chapter. Reproduce (scan, photocopy, transcribe) and bring to class selections from them that will fit on a single sheet (front to back). Provide citations for the sources, and be prepared to discuss your choices: *why* are they critical for your thesis? Pick exciting materials—something that captures why you felt intellectually engaged by the subject.

Booth et al., *Craft of Research*, ch. 5

Optional Reading: Booth et al., *Craft of Research*, ch. 6



September 6—Partner Meetings

Partners will meet during the class period.

Assignments:

By class time, email to me (as a pdf): a one- to two-page (double-spaced) sketch of your first chapter (or, if that doesn't suit you, of your entire thesis). Imagine it as a proposal to a book publisher or a PBS documentary producer.

1. Give the title plus the cast of characters
2. What is the problem, dilemma, or question(s) that launches the story?
3. What will be one or two moments of tension, conflict, or turning points?

(I know that this seems too early in the process, but it is a good time to think grandly, unburdened by knowing too much.)

After doing the above assignment, prepare a 5-minute oral pitch for your partner meeting, as if your partner were the book publisher or documentary producer.

Booth et al., *Craft of Research*, ch. 12 and parts of ch. 13 that seem relevant.

September 13—Starting to Write

Assignments:

By class time, email both of these assignments to your group and me. Send just the annotated bibliography to your advisor:

1. Write two pages of your first chapter (not the first pages) with footnotes.
2. Compile an annotated bibliography that includes 10-15 sources you have turned up on your topic. For at least 5 of these, tell us how you found the source. At the bottom of the bibliography, write 1-3 sentences explaining how what you want to do will fit into the historiography. In other words, are you looking at new sources, asking new questions of them, arguing with previous historians' interpretations ...?

September 20—Writing with Feeling and Voice

The class will meet in small groups during the class period.

Assignments:

By 5 p.m. on Sunday, September 17: email your partner and me two paragraphs of feedback on the two pages due last week. In the first paragraph, describe what you find the most interesting or effective. Be specific. (Don't just say "this is interesting" but instead "what I find interesting is the sharp distinction you made between the Garvey movement and the black press" or "I like how vividly you described King's ambivalence.") In the second paragraph, describe one way you think the pages can be improved. Be specific and constructive. Keep in mind what the author is trying to accomplish and try to help her or him get there.

Read Margaret Atwood, "In Search of Alias Grace: On Writing Canadian Historical Fiction," *American Historical Review* 103 (December 1998), 1503-1516 (on JSTOR)

By class time, email to your group and me: Historians have their feet in two quite different fields: the social sciences and the humanities. The best historical scholarship combines rigor of analysis with a smooth and compelling narrative. This assignment will help you work on narrative, which serves to help recreate a sense of the past for the reader. In no more than 2 pages, write a scene or episode from your topic. You have many options: an action-packed incident, a description of a place, a conversation between two people, or someone's memory of the past. Whatever you choose, it should arouse readers' imaginations. Let them see, hear, smell, taste, and/or feel what happened. Show rather than tell. Cite your sources.

Read and comment (on paper or electronically) on the other people's pages in your group and come to class ready to discuss.

September 27—Getting Stuck, Getting Unstuck

Assignments:

Read Tyler Litke, "Yearning for Normalcy: Marriage and Gender in the Slaveholding Class During the Civil War," *Traces* 5 (2017), 23-55

Read H. Brent McKnight, Jr., "The Cherokee Indian Fair and the Making of a Tourist Economy," *Traces* 5 (2017), 56-85

By class time, email me a page that you have written.

Bring to class a problem that you have run into: a gap in the evidence, an inconsistency between secondary and primary sources, trouble keeping on track, or something you just can't figure out.

Based on your experiences as a writer, what advice would you offer your classmates? Which tricks make writing easier for you? What pitfall should we avoid?

October 4—Four Pages in Search of an Argument

The class will meet in small groups during the class period.

Assignments:

By 5 p.m. on Monday, October 2: send a statement of your tentative argument for the thesis, the tentative arguments of each chapter, an outline of the first chapter, and the chapter's first four pages (with the argument underlined) to your group, your advisor, and me.

By class time: read your group's pages and come ready to discuss them.

Optional: Booth et al., *Craft of Research*, ch. 7

October 11—Individual Conferences (Hamilton 466)

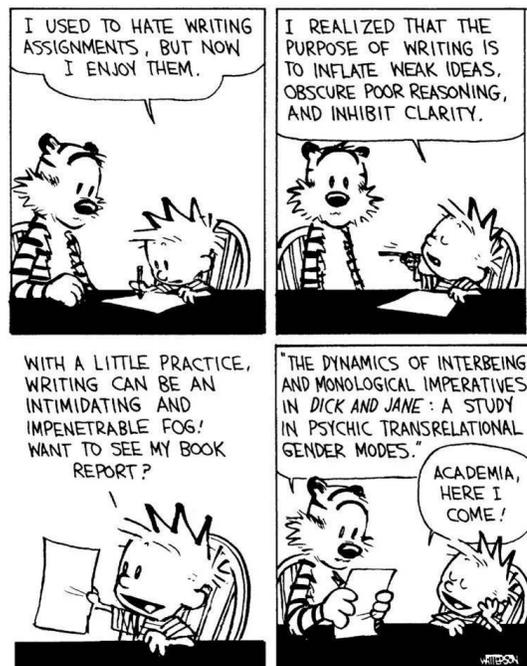
Assignment:
Write!

October 18—No Class—Fall Break

Assignments:

By 5 p.m. on Monday, October 16: send a draft of your first chapter (13-15 pp. with notes) to your partner and me.

By 5 p.m. on Wednesday, October 18: read your partner's draft, make comments on the draft, and email a three-paragraph response to your partner and me, using the following guidelines. First, report what you understand to be your partner's overall argument in this chapter and how the chapter seeks to prove that argument. Second, indicate what you find especially effective or interesting. Be as specific as you can. Third, describe the ways in which you think your partner could improve this chapter. How persuasive do you find the argument? Does the narrative move steadily forward or does it go off track? Are there gaps that your partner needs to fill? Are there things you don't understand?



October 25—Revised Chapter Due

Assignment:

By classtime: Email a complete and relatively polished chapter draft (15-17 pp. with notes) to your partner, your advisor, and me.

November 1—Where Do We Go From Here?

The class will meet in small groups during the class period.

Assignment:

Bring to class, on paper or in electronic form, three paragraphs answering the following three questions:

1. What is the overall argument of my thesis?
2. What does my first chapter accomplish?
3. What will my second chapter accomplish?

(Hint: answers #2 and #3 should have something to do with #1.)

November 8—The First Four Pages

Assignments:

Preparatory Assignment (not to turn in): Before you begin writing the pages to turn in, write one or two sentences for each of the following four questions (continued on the next page):

1. Who is in your mind as your audience when you write? Is s/he supportive or inhibiting?
2. Are you tempted to surround your ideas with qualifications and repetitions?
3. How would you describe your authorial voice?
4. What did you learn about writing while drafting chapter 1?

By 5 p.m. on Monday, November 6: email the first four pages of your chapter to your group, your advisor, and me. (If you don't want to write the chapter's introduction yet, begin with one or two sentences explaining this chapter's argument, then write the first four pages of the chapter's body.)

Read your group's pages and come prepared to discuss them.



*"I wrote another five hundred words.
Can I have another cookie?"*

November 15—Writing Day

Come write together in the classroom.

Assignment:

Write!

November 22—No Class—Thanksgiving

November 29—Partner Meetings

Partners will meet during the class period.

Assignments:

By 5 p.m. on Monday, November 27: send a draft of your second chapter (13-15 pp. with notes) to your partner and me.

By classtime: Read your partner's draft, make comments on the draft, and email to me and your partner a three-paragraph response following the guidelines for responding to the first chapter (listed under Oct. 18).

December 6—Revised Chapter 2 Due

Assignment:

By classtime: Email a complete and relatively polished draft of your second chapter (15-17 pp. with notes) to your partner, your advisor, and me.

Note: If revisions aren't quite done by the final day of class, you may ask me for an extension until December 11.



"By God, for a minute there it suddenly all made sense!"

(cartoon credits: Charles Barsotti, *New Yorker*, June 24, 1996; Bill Watterson, *Calvin and Hobbes*, Feb. 11, 1993; Mick Stevens, *New Yorker*, Dec. 24, 2001; Gahan Wilson, *New Yorker*, March 31, 1986)