

History 191
Senior Thesis

Fall 2011 – UC Merced
MWF 2:30-3:20 p.m. – Kolligian 296

Instructor: Professor Sean L. Malloy (smalloy@ucmerced.edu)
Office Hours: MW 3:30-4:20 p.m. and by appointment in COB 311
Course Website: Available via UCMCROPS

Course Description, Philosophy, and Goals

The primary aim of this class is to guide students step-by-step through the writing and revision of a 25-35 page Senior thesis in History based on research in primary sources. You will select a topic based on your own interests and then work with the instructor and with your fellow students to craft research questions and write multiple drafts of your thesis. In the process, you will locate and analyze primary sources, integrate your findings with a reading of the relevant secondary literature and historiography, learn the technique of proper Chicago-style citation, and practice constructing historical arguments. The end result should be a polished work of scholarly writing and research modeled on the kind of work you would find published in journals such as *The American Historical Review* (AHR) or *The Journal of American History* (JAH). During the last three weeks of class, students will give a 10-15 min. oral presentation of their research modeled on an academic conference panel.

There are two underlying educational philosophies that will guide this class. The first is that the best way to learn something is to practice doing it. You can find any number of books that purport to tell you how to write a history paper or thesis. These books often contain useful information and we will read excerpts from some of them. However, the major emphasis of this class will be on practicing the craft of historical research and writing through a number of shorter exercises and drafts that will help you master the craft while building towards a final draft of your Senior thesis.

The second philosophy that guides this class is that good historical research and writing builds on a collaborative foundation. While the final paper you submit will be your own, all historians build on the work of others in constructing their arguments. In addition to asking you to read secondary works by historians who have written on areas relevant to your topic, I will also put each student into a small writing group. These groups will meet regularly to read and comment on each other's work. In addition to our class meetings, I will also meet with the writing groups and with students individually in order to help provide feedback on your drafts and help you with the research process. Finally, students will keep a research blog where they share their thoughts on the process of producing their thesis. While there will be periods of solitary research, writing, and editing as you complete your thesis, you should never feel alone or isolated in your work. You will always be surrounded by a community of fellow scholars from whom you can learn and lean on for support. While printed (and increasingly electronic) publications make up the formal scholarly record, it is these human connections that make our work as scholars possible.

Course Materials

There are no required text books for this course. The bulk of your reading will be dictated by your research topic. Early in the semester you will identify a list of relevant primary and secondary sources with input from the instructor. In addition, I will post selected excerpts and articles on our CROPS website (see the course schedule below for more details) in order to help guide our classroom discussions. You will also be reading a lot of your fellow students' drafts over the course of the semester as part of your work in the writing groups.

The one item you are required to purchase is a folder or binder that you can use to maintain a writing portfolio. The portfolio will contain all of the writing assignments for this class in addition to drafts and comments from your fellow students on your work. When you submit your final draft of your thesis, you will also turn in the portfolio so that I can assess your work over the entire semester.

Course Requirements and Grading

The most important piece of graded work in this class is your final research paper of 25-35 pages due on the last day of class (December 9). The final paper is worth 50% of your grade. You will also receive letter grades on two other written assignments: a prospectus (due September 28) and a first draft (due November 16). In addition, 35% of your grade will be determined by participation. Participation includes not only attending class, but also a number of shorter writing assignments, posts on your research blog, work in the writing groups, and your final oral presentation.

Every student is required to maintain a research blog (via the blogger software available on our course UCMCROPS website). Your blog is a place for you to informally discuss the progress of your research and writing efforts over the course of the semester. You are required to post at least once per week (with a deadline on 5 p.m. on Friday) and offer at least one comment per week on another student's blog, though I would encourage you to post and comment more often. Your posts can focus either on the research/writing process (e.g. "my struggles with Chicago-style citation") or on some aspect of your research topic (e.g. "some initial thoughts on the election of 1988"). These posts can be informally written and are designed to help you think out loud about your Senior thesis while soliciting comments from your fellow students (and the instructor). Please make sure, though, that your posts and comments are at least nominally related to your thesis. Save the "I just had a killer carnitas burrito!!!!!!!" post for your personal Twitter feed or Facebook page.

We will not always meet together as a class, particularly on Fridays and in the middle of the semester when you should be immersed in research, writing, and smaller meetings with the instructor and your writing group. However, it is vital that you do attend when we are scheduled meet to together. Attendance at scheduled class meetings and writing group meetings is mandatory. Any missed class without a documented medical explanation will result in a reduction of your participation grade.

The grading breakdown is listed below. This is not a full list of all of the assignments, only those which receive a letter grade. Please see the checklist of written assignments attached to the end of this syllabus for a complete list with relevant due dates.

Participation (including research blog, peer review comments, short writing assignments, and in class presentations)	35%	
Prospectus	5%	September 28
First Draft	10%	November 16
Final Research Paper	50%	December 9

Academic Honesty Policy

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the University of California, Merced’s Academic Honesty Policy. The relevant section on plagiarism states that:

Plagiarism refers to the use of another’s ideas or words without proper attribution or credit. This includes, but is not limited to: copying from the writings or works of others into one's academic assignment without attribution, or submitting such work as if it were one's own; using the views, opinions, or insights of another without acknowledgment; or paraphrasing the ideas of another without proper attribution. Credit must be given: for every direct quotation; when a work is paraphrased or summarized, in whole or in part (even if only brief passages), in your own words; and for information which is not common knowledge. The requirement to give credit applies to published sources, information obtained from electronic searches, and unpublished sources.

Penalty for violation of this Policy may include failure of the course and University disciplinary action. Please see the entire policy <http://studentlife.ucmerced.edu>.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The University of California Merced is committed to ensuring equal academic opportunities and inclusion for students with disabilities based on the principles of independent living, accessible universal design and diversity. Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss his or her specific needs. Also contact Disability Services at (209) 228-7884 as soon as possible to become registered and thereby ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

Class Schedule

Week 1

August 29: Class Meeting: Introductions

August 31: Class Meeting: The Historian and the “Art of the Tale”

CROPS:

David M. Kennedy, “The Art of the Tale: Story-Telling and History Teaching.”

Assignment #1: One-paragraph statement of research interests due in class.

September 2: Research Day

Post at least one blog entry and one comment on another student’s blog by 5 p.m.

Week 2

September 5: Labor Day Holiday

September 7: Class Meeting: 2nd Annual UCM Gratuitously Arbitrary Mini-Research Paper Presentations

Assignment #2: Two-page Gratuitously Arbitrary Mini-Research Paper due in class.

September 9: Research Day

Post at least one blog entry and one comment on another student’s blog by 5 p.m.

Week 3

September 12: Writing Group Meetings

Assignment #3: One-page topic statement and research questions due in writing group and to Prof. Malloy by 5 p.m. via email.

September 14: Individual Meetings with Prof. Malloy

Assignment #4: Secondary source bibliography due to Prof. Malloy by 5 p.m. via email.

September 16: Research Day

Post at least one blog entry and one comment on another student’s blog by 5 p.m.

Week 4

September 19: Individual Meetings with Prof. Malloy

September 21: Individual Meetings with Prof. Malloy

Assignment #5: Primary source bibliography due to Prof. Malloy by 5 p.m. via email.

September 23: Research Day

Post at least one blog entry and one comment on another student's blog by 5 p.m.

Week 5

September 26: Class Meeting: Narrative and the Historical Imagination

CROPS:

Excerpts from John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History*.

September 28: Class Meeting: From Prospectus to First Draft

Assignment #6: Five-page prospectus with revised primary and secondary source bibliographies due in class.

September 30: Research Day

Post at least one blog entry and one comment on another student's blog by 5 p.m.

Week 6

October 3: Writing Group Meetings

Assignment #7: Provide a 1-2 paragraph response to your fellow writing group participants' prospectuses and via email to Prof. Malloy by 5 p.m.

October 5: Writing Group Meetings with Prof. Malloy

October 7: Research Day

Post at least one blog entry and one comment on another student's blog by 5 p.m.

Week 7

October 10: Writing Group Meetings with Prof. Malloy

October 12: Writing Group Meetings with Prof. Malloy

October 14: Research Day

Post at least one blog entry and one comment on another student's blog by 5 p.m.

Week 8

October 17: Individual Meetings with Professor Malloy

October 19: Individual Meetings with Professor Malloy

October 21: Research Day

Post at least one blog entry and one comment on another student's blog by 5 p.m.

Week 9

October 24: Class Meeting: The Challenges of the Editor

Assignment #8: Ten-page section of your thesis due in class

October 26: Individual Meetings with Prof. Malloy

October 28: Research Day

Post at least one blog entry and one comment on another student's blog by 5 p.m.

Week 10

October 31: Individual Meetings with Prof. Malloy

November 2: Individual Meetings with Prof. Malloy

November 4: Research Day

Post at least one blog entry and one comment on another student's blog by 5 p.m.

Week 11

November 7: Writing Group Meetings

Assignment #9: Two- to three- paragraph (roughly one page) comment on your fellow writing group members' draft due at your writing group meeting and via email to Prof. Malloy by 5 p.m.

November 9: Individual Meetings with Prof. Malloy

November 11: Research Day

Post at least one blog entry and one comment on another student's blog by 5 p.m.

Week 12

November 14: Individual Meetings with Prof. Malloy

November 16: How to Effectively Present a Research Paper

Assignment #10: First draft of research paper due along with research paper portfolio to Prof. Malloy and your writing group in class.

November 18: Research Day

Post at least one blog entry and one comment on another student's blog by 5 p.m.

Week 13

November 21: Student Presentations (order TBA)

Assignment #11: One- to two-page comment of your fellow writing group members' first drafts due in class.

November 23: Individual Meetings with Prof. Malloy

November 25: No class; Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 14

November 28: Student Presentations (order TBA)

November 30: Student Presentations (order TBA)

December 2: Student Presentations (order TBA)

Week 15

December 5: Student Presentations (order TBA)

December 7: Student Presentations (order TBA)

December 9: PARTY

Final draft of research paper due along with research portfolio in class on December 9.

Senior Capstone
Fall 2011 – UC Merced

Assignment Checklist

Assignment	Due Date
Assignment #1: One-paragraph statement of research interests	August 31 (in class)
Assignment #2: Two-page Gratuitously Arbitrary Mini-Research Paper	September 7 (in class)
Assignment #3: One-page topic statement and research questions	September 12 (in class)
Assignment #4: Secondary source bibliography	September 14 (via email by 5 p.m.)
Assignment #5: Primary source bibliography	September 21 (via email by 5 p.m.)
Assignment #6: Five-page prospectus with revised primary and secondary source bibliographies	September 28 (in class)
Assignment #7: One- to two-paragraph response to your fellow writing group participants' prospectuses.	October 3 (at your writing group meeting and via email to Prof. Malloy by 5 p.m.)
Assignment #8: Ten-page section of your thesis due in class	October 24 (in class)
Assignment #9: Two- to three- paragraph (roughly one page) comment on your fellow writing group members' draft	November 7 (at your writing group meeting and via email to Prof. Malloy by 5 p.m.)
Assignment #10: First draft of research paper	November 16 (in class)
Assignment #11: One- to two-page comment of your fellow writing group members' first drafts	November 21 (in class)
Final draft of research paper	December 9 (in class)

Note: All page numbers are based on double-spaced, 12 pt., Times New Roman. You may use another font so long as it is reasonably close to the specifications above. If you have any doubt, please consult the instructor.