

# Historical Writing

HI 598.001

Spring 2019

T 3-5:45

Withers 115

NC State  
University



## COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course critically evaluates the methods and practice of contemporary historical writing, primarily through the student's own research and writing of a research paper.

The aim of the class is to explore the qualities of historical writing as *scholarship* and as *writing*, and to see whether doing so can help those taking the class become better, or at least more versatile, authors of pieces about the past. Some questions that we address:

- How do those writing about the past convey what they have learned and the arguments they want to make?
- What rhetorical devices do they use to try to enlighten, capture the attention of, provoke, persuade, or even amuse their readers?
- Why do we think of some historians as especially good stylists or practitioners of the craft of historical writing?
- Why is writing for the public different from writing for the academy?

Students' objectives in this course are to: 1) define a research topic and question, and relate the significance of both; 2) relate the framing questions for their research; 3) outline their projects; 4) describe the historiographical contexts for their projects; 5) frame a research prospectus; demonstrate improved skills in research; 6) demonstrate improved skills in narrative writing; and 7) develop skills to analyze and assess relevant primary and secondary sources.






**Critical studies in the methods and practice of contemporary historical writing.**

**Professor Craig Thompson Friend**

office hours: T 2-3 pm, Th 2-3 pm, or by appt.  
office: Withers 368

email: [ctfriend@ncsu.edu](mailto:ctfriend@ncsu.edu)  
office phone: 919-513-2227

## REQUIRED BOOKS

-  Abbott, Andrew. *Digital Paper: A Manual for Research and Writing with Library and Internet Materials*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.
-  King, Stephen. *On Writing*. New York: Scribner, 2010.
-  Leftridge, Alan. *Interpretive Writing*. Ft. Collins, CO: National Association of Interpretation, 2006.
-  Popkin, Jeremy D. *From Herodotus to H-Net: The Story of Historiography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.
-  Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

You will also have multiple readings—articles, blog posts, etc.—that are available through the links in this syllabus or through the NCSU library. If you have difficulty accessing any readings, please alert the professor immediately.

### ASSIGNMENTS

Participation	15%
* Research Question Assignment	0%
Primary Source Analysis Assignment	10%
Book Review	10%
Research Prospectus	10%
* Draft of Research Paper	0%
Critique—two copies	10%
Conference Presentation	10%
Final Research Paper	35%
(* must be completed as part of Final Research Paper grade)	

Note: incomplete grade will be given in this class only in cases of medical emergency.

### GRADING SCALE

97-100=A+	87-89=B+
93-96=A	83-86=B
90-92=A-	80-82=B-
80>=F	

## SWIM OR SINK!

Students often think that making a good grade in a course is what matters. Well, when you were an undergrad, that may have been true, but it is not the measure of success for graduate students. It is entirely possible to do well in this course without being transformed by your newfound knowledge, but it would be a darn shame. Imagine we are standing on a seashore and the course is the ocean. Enter with me and go as deep as you dare.

**WADERS** will roll up their pants legs and get their feet wet, concerning themselves with **WHAT** they see in the shallow waters. There's nothing wrong with staying near the shore where you feel safe. You may find a neat seashell, but your learning experience will be just as shallow as the water.

**SNORKELERS** are willing to take in a deep breath and look beneath the surface. They want to see how the tide ebbs and flows, to know **HOW** an interpretation developed and how that seashell ended up in the shallow waters.

**DIVERS** go deeper, fully immersing themselves in the historiographical waters. They not only want to see the ebb and flow of the tide, but they want to know the dangers of the undercurrents. They want to interact with all that lies beneath the surface because they are concerned with **WHY** history and historiography matters.

## THE SAC METHOD

For every reading that you do in this course you should be able to summarize, assess, and critique—SAC! You should prepare for each class AS IF YOU WILL BE LEADING DISCUSSION! You may be called on to do so.

**S**ummarize: What is the reading about? What is the story that the author is presenting? What is the argument?

**A**ssess: Why is the story written in such a manner? How is the argument supported? What is the conclusion?

**C**ritique: How effective is the story? How convincing is the argument? How does it contribute to the larger historiography?

By being able to summarize, assess, and critique individual readings, you will develop the skills to see broader historiographical landscapes and situate your own work and perspective.

## HOW THIS COURSE WORKS

**PARTICIPATION.** The seminar is taught in the Socratic method, meaning that there will be asking and answering of questions to stimulate critical thinking and to draw out ideas and underlying presumptions. Questions will be followed up with more questions in order to advance the discussion. You will be graded both on the frequency and the quality of your participation; attendance is clearly important for participation. Students are expected to arrive in class having read and considered the material for discussion that day. Attendance alone is not sufficient for full participation credit. Students must actively engage.

- A: Student is well prepared, attentive, always responds when called upon and volunteers often with pertinent answers or questions.
- B: Student is usually prepared, responds when called on and volunteers on occasion.
- C: Student shows evidence of being unprepared on occasion, has trouble when called on and does not volunteer often.
- D: Student is unprepared, inattentive, never volunteers, or comes to class late.
- F: Student exhibits a lack of concern for the class, sleeps in class, or disturbs the class.

## What is “New” about Your Research?

It is not easy to find new topics to research, but the last thing you want to do is replicate others’ research and contribute nothing to the historiography. There are four ways in which you can create an original contribution:

- *New Topic: Asking a New Question.* No one has written about my topic. As a result of this scholarly neglect, my paper explains the significance of my research topic and offers a provisional interpretation of this new material.

- *New Evidence: Filling a Gap.* A few scholars have written about my topic, but gaps and deficiencies in the literature still exist. My paper examines new or different evidence to correct these shortcomings.

- *New Interpretation: Making a Counterclaim.* Other scholars have written about my topic, but I am dissatisfied with the interpretations and/or methodologies. My paper calls for a reassessment of the existing literature based on recent findings, new methodologies, and/or original questions.

- *New Interpretation: Carrying on a Tradition.* Other scholars have written about a similar topic, and I think their interpretations and/or methodologies may be useful in reassessing my topic. My paper builds upon a common historiographical tradition to enlighten understanding of a previously explored topic.

**RESEARCH QUESTION ASSIGNMENT: Two-pages—the first with your question, preliminary thesis, and significance; the second with a preliminary bibliography.** Once you have a general topic in mind, begin to formulate a question. It is important to go beyond simply pointing to a general area of interest or a set of broadly connected themes. You need to try and formulate a clear and specific question for the topic that your research addresses. For example, framed at the broadest level, your research question might be:



-  How and why did black Americans participate in the revolutionary effort of 1775-1782?
-  How were female bodies depicted in medieval European art and why were they depicted so?
-  How and why did capitalism take root in Communist China?
-  How does the content of the History Channel reflect contemporary ideas about history and why do these ideas persist?

In order to be adequately answered, each of these research questions would be broken down into a range of sub-questions. But thinking of the task as oriented to answering a broad and general question in this way will help you to narrow your focus and to formulate a more precise plan for attacking the topic. In presenting your research question, you will want to explain in clear and jargon-free prose why it is an interesting and meaningful topic. This can be hard to do early in the research process, but it is important to try to be accessible and easy to follow—if nothing else, it will help you organize your thoughts. Also, in explaining why the topic is interesting and important, it is not enough merely to offer some citations to other scholars who have written about it before—you need to make the case yourself.


For example, in approaching the History Channel question above, I might decide that the success of historical documentaries like Ken Burns's *Civil War* evidenced a consumer pool for historical television content—that answer might be my thesis (the answer to my research question). To build a case for *why* the question and thesis are worth my time and effort, I might note that history-oriented television has been significantly understudied, both for its accuracy and its impact. I might explain how, when we think carefully about the issue, televised history-content cuts to the heart of some very great difficulties in public history, including how to weigh historical content against entertainment; how the tension between academic history and public history plays out through history-oriented television; how television's commercial orientation undermines public history; and why history-oriented television plays a central role in the Cultural Wars. Therefore, investigating the History Channel, I might argue, can help us to understand difficult problems in public history more generally (significance).


**... and about that preliminary bibliography:** at least six books and three articles about your general topic should be listed in correct bibliographic form on the second page.


**PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT: A three-page analysis of a primary source for your research.** Analyzing primary sources is an important component of historical research and greatly furthers our understanding of historical events. Primary sources can include journals, newspaper articles, artifacts, letters, artwork, music and literature, among numerous examples. Understanding from when and where a primary source comes helps historians to understand what the document reveals about the history of a place or people. Select one primary source or one historical artifact that is essential to your research. Write a description of it that discusses its provenance, authorship and audience, historical context, contents, biases, usefulness as a source for your research, and its shortcomings as a useful source. In so doing, include the following:


-  **Provenance:** Apply the “time and place rule,” which dictates that the stronger the connection between an item and the event to which it is related, the more reliable the source. So a firsthand account of a riot by a participant in that riot is a more reliable source than an account written by someone living miles away who heard about the riot or someone who wrote an account of it fifty years after it occurred.
-  **Authorship and Audience:** Consider the audience for the item. To whom was the author directing his/her writing or art, and why? Was this source only meant to be seen by the author,

or by a wider public? Would this affect how the source was created and what message it is intended to send?

 **Historical Context:** The basics—what the item is, who created it, where, when, why. What was going on in the world, the country, the region, or the locality when this was created that might help us understand why it was created?

 **Contents:** Study the primary source itself in depth to see if there is symbolism or metaphor in the writing or aesthetics. If so, what is this symbolism or metaphor meant to convey? What does the author's word choice or subject choice tell you about the primary source? How was the source created, and what physical elements do you notice about it?

 **Biases:** Apply the "bias rule," which reminds historians that all historical documents contain some sort of bias, depending on their source. Keep in mind the author of the document, and her/his role in events as the item conveys only that person's version of events or opinions.

 **Usefulness:** Evaluate the primary source in the context of your own historical study. What does this source contribute to your study of history? What information or discoveries can you glean from this primary source, and what does this information or discovery add to your understanding of the historical period you're studying?

**BOOK REVIEW: A five-page review of a book for your research.** History instructors have three good reasons for assigning reviews, whether of books, films, exhibits, tours, or other works. First, a review requirement ensures that students will do the assigned reading, or whatever else is being reviewed. It is much harder to fake familiarity with a work when one is required to write about it. Second, reviews are logistically easy. Students assigned a research paper will necessarily spend a lot of time hunting for a topic, finding sources, and wandering down dead ends. In contrast, if an instructor assigns a review of required reading, the students begin with a topic and their sources, so they can spend their time reading, thinking, and writing. Third, and by far most important, review essays provide practice in one of the most valuable skills offered by a liberal arts education: the skill of critical reading. When I assign a review, it is this skill that I hope to see displayed.

The first step in a review is to describe the work and its topic. For example, if you were to review a biography of Charles Lindbergh, it would be appropriate to give your reader some idea of who Charles Lindbergh was, and why someone might want to read a book about him, before you gallop off to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the book itself. The trick is to provide the necessary summary in as short a space as possible. You will repeat the book author's ideas, not your own, so this section should only be a small part of your review.

The second task is to describe the work itself. That is, rather than telling the story of the Erie Canal, you are now telling a story about how Carol Sheriff wrote a history of the Erie Canal. Here you will ask "Why did the author choose this topic? Who is her audience? What sources does she use? What arguments does she make? Is the book more analytical or narrative? Is it just words, or pictures too? In short, what was the author trying to do?"

Having determined the author's goals, you now explain whether the author achieved those or other goals. For example, if an author states in his first sentence that his "book represents an effort to recast the history of the Second Industrial Revolution," then by all means, your review should at some point evaluate his success in doing so. But it is also perfectly appropriate to go beyond the author's stated goals to ask whether those goals were appropriate to begin with. For example, the U.S. Congress recently expressed concern that the National Park Service was doing a fine job of explaining military history to visitors to Civil War sites, but it was doing little to educate them about the root causes of the war, notably slavery. In this case, the Congress functioned as exhibit reviewer and made the case that the function of Park Service interpretation needed to be reconsidered.

While you do not need to like the work you are reviewing, please remember that criticism is more than complaint. Book authors have a limited number of pages, curators have a limited amount of exhibit space, and everyone is constrained by finite time, money, and sources. Before demanding that a historian take on an additional task, you might think about what portions of a book, exhibit, or film

could have been eliminated to make room. Before complaining that the historian focused only on one group of people, ask if other groups left the records the historian would need to tell their stories as well. It may help to imagine that you are giving advice to a historian about to create a work similar to the one you are reviewing. What constructive lessons can you provide?

If this sounds formulaic, it is. Sometimes formulas have their merits. Indeed, perhaps the best preparation for writing a review as a college assignment is to read other academic reviews. Among the best are the review essays (not the capsule reviews) published in the *American Historical Review* and *Reviews in American History*. If you are affiliated with a university, you can read back issues of both journals at JSTOR and more recent issues of *Reviews in American History* at Project Muse. Regardless of your affiliation, you can read similar reviews, though less uniformly excellent ones, at H-Net Reviews.

The important thing to remember is that a book, exhibit, or other scholarly work is a tool with a specific function. To evaluate the tool, you must first understand the function. And having done that, you must explain it to your reader, answering the question, what is this book good for? Along the way, you will find yourself ripping the book apart to see how it works, imagining how it could have been written differently, seeing it from the author's point of view, and, perhaps, comparing it to other works. And that is critical reading. [Courtesy of HistoryProf.org]

**RESEARCH PROSPECTUS WITH ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY: A twelve-page prospectus (not including bibliography) that addresses the following:**

- 🔍 What is your topic, and what is the general question that you are asking of it?
- 🔍 Why is the topic and the question important?
- 🔍 At this moment, what do you think is the answer to your question?
- 🔍 What historiography already exists on this research question?
- 🔍 How does your question propose to fit into that literature?
- 🔍 What methodology/ies do you expect to use to tackle the question?
- 🔍 What is your research plan? (Where are your sources? What is your schedule?)

This is called a prospectus for a reason: it is meant to *initially* direct research and writing. Expectations are that the thesis, the sources, the evidence, even the topic itself may evolve: You will most likely develop an “angle” on the question that you have posed, although many of its details have yet to be nailed down. For example, I may want to argue that the History Channel evidences a conservative counter-narrative to the more liberally-framed public history narrative that had taken shape since the 1970s. This is the answer to my original research question: “What does the content of the History Channel say about contemporary ideas about history, and why do these ideas persist?” Consequently, this answer is my thesis, but I do not yet fully have a research plan on how to prove it. The sources, methodologies, and themes will evolve as I move into the topic.

But I also need to begin thinking about *how* I am going to accomplish the task before me. As part of your prospectus, you need to include a list of archival and digital collections that you have already explored (at least preliminarily). Your list should include preliminary identification of collections in each repository, and conclude with timetable for completion of the project, including planned visits to requisite archives and a writing schedule.

**And about the annotated bibliography . . .** Provide a bibliography of secondary sources that you plan to employ in the historiography. A mixture of articles and books can be useful, and public historiography is dominated by articles—the trick is to discern the wheat from the chaff. Each listing should have no more than two sentences following that relate the book's or article's topic, research question, thesis, and significance. Book reviews are an excellent way to determine the topics, research questions, and theses of your books. Reviews also provide insight in how reviewers respond to the topic and thesis.



**RESEARCH PAPER: A thirty-page paper** based upon primary and secondary sources. Footnotes are included in the page count; requisite bibliography is not included in page count. The 35 percent accorded this project depends upon the completion of three assignments: 1) submission of the research question assignment on January 15<sup>th</sup>; 2) two copies of a draft turned in via email to the professor and the critiquer on March 31<sup>st</sup>; and 3) the final manuscript which is due May 2<sup>nd</sup>. Failure to meet any of these deadlines will result in forfeiture of the manuscript grade. *Please note that a draft is an unrefined, complete version of the paper*; it is a draft because it requires rewriting, revision of organization, or a bibliography—NOT because it is a small, incomplete part of the larger project. *Your draft must be complete*, including the following elements:

✎ An introduction that:

- defines your main questions
- fits these questions into the context of the historiography on the topic (approx. 5 pages)
- briefly discusses your primary sources
- briefly explains the methodology you are using to analyze these sources
- presents your thesis

✎ A body that presents an extensive analysis of the primary source evidence:

- the body should provide historical context and necessary background information
- the analysis of evidence must logically support the thesis stated in your introduction
- the analysis of evidence can take either a narrative or non-narrative form
- the evidence itself must be discussed in a way that answers your questions/proves your thesis
- the evidence may be organized either chronologically or thematically (or as a combination)

✎ A conclusion that:

- sums up the major findings of your research
- explains how the answers to your questions relate to historiography on the topic.

✎ Documentation of all quotations, paraphrases, etc., in correct footnote forms.

The final version of the manuscript, then, should be complete, exorcized of all grammatical, typographical, organizational, and illogical demons. You may add the bibliography later.

**CRITIQUE:** A three-page evaluation of another student's draft historiography, as well as a thoroughly marked-up critique of the draft. Each student will have primary responsibility for evaluating one particular manuscript and submitting two copies of his/her critique (including specific suggestions for improvement). The paper you are to critique should have the following features:

#### **An introduction**

- ✎ Does it give relevant context/background information?
- ✎ Were you comfortable as you finished the intro that you knew what is being studied (topic) and why (significance)?
- ✎ Did you know the main themes of the narrative?
- ✎ Is the historiographical importance clearly stated?

#### **An argument**

- ✎ What point is the author making about the historiography?
- ✎ Is it clearly stated, and does it relate to the topic?
- ✎ Is it evident why this is important?

#### **The body**

- ✎ Was the narrative well-written? Was it a good read? If so, how and why? If not, what impeded understanding or enjoyment?
- ✎ How is the historiography organized: Book-by-book? Thematically? Chronologically? Is it effective?
- ✎ What sources were used, and why? Were the sources used wisely—were conclusions logical?

#### **Conclusion**

- ✎ Was the conclusion expected?

☞ Did the totality of the paper support or refute the author's intent?

☞ Do you agree with the conclusions?

Since you are critiquing a draft, it is imperative that you be as constructively critical as possible. "The author clearly has no grasp of his topic" is not constructive for it provides no guidance. "The author would benefit from making an argument for the relevance of her topic" is constructive because it gives some sense of what you see as a partial solution.

**CONFERENCE PAPER AND PRESENTATION:** You will distill your research paper from its original length to an eleven-page version that would be appropriate for presentation at a conference. You will present your paper to the class on either April 16<sup>th</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup>, as determined by lottery. (You may trade presentation dates with another student if you wish.) On the date of your presentation, you must bring an extra copy for the professor to follow as you read your paper to the class. Your presentation will be followed by questions and critiques.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Week One: January 8th	<b>Basics of Theory and Historiography</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thomas Andrews and Flannery Burke, <a href="#">"What Does it Mean to Think Historically?"</a> <i>Perspectives on History</i> (January 2007)</li><li>• Turabian, <i>A Manual for Writers</i>, chaps. 1-5 &amp; 14</li><li>• John Stackhouse, <a href="#">"Should You Write a Master's Thesis?"</a></li><li>• Lynn Hunt, <a href="#">"How Writing Leads to Thinking."</a> <i>Perspectives on History</i> (February 2010)</li><li>• Liena Vayzman, <a href="#">"Practical Advice for Writing Your Dissertation, Book, or Article,"</a> <i>Perspective on History</i> (December 2006)</li><li>• Schrag, Zachary. <a href="#">"A Thesis Statement Template."</a> <i>HistoryProfessor.org</i>.</li><li>• ----- <a href="#">"Elements of a Thesis Statement."</a> <i>HistoryProfessor.org</i>.</li><li>• ----- <a href="#">"Dialectical Thesis Statements."</a> <i>HistoryProfessor.org</i>.</li><li>• Pinker, Steven. "Why Academics Stink at Writing." <i>Chronicle of Higher Education</i>. 26 September 2014 (provided as pdf)</li><li>• Robert Darnton, "The Good Way to Do History," <i>The New York Times Review of Books</i>, 9 January 2014</li><li>• Keith Thomas, "Diary," <i>London Review of Books</i>, 10 June 2010</li><li>• Limerick, Patricia Nelson. "Dancing with Professors: The Trouble with Academic Prose." <i>New York Times Review of Books</i>. Oct./Nov. 1993. (provided as pdf)</li></ul>
Week Two: Jan. 15th	<b>Basics of Research</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Turabian, <i>Manual for Writers</i>, chaps. 6 &amp; 7, 15-17</li><li>• Walkowitz, Judith. <a href="#">"On Taking Notes."</a> <i>Perspectives on History</i>. January 2009.</li><li>• Lipkowitz, Elise. <a href="#">"From Notes to Narrative: Introduction."</a> <i>Perspectives on History</i>. January 2009.</li><li>• Harkness, Deborah E. <a href="#">"Finding the Story."</a> <i>Perspectives on History</i>. January 2009.</li><li>• Timothy Shenk, "Apostles of Growth," <i>The Nation</i> (5 November 2014)</li><li>• "How to Read a History Book" &amp; "A Note on Historiography" in syllabus appendix</li><li>• <b>Research Question Assignment is due in class</b></li></ul>



Week Three: January 22nd	<b>Sources: Primary and Secondary</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Primary Source Analysis Assignment is due in class.</b></li> <li>• Wong, Paul T.P. <a href="#">“How to Write a Research Proposal.”</a> <i>International Network on Personal Meaning</i>.</li> </ul>
Week Four: January 29th	<b>Understanding Historiography</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Popkin, <i>From Herodotus to H-Net</i>, all.</li> </ul>
February 3rd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Book Review due as an email attachment by 6 pm</b></li> </ul>
Week Five: February 5th	<b>Imagining the 30-page Research Project</b> <p>Please read with attention to <i>how</i> the author wrote, not necessarily <i>what</i> was written. Also consider the differences regarding research, structures, narratives, and writing an article (the equivalence of a research paper) versus writing a book (the equivalent of a thesis or dissertation).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kevin J. Mumford, University of Iowa, “The Trouble with Gay Rights: Race and the Politics of Sexual Orientation in Philadelphia, 1969–1982” <i>American Historical Review</i> 98 (June 2011): 49-74; winner, Binkley-Stephenson Award, Organization of American Historians</li> <li>• Julianna Barr, “Geographies of Power: Mapping Indian Borders in the ‘Borderlands’ of the Early Southwest,” <i>William and Mary Quarterly</i>, 68 (January 2011): 5-46; winner, Kimberly S. Hanger Award, Latin American and Caribbean Section of the Southern Historical Association</li> <li>• Richard Rabinowitz, “Eavesdropping at the Well: Interpretive Media in the <i>Slavery in New York</i> Exhibition,” <i>The Public Historian</i> 35 (2013): 8-35; winner, G. Wesley Johnson Award, National Council on Public History</li> </ul>
Week Six: February 12th	<b>The Big Commitment!</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Research Prospectus Assignment is due in class.</b></li> </ul>
Week Seven: February 19th	<b>Research and Writing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abbott, <i>Digital Paper</i>, all.</li> <li>• Turabian, <i>A Manual for Writers</i>, chaps. 6-7, 9-12.</li> </ul>
Week Eight: February 26th	<b>Research and Writing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• King, <i>On Writing</i>, all.</li> <li>• Anne Lamott, “Shitty First Drafts,” excerpt from <i>Bird by Bird</i> (provided as PDF)</li> </ul>
Week Nine: March 5th	<b>Other Forms of Writing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leftridge, <i>Interpretive Writing</i>, all.</li> <li>• <a href="#">“Writing History for a Popular Audience.”</a> <i>The American Historian</i>.</li> </ul>

Week Ten: March 12th	<b>Spring Break!</b>
Week Eleven: March 19th	<b>no class—professor available for consultation by appointment</b>
Week Twelve: March 26th	<b>no class—professor available for consultation by appointment</b>
<b>March 31st</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Draft of research paper is due via email attachment to professor and critiquer by 6 pm</b></li> </ul>
Week Thirteen: April 2nd	<b>Transforming Research into Presentations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Turabian, <i>A Manual for Writers</i>, chap. 13.</li> <li>Claire Potter, <a href="#">“How to Get to Carnegie Hall: Giving Good Paper,”</a> <i>Chronicle of Higher Education</i>, 4 November 2007</li> <li>Linda K. Kerber, <a href="#">“Conference Rules: How to Present a Scholarly Paper,”</a> <i>Chronicle of Higher Education</i>, 21 March 2008</li> <li>“How to Critique” in syllabus appendix</li> </ul>
Week Fourteen: April 9th	<b>The Day of Reckoning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Critiques are due in class</b></li> </ul>
Week Fifteen: April 16th	<b>Conference Papers—group 1</b>
Week Sixteen: April 23rd	<b>Conference Papers—group 2</b>
Exam Week: May 2nd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Final assignments are due by 4 pm via email attachment</b></li> </ul>

## POLICIES (or, the fine print)

### **Absence Policy**

You are grown folk. Attend as you wish. Don't be surprised if your participation grade suffers because you are not in class to attend, or that your work reflects a general ignorance because you were not in class to hear valuable material or ask relevant questions. If you have any questions about University Attendance Regulations, visit <http://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-02-20-03>. Note, however, that I only teach material once! It is not my obligation to teach you should you miss class, and also note that there is no make-up policy for assignments. The onus of success lies with you, as do the consequences of failure.

### **Technology Policy**

Students may use laptops at the professor's discretion. If a student is using a laptop for anything other than course-related work, the privilege of technology may be stripped from that student. Under no conditions should a phone be seen in the classroom.

### **Writing Policy**

All papers must be neatly typed in a regular-sized font (Times New Roman, 11 or 12 point is preferred) and double-spaced. All margins must be either 1 or 1¼ inches. YOU CANNOT BE TOO THOROUGH WHEN CITING SOURCES! All citations must conform to the style found in Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers*. Points will be deducted for errors in grammar and mechanics.

### **Academic Dishonesty Policy**

Students are required to comply with the university policy on academic integrity found in the Code of Student Conduct found at <http://policies.ncsu.edu/policy/pol-11-35-01>. Severe penalties attend your using other people's words without attribution. See campus policies for the implications (<http://www.fis.ncsu.edu/ncsulegal/codeof.htm>) and the History Department's policy at [http://history.ncsu.edu/ug\\_resources/plagiarism\\_honor\\_code](http://history.ncsu.edu/ug_resources/plagiarism_honor_code). Your signature/e-name on an assignment or examination represents that you have conformed to the Honor Pledge: "I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this test or assignment."

### **Incomplete Grades**

If an extended deadline is not authorized by the instructor, an unfinished incomplete grade will automatically change to an F after either (a) the end of the next regular semester in which the student is enrolled (not including summer sessions), or (b) the end of 12 months if the student is not enrolled, whichever is shorter. Incompletes that change to F will count as an attempted course on transcripts. The burden of fulfilling an incomplete grade is the responsibility of the student. The university policy on incomplete grades is located at <http://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-02-50-3>.

### **Policy for Students with Disabilities**

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, student must register with the Disability Services Office (<http://www.ncsu.edu/dso>), 919-515-7653. For more information on NC State's policy on working with students with disabilities, please see the Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Regulation at <http://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-02-20-01>.

### **Supporting Fellow Students in Distress**

Occasionally, you may come across a fellow classmate whose personal behavior concerns or worries you. When this is the case, I would encourage you to report this behavior to me and to [NC State Students of Concern](#). Although you can report anonymously, it is preferred that you share your contact information so they can follow-up.

## **Evaluations**

Online class evaluations will be available for students to complete during the last two weeks of the semester, becoming unavailable at 8am on the first day of finals. Students will receive an email message directing them to a website where they can login using the Unity ID. All evaluations are confidential; instructors will not know how any one student responded to any question, and students will not know the ratings for any instructors. The evaluation website is <http://go.ncsu.edu/cesurvey>.

## APPENDIX

**How to Read a History Book: *Get the main points:*** Books are made of words, but not all words have equal weight. Understanding the hierarchy of words may allow you to extract 75 percent of a book's content while reading only 25 percent of the text.

The most important words can be the title. A well-chosen title will suggest not only the subject matter of the book, but also its central argument. Take, for example, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. Gordon Wood tells you right up front that he thinks the Revolution was radical. If, by the end of the book, you do not understand why he thinks so, he has failed in his task. *Nature's Metropolis* has a paradox for a title. A metropolis is a human creation, so how can it belong to nature? The text of the book answers that question. Not every title is so eloquent, but it is always worth asking why the author chose the title he did.

Once you have actually opened the book, you will find a hierarchy of chapters. The introduction and conclusion are often the most important, for here the author can explain the question that animated her research and the answers she found. It may be helpful to read not only the introduction, but also the conclusion before reading the body chapters. If there is anything in the conclusion that you find improbable, you can then read the body chapters looking for proof. Some books employ a similar hierarchy within each chapter, providing an introduction and conclusion of a few paragraphs, often set off from the rest of the text by a boldface heading or a blank line.

On the lowest fractal level, individual paragraphs have hierarchies, for some sentences, generally the first sentence of each paragraph, serve to make the author's point, while the following sentences provide nuance and evidence. In a very structured book, reading only the first sentence of every paragraph will give you a summary of the entire text. And maps, photographs, illustrations, and captions are always worth your attention; they are too expensive to the publisher to be included lightly.

Does this mean that it is sufficient to read only the topic sentences, and to finish a 300 page book in 40 minutes? Not exactly. Because a good book (and your instructors wouldn't assign a book they didn't think worthwhile) will contain dozens of topic sentences that will provoke you to read the whole paragraph. The topic sentences have the same function as headlines in a newspaper. They give you a brief glimpse of the paper's contents, so you can decide which areas demand more detailed exploration. In other words, read quickly through the parts you believe; read slowly through the arguments of which you are not convinced.

**Ask questions:** Reading in the manner described above will give you an idea of what the author thinks. That is a good start, but you haven't really read a book until you decide what you think.

As you read, you should constantly ask questions. Here are some examples.

- What is the author's argument, and am I persuaded? If so, what evidence is particularly persuasive? If not, what evidence does not fit? Or what would it take for me to believe the author's point?
- What does the author care about? What are some of the key terms she uses again and again? What terms does she use for controversial ideas and events?

- How did the author write this book? What sources did she use? Only primary sources, only secondary, or a mixture? Is there one source that provided most of her material? Who are the people in the book—is it only about rich white men, or are other groups’ stories told as well?
- Why did my professor assign this book? How does it fit into the course? Does it agree with other books and the professor’s lectures, or is there a debate? How does this book square with things I’ve learned outside of class? (It may help to read with your class notes at hand.)
- What do I think of this book? What is missing from the book—what would I like to know more about? What is surprising? What is funny? What made me angry?

**Take notes:** To get your best ideas—both your insights about the author’s intended arguments and your own thoughts on the subject—to the section, essay, or exam where they can be evaluated and rewarded, you must take notes while you read. Fortunately, academic press books generally provide ample margins for your thoughts on specific pages, as well as for lines, stars, question marks, and other symbols to mark key passages (a tidier alternative to highlighting or underlining). Imagine that you are talking to the author. When he says something interesting, talk back or ask a question—and write your response in the margin.

For notes on more general themes that recur throughout the book, I suggest the fly pages in the back. For library books and books you plan to sell, you will naturally have to take your notes elsewhere—on paper or computer. But whether you take your initial notes in the book or separately, it is very helpful to type them up as a summary with questions. If you prepare such a summary for each text in the course, you will be very well prepared for your exams. [Courtesy of HistoryProf.org]

**A Note on Historiography:** Providing a sense of historiographic context is essential to a successful, scholarly research paper. If you write for a more popular audience, you can focus on public knowledge: dates, personalities, and events reiterated in a narrative fashion. But when you write for other academics or public history professionals, you must move beyond the basics and attend more to interpretations of history, differing analyses of primary sources, and the mindsets among academics during the periods under which these histories were written.

In short, a historiographical essay is a review and analysis of the ways in which historians interpreted a specific topic differently over time. While researching material for a historiographical essay, students must read the major works of history (namely secondary sources) on a concise topic published at different periods of time. Students researching the historiography of various topics throughout American history, for example, might first read major works from progressive historians during the early to middle twentieth century, such as Charles A. Beard and Frederick Jackson Turner, move to scholarships from post-World War II consensus historians, such as that of Richard Hofstadter and Robert H. Wiebe, shift to new left historians from the late 1960s and 1970s, such as Howard Zinn and James Weinstein, then conclude with more recent works from historians, such as Gordon S. Wood and Patricia Nelson Limerick.

After thoroughly researching works pertaining to the topic, the objective is to discover the ways in which historiographical trends have changed and the reasons for those changes, and to express common threads and themes throughout the major works. Changes in historiographical trends, in many instances, occur due to new interpretations of primary sources, or when scholars analyze a topic through new historical approaches, such as the utilization of social, cultural, or economic studies and vantage points. Although historical consensus are rare or virtually non-existent, works with common threads can be found and must be identified within a historiographical essay. *Most importantly and perhaps the primary confusion among some graduate students, is that historiographical essays should not discuss, to any great length, the actual history of a certain topic, as this would be the objective of a research paper.* Instead, a historiographical essay should only discuss the major arguments and theses of certain works and how interpretations within those arguments and theses have contributed to the historiography of a topic.

Conclusions should compare and contrast works within the historiographical subject, discuss the ways in which the works discussed in the essay have contributed to the historiography, explain the

current state of that historiography, and suggest avenues that have been inadequately researched for future scholarships. Historians are always in conversation with one another through their writings. Although it is not always apparent on the surface, it is still important to come to an understanding of historiographical conversations, and a historiographical essay is an excellent way to understand this concept.

The most important step in writing historiography is to become familiar with the history of your topic in broad terms. A good historiography is written from a position of authority on a topic. A historiography is best situated early on in an essay, preferably in the introduction in order to familiarize the reader with the topic and to set out the scope of previous work in broad terms.

- Your historiography should establish:
  - the major thinkers on the topic, and
  - their main arguments (or theses).
- Your historiography may also explain:
  - the perspective from which the authors are writing (e.g. Marxist, feminist, etc.)
  - the type of history they have written (e.g. political, social, cultural, economic, etc.)

A good historiography will present this information in a way that shows the connections between these major works. For example, does one work respond to an argument set out in another? Does it expand on that argument or disagree with it? A good historiography will also situate the author's work within the dialogue, explaining whether his or her thesis builds on or rejects the work that has come before.

### Example 1

The following example is from "Women on the Third Crusade," by Helen Nicholson:

With the modern interest in "putting women back into medieval history", the role of women in crusading has received some attention. *[This sentence identifies the scope of her inquiry and the perspective—she is situating her essay within a dialogue about the role of women in medieval history.]* Yet historians disagree profoundly over the extent and nature of women's involvement. For example, Ronald Finucane, noting the various accounts of women taking part in crusades, observed that "there are clear indications that women sometimes took a more active part in the fighting." *[Here she identifies a major argument in the role of women in crusades, clearly identifying the author's thesis.]* However, Maureen Purcell, while admitting that women took part in crusades, denied emphatically that they were true crusaders, *crucesignata*, except for a brief period in the second half of the thirteenth century. When they accompanied a crusade, they did so as pilgrims rather than as crusaders, and they certainly did not fight. *[Here Nicholson identifies an important counter-argument, explaining where the two authors agree and disagree.]* James Brundage commented on the various roles women played in the armies of the First Crusade, supporting the fighting men with food and water, encouragement and prayer. He noted that some women were killed in action, but not that they actually took an active role in the fighting. *[This author does not address the debate directly, but adds additional information to the discussion.]* James Powell studied the role of women in the Fifth Crusade, and argues that women certainly did take the cross and went in person "to fulfill their vows by carrying on important functions," such as serving as guards in the camp, killing fugitives, and perhaps tending the sick and wounded. However, he was not sure whether they took part in the general fighting. *[This author's work suggests the question that Nicholson attempts to answer in her essay.]*

So did women take part in the Third Crusade, and did they fight? . . . Overall, it seems likely that women sometimes fought on crusade . . . *[The author presents her thesis.]*

From Helen Nicholson, "Women on the Third Crusade," *Journal of Medieval History* 23 (1997): 335-49.



## Example 2

The following example contains excerpts from the introduction to a chapter on slave life in Peter Kolchin's work entitled *American Slavery, 1619-1877*.

Until fairly recently, most historians of slavery paid far more attention to the behavior of the masters than to that of the slave; slaves, the vast majority of whom were illiterate and therefore left no written records, appeared in their works primarily as objects of white action. Scholars differed in many of their evaluations of slavery—some portrayed it as benign, whereas others depicted it as harshly exploitative—but with the partial exception of a tiny number of black and Marxist scholars, they focused far more on what slavery did to the slaves than what the slaves did themselves. *[Kolchin sets out in broad terms the perspective from which most historians have written about slavery until recently.]*

During the first half of the twentieth century, a major component of this approach was often simple racism, manifest in the belief that blacks were, at best, imitative of whites. Thus Ulrich B. Phillips, the era's most celebrated and influential expert on slavery, combined a sophisticated portrait of the white planters' life and behavior with crude passing generalizations about the life and behavior of their black slaves. Noting that "the planters had a saying... that a negro was what a white man made him," Phillips portrayed the plantation as a "school constantly training and controlling pupils who were in a backward state of civilization"; through this educational process the slaves "became largely standardized into the predominant plantation type." . . . *[Kolchin identifies a major writer on the topic and sets out his perspective and main arguments.]*

Kenneth M. Stampp's "neo-abolitionist" book *The Peculiar Institution* (1956) differed sharply from Ulrich B. Phillips's *American Negro Slavery* (1918) in its overall evaluation of slavery, its main subject remained the treatment—now the *mistreatment*—of slaves. Stampp took the slaves far more seriously than did Phillips, but the sources that Stampp relied upon—plantation records, letters and diaries of slave owners, travel accounts written by Northern and European visitors who almost invariably stayed with white hosts—revealed more about the behavior and thought of the masters than of the slave, whom he portrayed as "culturally rootless people." *[Kolchin introduces another historian's approach to the material and compares it to the previous historian's work.]*

The depiction of antebellum slaves as victims reached its peak in Stanley M. Elkins's 1959 volume, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*, one of those rare historical works that not only arouse intense controversy but also promote sharp reversals of historical interpretation. . . . Elkins argued that the unusually harsh conditions faced by Southern slaves produced a "closed" environment that stripped them of their native African culture, prevented the emergence among them of any meaningful social relations, and turned them into childlike "Sambos" who almost completely internalized the values of their masters. . . .

Despite its ingenuity, the Elkins thesis soon came under withering attack from critics who blasted it as contrived, illogical, and unsupported by empirical evidence. . . . Research by scholars seeking to test the Elkins thesis provided increasing evidence that antebellum slaves lived not in a totally closed environment but rather in one that permitted the emergence of enormous variety and allowed slaves to pursue important relationships with persons other than their masters, including those to be found in their families, churches, and communities. *[Kolchin identifies this work as pivotal. He sets out Elkin's thesis and the response to Elkins' work.]*

Ironically, however, that thesis—and the controversy it provoked—played a major role in redirecting historical scholarship on slavery. As historians sought to rebut Elkins's assertion of slave docility, they found it necessary to focus far more than they previously had on the slaves as subjects in their own right rather than as objects of white treatment. . . . As the focus of historical attention shifted increasingly to the slaves, historians found themselves forced to

exploit “new” kinds of historical sources, which had previously been little used, to shed light on the slaves’ world. Scholars probed archaeological remains, analyzed black folklore, and toiled over statistical data culled from census reports and plantation records, but in their efforts to explore slave thought and behavior they found two kinds of sources especially useful: autobiographies of former slaves . . . and interviews with former slaves . . . *[Kolchin explains how Elkins’s thesis impacted the study of slavery, namely in a shift of focus and the use of previously unexamined sources.]*

. . . Although these scholars do not agree with one another in all particulars, the great majority of them have abandoned the victimization model in favor of an emphasis on the slaves’ resiliency and autonomy. As I suggest below, I believe that some of these arguments for slave autonomy have been overstated and eventually will be modified on the basis of future evidence. *[Kolchin identifies the prevailing contemporary approach to the study of slavery and his position on the issue.]*

From Peter Kolchin, “Antebellum Slavery: Slave Life,” in *American Slavery, 1619–1877* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 133-38.

**How to Critique:** The critique is a rigorous critical reading of a passage. As such, it picks up where the objective summary leaves off. In fact, a critique often includes a brief summary so that its readers will be able to quickly grasp the main ideas and proofs of the passage under examination. Critiques come in all shapes and sizes, but a good way to get used to writing critically is to plan your earliest critiques along the following lines.

First, read the passage thoroughly. Make plenty of notes, ask lots of questions, and highlight or underline anything you may wish to quote in your paper. Spend some time on this step. It is impossible to adequately critique something if you don't fully understand it.

Next, write a summary. Identify the author's main point (thesis) and list the types of proofs he or she employs to persuade the reader to believe or accept the thesis. For example, does the author use historical anecdotes, quote noted authorities, provide statistical evidence, or appeal to a reader's sense of patriotism or generosity? These are all common types of proofs used in persuasive writing. You should also try to figure out why the author is writing, and to whom. Remember that the purpose of a paper and its intended audience can affect the way the paper is written.

Now, set your own agreement or disagreement with the author aside for a moment and investigate the validity of his or her argument.

- Does the author provide complete and accurate information? Some authors may leave important facts out of their presentations in order to avoid dealing with them, or they may give inaccurate data either through ignorance or in a deliberate attempt to mislead readers.
- Does the author provide information that is relevant to the issue?
- Does the author define key terms adequately and clearly? Just because someone uses the words "freedom," "rights," or "harm" in an essay, does not necessarily make those terms universal. Some people might interpret "harm," for example, as "injury," while others might interpret it as "offense."
- Finally, is the author's argument logically consistent, or is it supported on fallacious logic such as the "straw man," the "slippery slope," or the "false dilemma"?

Once you have examined carefully the passage you intend to critique, use the information you have collected to draft a response to the passage. Do you agree or disagree with the author's views and proofs? Be sure to discuss specific reasons why you agree or disagree with something. The critique's value as an academic document rests on your ability to say precisely why you agree or disagree.

Finally, draft the critique. You should include:

- An introduction which introduces the passage and its author. This introduction should clearly state the author's thesis and the arguments you intend to make about it. The introduction should also provide your reader with a little background so that he or she will understand why this

critique is worth reading. What do you know about the author? About the issue under discussion? Is it of current or historical interest? Is it at the heart of a controversy? What is the author's intended audience? These details can strengthen your introduction.

- A brief summary. You should already have drafted a summary. Now you can include it in your draft of your critique, making sure to use adequate transitions so that the writing flows smoothly.
- Your analysis of the author's presentation. Present your reader with an in-depth analysis of the validity of the author's logic and use of evidence, as discussed above. Be sure to present your information in a form which is easy to follow, using transitional elements whenever necessary to preserve the smooth flow of your writing.
- Your own response to the argument. As discussed above, you may agree or disagree with the author's views, and this is the part of the critique where you make your own views on the issue clear. Remember that your own arguments must be well-supported. You must give compelling reasons for your agreement or disagreement with the author.
- A conclusion. Evaluate the author's overall success or failure in achieving his or her purpose. Also, remind your reader of the strengths and weaknesses of the passage.

Once the critique is drafted, revise it, making sure you have emphasized the most salient points in your discussion. Check your sentence variety, your organization, and your word choice. Is the critique all it can be? Have you edited the critique to eliminate errors in spelling, sentence structure, and agreement? If you follow these simple steps, your critique should be concise, correct, and effective.