

# History 730: American History Research Seminar

Online  
Spring 2022

Dr. Jeremy Neely  
Missouri State University

Office: 421 Strong Hall  
Office Hours (via Zoom):  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.  
and by appointment

Email: [JeremyNeely@MissouriState.edu](mailto:JeremyNeely@MissouriState.edu)

Phone: (417) 836-6221

## Texts

- Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, Ninth Edition. New York: Bedford-St. Martins, 2017. ISBN: 978-1319244415

You may choose to seek out other resources which can prove useful to history students who are writing research papers. These include Richard Marius and Melvin E. Page's *A Short Guide to Writing about History*, Diana Hacker's *Rules for Writers*, and Samuel J. Redman's *Historical Research in Archives*. Many writers, with good reason, adore both Stephen King's *On Writing* and Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird*. Many decades after its publication, *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk and E. B. White remains an indispensable, reasonably priced guide to writers across all disciplines.

## Course Description

Students in this seminar will organize and complete a semester-long research agenda that produces a significant research paper which draws heavily their investigation of primary sources and makes an original contribution to the historiography of their topic. Students may choose any topic in the history of the Civil War era (roughly 1848 to 1877, although I'm willing to consider a topic that falls just outside of these parameters) for their project as long as it meets the professor's approval and they demonstrate that they can access the primary sources that will be necessary to finish the research paper.

## Prerequisites

Graduate standing and satisfactory completion of History 701: Historiography and Historical Method.

## Course Objectives

This course will enable students to:

- Identify a compelling research topic and formulate a thoughtful research question that seeks to explain an element of that topic's history with a sophistication befitting a graduate student.
- Organize a feasible research agenda that can be completed within a semester.
- Identify relevant, accessible primary sources that will allow them to address their research question.
- Analyze and synthesize primary sources in order to draw conclusions about their significance.
- Assess the relevant historical scholarship on their chosen topic, identifying gaps within that literature and suggesting how their original research can enrich that historiography.
- Craft a research paper whose original thesis answers their research question by building upon their own research and the interpretations of other historians.
- Adhere to the *Chicago Manual of Style* as they cite their sources and format their research paper.
- Engage thoughtfully with their classmates' research through peer reviews.
- Revise early drafts by applying the suggestions offered by peers and the professor.

## Course Expectations and Policies

I expect you will have read and be familiar with the expectations and policies laid out in this syllabus.

### Office Hours (via Zoom)

I encourage you to contact me with any questions or concerns either during my posted office hours (9:30 to 11:30 a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays) or at another time that works for both of us. If those times don't work for you, please contact me to arrange an alternative meeting time. Taking an online class—much like hunkering down in the archives—can feel like an isolating experience, and I'm always happy to chat about the course or anything else, with or without an appointment.

Email is the fastest way to reach me, and barring some kind of emergency, I will reply to your message within a business day, although usually sooner. If I somehow don't reply within a day, please send me another message to make sure I didn't somehow miss the first one.

### Taking an Online Course

An online course presents both advantages and challenges that are different from a seated, face-to-face course. Since we do not convene as a group but together follow the same common schedule, which you will find in the Course Outline at the end of this syllabus, it is important that you manage your time well to keep up with the class and your responsibilities in it. In the following pages I will give you the deadlines by when you should submit your assignments, but I leave it to you to decide the days or nights most convenient to complete your coursework.

You will need a reliable computer and internet access to succeed in this course. Please understand that maintaining such access is your responsibility. I encourage you to have a back-up plan that will allow you to access course materials in the unfortunate event that your computer or internet access stops working properly. The computers that are available in the Missouri State library or other public libraries are good alternatives to consider. Technical support is available through the Missouri State Help Desk, which you can find at <https://helpdesk.missouristate.edu/> and 417-836-5891, or by e-mail at [HelpDesk@MissouriState.edu](mailto:HelpDesk@MissouriState.edu). The Help Desk's Experts Knowledge Base (<https://experts.missouristate.edu/>) offers detailed how-to guides for Blackboard and a wide variety of technical issues. I am happy to help you with any questions that you have about writing a research paper, but I confess that I may not be of much assistance for your tech problems.

### Grades

Your final grade will be determined by your performance on the following elements.

Participation	10 points
Topic Proposal	15 points
Primary Source Analysis	10 points
Annotated Bibliography	25 points
Detailed Outline	10 points
Peer Reviews (15 points each)	30 points
Early Draft	25 points
Final Draft	75 points

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Total Points Possible	200 points
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In this course I use plus/minus grading according to the following scale.

A	186 – 200 points	C +	154 – 159 points	F	0 – 119 points
A -	180 – 185 points	C	146 – 153 points		
B +	174 – 179 points	C -	140 – 145 points		
B	166 – 173 points	D +	130 – 139 points		
B -	160 – 165 points	D	120 – 129 points		

Missouri State, alas, does not use A+ or D- grades. You can find more details on the university's grade policies here: [www.missouristate.edu/registrar/catalog/grades.html](http://www.missouristate.edu/registrar/catalog/grades.html)

### **Written Assignments**

Instructions and expectations for each of the written assignments will appear on Blackboard. With the exception of the first two assignments, which you can already see, these assignments will be visible at least four weeks before they are due. Each of these assignments will be submitted electronically to Blackboard, preferably as Microsoft Word (.docx or .doc) files. **Since each assignment is part of a larger, semester-long sequence that leads up to the final research paper, you must complete all of the assignments in order to pass the course.**

### **Late Work**

A ten-percent late penalty will be applied for each day that written work that is submitted after its due date. Late work will not be accepted more than seven days after its due date.

### **Participation**

I expect you will be an active and constructive participant in the class discussion board. This forum exists partly as an instrument of accountability, for students to put into words what their research is revealing and what they make of it, and partly as a support network for our peers. Participation on the discussion board counts for 10 points, or five percent of your final course grade.

### **Blackboard**

You will find the instructions for each of this semester's assignments posted to our Blackboard page, along with the grading rubrics, syllabus, and tentative course schedule. You can also track your course grade via Blackboard.

### **Dropping the Class:**

It is your responsibility to understand the University's procedure for dropping a class. If you stop attending this class but do not follow the proper procedure for dropping the class, you will receive a failing grade and will also be financially obligated to pay for the class. For information about dropping a class or withdrawing from the university, contact the Office of the Registrar at 836-5520 or visit the University's list of relevant deadlines at [www.missouristate.edu/registrar/acad\\_cal.html](http://www.missouristate.edu/registrar/acad_cal.html).

### **Statement of Nondiscrimination:**

Missouri State University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution and maintains a grievance procedure available to any person who believes that he or she has been the victim of discrimination. At all times, it is your right to address inquiries or concerns about possible discrimination to the Office for Institutional Equity and Compliance, Park Central Office Building, 117 Park Central Square, Suite 111, 417-836-4252 ([www.missouristate.edu/equity/](http://www.missouristate.edu/equity/)). Other kinds of concerns, such as those of an academic nature, should be discussed with me and can also be brought to the attention of the Department of History.

### Statement on Disability Accommodation:

If you are a student with a disability and anticipate barriers related to this course, it is important to request accommodations and establish an accommodation plan with the University. Please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) (<https://www.missouristate.edu/disability/>) Meyer Library, Suite 111, 417-836-4192, to initiate the process to establish your accommodation plan. The DRC will work with you to establish your accommodation plan, or it may refer you to other appropriate resources based on the nature of your disability. In order to prepare an accommodation plan, the University usually requires that students provide documentation relating to their disability. Please be prepared to provide such documentation if requested. Once a University accommodation plan is established, you may notify the class instructor of approved accommodations. If you wish to utilize your accommodation plan, it is suggested that you do so in a timely manner, preferably within the first two weeks of class. Early notification to the instructor allows for full benefit of the accommodations identified in the plan. Instructors will not receive the accommodation plan until you provide that plan, and are not required to apply accommodations retroactively.

### Statement on Academic Dishonesty:

This semester we commit ourselves to acting ethically and with academic integrity. This means that I expect you to do your own work and to credit others for work and ideas that are not your own. I will offer guidance about how to avoid plagiarism, whether intentional or inadvertent, but it is ultimately your responsibility to practice academic integrity, to cite materials properly, and to do your own work. If you ever have questions about attribution or paraphrasing, please ask me. When in doubt, though: always cite your sources.

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this course. Students caught plagiarizing (submitting work that is not their own) will automatically receive a zero on that assignment and will be reported to the Office of the Provost. Discipline may also result in assignment of an “XF” course grade. I expect that you will know and follow the university’s student honor code, Student Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures, which are available at [www.missouristate.edu/policy/academicintegrity.htm](http://www.missouristate.edu/policy/academicintegrity.htm) and also at the Reserves Desk in Meyer Library.

### Mental Health and Stress Management

The Missouri State University Counseling Center is available to provide free and confidential services to students. You can find more information at <https://counselingcenter.missouristate.edu/>.

I’m glad that you are here, and I want to help you succeed. If at any point during the semester you find yourself really struggling with mental health, whether it’s depression, anxiety, addiction, please know that there are resources available to help you. The MSU Suicide Prevention Resource Policy includes many of these resources: [https://www.missouristate.edu/policy/Op1\\_08-suicide-prevention-available-suicide-programs-and-related-procedures.htm](https://www.missouristate.edu/policy/Op1_08-suicide-prevention-available-suicide-programs-and-related-procedures.htm)

### Course Schedule

Please note that each assignment is due by 11:59 p.m. (Central) on the Sunday of that week.

The topic proposal, for example, is due at the end of the third week of the semester and must therefore be submitted by 11:59 p.m. (Central) on Sunday, February 6.

<u>Week One</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
January 18 – 23	Discussion Board Introductions
<u>Week Two</u>	
January 24 – 30	None ( <i>Select your topic and gather sources</i> )
<u>Week Three</u>	
January 31 – February 6	Topic Proposal
<u>Week Four</u>	

February 7 – February 13	Peer Review One
<b>Week Five</b>	
February 14 – February 20	None ( <i>Gather and study sources</i> )
<b>Week Six</b>	
February 21 – February 27	Primary Source Analysis Due
<b>Week Seven</b>	
February 28 – March 6	Annotated Bibliography Due
<b>Week Eight</b>	
March 7 – March 13	Detailed Outline Due
<b><i>March 14 - 20: Spring Break</i></b>	
<b>Week Nine</b>	
March 21 – March 27	None ( <i>Research and write</i> )
<b>Week Ten</b>	
March 28 – April 3	Early Draft of Research Paper
<b>Week Eleven</b>	
April 4 – April 10	Peer Review Two
<b>Week Twelve</b>	
April 11 – April 17	None ( <i>Research and revise</i> )
<b>Week Thirteen</b>	
April 18 – April 24	None ( <i>Research and revise</i> )
<b>Week Fourteen</b>	
April 25 – May 1	None ( <i>Research and revise</i> )
<b>Week Fifteen</b>	
May 2 – May 8	None ( <i>Revise</i> )
<b>Week Sixteen</b>	
May 9 – May 12	Final Draft

**The Final Draft of your research paper is due by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, May 15, 2022.**