

HIST B398
Approaches to Historical Praxis
Mondays, 12:10–2:00pm
English House Seminar Room 2

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Office Hours: Mondays 2:15 - 4 pm
and by appointment

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Welcome to the History senior capstone seminar. This course is designed to provide you with the space and support to gain first-hand experience of doing extended historical research.

This is your opportunity to delve into the history of an event, an issue, or an idea—to situate it in its cultural, social, and/or political contexts, while exploring and building on existing scholarship. Over the course of the semester, you will articulate a historical question; situate the question in its historiographic contexts, considering and evaluating arguments made by other historians related to your topic or question; conduct archival research to try and address your question; and finally, refine your question and develop your own argument. You will also receive and integrate feedback from your professors and classmates, while drawing on additional resources of the College (other faculty with expertise in your area of research, archivists, librarians, digital specialists).

The senior project most commonly takes the form of an expository essay approximately 20-25 pages in length (not including citations). With additional planning and permission, it may also take the shape of a digital project; a proposal for further research (approximately 15-20 pages); or a syllabus for a course and a supporting document (approximately 10-15 pages) explaining why and how it is designed and to what historical and pedagogical ends. Whatever form it takes, the final project should articulate your research question and your findings, demonstrate fluency with the primary and secondary sources on which your project is based, and develop an original argument supported by evidence and rigorous analysis.

You will also have the option of continuing to work on your project in the Spring semester. In HIST B399, you can expand on your final project and turn it into a longer thesis, a digital or physical exhibition, or other larger project. Taking 399 is subject to department approval based partly on your work throughout 398 and partly on the academic quality and potential of your final project in this class. If you are interested in continuing your senior project, you should consult with us and other members of the History department and notify the department **prior to the end of pre-registration in mid-November**.

In addition to us, the rest of the History department faculty is a resource for your work on your capstone project. Contact any member of the History faculty whom you think will be helpful. Seek the advice of experts in your area of interest at Haverford, Swarthmore, or Penn. Moreover, since your classmates will be going through the same experiences, it is imperative that you talk to one another inside and out of class.

We have designed the course with a series of assignments and deadlines, to help keep you on track towards completing the project by the end of the semester. To pass the course, each assignment must be completed and, most importantly, completed **on time**. **There are NO EXTENSIONS in this class (with the exception of documented emergencies)**. Your final grade will reflect your ability to turn in your assignments on time, your participation in the course, and the grades on your work.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Articulate, research, and answer a historical research question.
 - Comprehend and evaluate the historical scholarship on your chosen topic and be able to frame that information in writing.
 - Successfully explore the Tri-Co library/database system to locate primary and secondary sources, both those contained within the Tri-Co system and/or available elsewhere.
 - Integrate and deploy evidence and make persuasive arguments.
 - Effectively manage time in pursuit of an extended, complex, and multi-part project.
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ASSIGNMENTS/DEADLINES

Mini-proposal

Due Sunday August 30, 11:59 PM

Please upload to Moodle (as a Word doc or PDF) a one- or two-paragraph mini-proposal for a potential capstone project, addressing the following questions:

1. What is the general topic you hope to explore?
2. What are the key questions you hope to answer?
3. What kind of archival (primary) sources might you look for? And/or who do you see as the key voices or historic actors whose story you want to trace?
4. Why is this topic / why are these questions significant? What's at stake in tracing this history?
5. What form do you think the project will take? Most students write a 20-25 page essay, but you may also produce an alternative assignment, for example, a digital project, a proposal for future research (approximately 15-20 pages); or a syllabus for a course with a supporting document (approximately 10-15 pages) explaining why and how it is designed and to what pedagogical ends. Whatever form it takes, the final project should articulate your research question and your findings, demonstrate fluency with primary and secondary sources on which your project is based, and be supported by evidence and rigorous analysis.

Weekly progress report

Due every Sunday night, 11:59, unless otherwise noted, starting Week 2

Each week you will write a brief, one- or two-paragraph report (visible as a forum to the full class on Moodle) that explains what you did on your project and what impact that work has had on your understanding of your project. i.e. What new secondary and primary sources did you read? What historiographical debates did you encounter on your subject? What new evidence/primary source did you incorporate into your research? Any new approaches, questions, material related to your research? We have included specific prompts for each week to help guide your research process towards the next major assignment, though you may want to write more.

Preliminary annotated bibliography

At least two sources a week (one primary, one secondary), due Monday 9/7, Sunday 9/13, and Sunday 9/20, 11:59 PM

As part of the preliminary research and planning of your project, you will be asked to build an annotated bibliography of at least six sources—with two new sources due each week from Week 2 to 4. Annotations should include:

- (1) Standard bibliographical information (i.e. author, title, date, publisher, etc.) in Chicago Style format
- (2) Summary of the source (one to three sentences)
- (3) Brief explanation (one to three sentences) of how the source relates to the historical question you are examining.

Project proposal plus bibliography

Due Sunday 9/27, 11:59 PM

A 2- to 3-page proposal (double-spaced, 12 pt Times New Roman-style font) that introduces your specific topic, question, argument, and—if not a research paper—the format and intended audience. Proposal should address (1) The topic and question you plan to address; (2) the secondary sources you plan to draw on / be in conversation with; (3) the primary sources you plan to research to build your analysis and argument.

Please also include a bibliography of 10-15 sources (including the 6 sources from your annotated bibliography—you can but do not need to include annotations)

All projects are subject to departmental approval

Primary Source Presentations (Week 8 and Week 15)

Sunday 10/18, 11:59 PM, and Sunday 12/6 11:59 PM: Powerpoint slide (using template)

At our class sessions for Weeks 8 and 15, each student will create and present one slide (using a template) sharing a primary source from their research. In brief (five-minute) presentations, please explain what the object is, what is significant or interesting about it, and how it connects to your larger question/topic/argument.

Introduction

Due Friday 10/30, 11:59 PM

This assignment is meant to provide a first draft of your introduction. It may draw on material you've already written in your proposal.

In approximately five pages (double-spaced, 12 pt Times New Roman font), please address the following:

- (1) Introduce your topic and the major cultural, political, and/or social contexts.
- (2) Provide a clear articulation of the main question(s) that your final project seeks to answer
- (3) Give an overview of the existing historiography—what have other scholars written about your topic, and how will your paper build on/expand on their work?
- (4) Give an overview of the primary (archival) sources you plan to draw on.

Partial Draft + Outline

Due Friday 11/13, 11:59 pm

This assignment is meant to build on your introduction, to provide a draft of the first 10-12 pages of the final paper (or equivalent in the case of an alternative format), with an outline of additional work needed to complete the project. This partial draft should include your introduction from 10/30 (making edits based on earlier feedback), plus an additional 5 to 6 pages of writing, focused on analysis of your archival sources.

Final Presentation

Monday, 12/14, 10 am to 1 pm (location TBD)

Final Project Slides – Due Sunday, 12/13, 11:59 PM

You will present your findings to members of the History department and friends in an open forum. In an organized and well-articulated 5- to 7-minute presentation, you will outline your topic and goal of your final project, provide us with evidence from your research, and then conclude with a discussion of the larger historical themes raised (and hopefully answered) by your research. Following your presentation there will be a brief period when you will take questions from the audience.

Final Project Plus Reflection

Due Friday, 12/18 at 12:30 pm

Please upload your final project to Moodle, along with a 3-page reflection paper (double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 pt font) providing a brief discussion on the processes (research, writing, designing) that were involved in creating your capstone project. Discuss your methods and the strategies you as well as the

challenges that you faced. Then envision the possible futures of your research project. If you had all the resources (including time) that you could need, what would the project become?

GRADING

Participation: 30%

Proposal and Preliminary Bibliography: 10%

Introduction: 10%

Partial Draft: 10%

Final Project: 30%

All other assignments (ungraded, based on completion): 10%

RESOURCES

On Writing and Research

The following useful text is available in the reference section of Canaday library

- Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 9th ed., (University of Chicago Press, 2018).

In addition, read Harvard University's *A Guide to Writing a Thesis in History and Literature*.

https://histlit.fas.harvard.edu/sites/g/files/omnuum4926/files/histlit/files/guide_to_writing_in_history_and_literature.pdf

Citations

Chicago Manual of Style Online

<https://www-chicagomanualofstyle-org.proxy.brynmawr.edu/> (see especially citation quick guide)

History research librarian

Jennifer Coval: jcoval@brynmawr.edu

Digital Scholarship Team

digitalscholarship@brynmawr.edu

OTHER GUIDELINES

Syllabus

Please read the syllabus carefully. It contains all necessary information for the class and serves as a basic contract between you and the professors. We retain the option to change the syllabus as needed, but will communicate any changes clearly on the Moodle page.

Office Hours

You are encouraged to come to see us regularly throughout the semester during our office hours. If you have a time conflict please let us know so we can find a time that works for all of us. In addition, you can also email either professor if you have questions about any class-related issues. However, please be aware that we do not check our email on an hourly basis. We will respond to you within 24 - 48 hours.

Participation

You are required to attend all class sessions and required meetings with Professor Pilgrim and/or Professor Vider. You are also required to be an active participant during class discussion and peer reviews. If you cannot

make classes for reasons of religious observance, illness, or family emergency please let us know as soon as possible.

Deadlines

You are required to turn in every assignment *on time* including short assignments as well as proposals for your final project. Your work will be graded based on the quality of content and presentation of submitted work.

Advising

Before fall break, you will meet and consult with both Professor Vider and Professor Pilgrim on your project. After fall break, we will assign each student to one of us as a primary advisor, based on topic, who you will be required to meet with over the remaining weeks of the semester—though you are still welcome to meet with both of us.

Academic Integrity/A Note Concerning the Honor Code

We take academic integrity and Bryn Mawr College's honor code tradition seriously and expect you to follow Bryn Mawr's policy on academic integrity. If you are unfamiliar with or uncertain about the policy and the Honor Code, you may find it here: <http://sga.blogs.brynmawr.edu/honor-board/honor-code/>

Most importantly, please be sure to cite all sources, whether you are quoting verbatim or summarizing information, an idea, or an argument. Representing someone else's words or ideas (including AI-generated text) as your own is a serious intellectual and academic offense and may result in a failing grade for the assignment or course.

AI Use

AI is increasingly unavoidable—even when doing a Google search or using some article databases—but please be mindful of how you engage with AI and AI programs like ChatGPT. Material generated by AI programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, misleading, or otherwise problematic. Most importantly, AI usage may also stifle your own independent thinking and creativity. If you include material generated by an AI program, it should be cited like any other reference material (with due consideration for the quality of the reference). Any plagiarism or other form of cheating via AI will be considered a violation of the Bryn Mawr Honor Code. If you also use AI programs for brainstorming and research, we also encourage you to note and discuss this in your weekly progress reports.

Accessibility

Students who think they may need accommodations in this course because of the impact of a learning difference are encouraged to meet with one or both of us privately early in the semester.

Bryn Mawr College is committed to providing equal access to students with a documented disability. Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first speak with Access Services. Students can email accessservices@brynmawr.edu to request an appointment to begin this confidential process. If eligible for accommodations as per Access Services, students should schedule an appointment with the professor as early in the semester as possible to share their verification form and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement. More information can be obtained at the Access Services website. (<http://www.brynmawr.edu/access-services/>). For Haverford College's Accessibility Services please see [here](#).

Electronics

We ask you to turn off your cell phones and other electronic devices for the class period. You may use your laptop or tablet/ipad for taking notes, but please remember that they should be used *only* for that purpose. To do otherwise is disrespectful towards your classmates as well as your professors, and may impact your participation grade.

Religious/Cultural observances

Students with religious or cultural observances that coincide with this class should let us know by e-mail in advance. We strongly encourage you to honor your cultural and religious holidays! However, if we do not hear from you in advance, we will assume that you plan to attend all class meetings.

Mental Health

Your mental health is important. If you are feeling in distress, struggling with anxiety, or just need someone to talk to, I encourage you to reach out to the Bryn Mawr College Health and Wellness Center at 610-526-7360 (or 610-526-7778 after hours); or the Haverford College Counseling Service at 610-896-1290.

Title IX

Bryn Mawr/Haverford College is committed to fostering a safe and inclusive living and learning environment where all can feel secure and free from harassment. All forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic violence, and dating violence are violations of Bryn Mawr/Haverford's policies, whether they occur on or off campus. Bryn Mawr/Haverford faculty are committed to helping to create a safe learning environment for all students and for the College community as a whole. If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination, harassment, or violence, know that help and support are available. Staff members are trained to support students in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more.

The College strongly encourages all students to report any incidents of sexual misconduct. Please be aware that all Bryn Mawr/Haverford employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors, clergy, and healthcare providers) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the Title IX coordinators at Bryn Mawr or Haverford.

Information about the College's Sexual Misconduct policy, reporting options, and a list of campus and local resources can be found on the College's website:

[Bryn Mawr Sexual Misconduct Policy](#)

[Haverford Sexual Misconduct Policy](#)

SCHEDULE

Week 1. Week of August 30: *Proposing a Topic*

Due Sunday 8/30, 11:59 pm: Please upload (as a PDF or Word doc) a one- or two-paragraph proposal for a potential capstone project, indicating the topic and key questions you hope to explore this semester. If you are not certain about your topic yet, you can submit two (one- to two-paragraph long) proposals.

IN CLASS: Monday 8/31: Class Meeting: Proposing a Topic

In class, we will discuss the challenge of choosing a project topic – what makes a good historical topic and/or question, how do you decide the appropriate scale and scope of the project, and how might availability of sources shape your thinking. We will also read some topic statements from last year.

Week 2. Week of September 6: *Individual Meetings*

Due Monday 9/7, 11:59 PM: Weekly progress report #1 + Two Annotations

For your weekly progress report, some questions for potential reflection: How are you thinking about (or rethinking) your topic proposal after our meeting last week? What do you see as the potential pathways and challenges for researching this topic?

For the annotated bibliography: Please complete at least two annotations (at least one primary source, at least one secondary source).

NO CLASS / Required individual meetings

Please schedule an individual meeting with Professor Vider to discuss your project.

Week 3. Week of September 13: *Class at Canaday Library with Jennifer Coval*

Due Sunday 9/13, 11:59 PM: Weekly progress report #2 + Two Annotations

For your weekly progress report, some questions for potential reflection: How has the research been going so far? Which has been more challenging, finding primary or secondary sources? What would be your dream source for your topic? How are you feeling right now about your topic?

For the annotated bibliography: Please complete at least two annotations (at least one primary source, at least one secondary source), added to previous entries.

IN CLASS: Class Meeting in Canaday Seminar Room

Introduction to research resources with librarian Jennifer Coval

Between September 15 and September 28 you must meet with Jennifer Coval, history librarian to discuss your research interest. To set up an appointment use [Calendly - Jennifer Coval](#).

Week 4. Week of September 20: Individual Meetings

Due Sunday 9/20, 11:59 PM: Weekly progress report #3 + completed annotated bibliography

For your weekly progress report, some questions for potential reflection: Were there any sources, databases, or archives you learned about during last week's class with Jennifer Coval that you found especially helpful or promising? Do you feel like you have found some good primary sources so far, or know where to look? Are you having trouble finding secondary sources that feel relevant?

For the annotated bibliography: Please complete at least two more annotations (at least one primary source, at least one secondary source) and submit your full annotated bibliography (at least six sources total).

NO CLASS / Required individual meetings

Please schedule a time to meet with Professor Pilgrim to discuss your project.

Week 5. Week of September 27: Proposal Workshop

Due Sunday 9/27, 11:59 PM: Weekly progress report #4 + Proposal with bibliography (10-15 sources, at least 6 annotated)

For your weekly progress report, some questions for potential reflection: How have your ideas for the project changed since you wrote your initial mini-proposal at the end of August? Do you have any concerns about the project or your research so far? What do you feel most excited to do next?

IN CLASS: We will break up into small groups to read and workshop the proposals.

Week 6. Week of October 4: Joint Meeting with Professor Vider and Professor Pilgrim

Due Sunday 10/4, 11:59 PM: Weekly progress report #5

For your weekly progress report, some questions for potential reflection: What did you find most helpful (or confusing) from last week's workshops? Are there any gaps in your research/bibliography you want to address? Is there a secondary source or two that might be especially helpful to read over the fall break?

JOINT MEETINGS / NO CLASS THIS WEEK

Please sign up for a joint meeting with Professor Vider and Professor Pilgrim (during or after class time) to discuss your project.

Week 7. FALL BREAK

Week 8. Week of October 18: Primary Source Presentations

Due Sunday 10/18, 11:59 pm: Weekly progress report #6 + a slide for primary source presentation

For your weekly progress report, some questions for potential reflection: What primary source do you plan to share tomorrow? What do you think is significant or interesting about it, and how does it connect to your larger topic/question/argument? What are your goals for your research and writing over the next few weeks?

IN CLASS: Primary source presentations and discussion

Week 9. Week of October 25: Individual Meetings

Due Sunday 10/25, 11:59 PM: Weekly progress report #7

For your weekly progress report, some questions for potential reflection: What did you find useful about the primary source presentation last week? What research and/or writing have you done in the last week? Have you found that there are particular times or places where you write/work best?

NO CLASS / Required individual meetings

Please sign up for meeting with either Professor Pilgrim or Professor Vider

****Due Friday 10/30, 11:59 PM: Please upload your introduction to Moodle, and email to your workshop groups****

Week 10. Week of November 1: Introduction Workshop

Due Sunday 11/1, 11:59 pm: Weekly progress report #8

For your weekly progress report, some questions for potential reflection: How did writing the introduction go? How do you feel about your historiography? Do you think you have enough sources (primary and secondary) at this stage to write the paper, or do you feel like there are still sources you would like to look for?

IN CLASS: Introduction workshops

Please come to class prepared to discuss introductions.

Week 11. Week of November 8: Optional Individual Meetings

Due Sunday 11/8, 11:59 pm: Weekly progress report #9

For your weekly progress report, some questions for potential reflection: What were some of the major comments from the introduction workshop? What feedback was most helpful? Was there any feedback you think you won't take – and why?

NO CLASS / Optional individual meetings

****Due Friday 11/13, 11:59 pm: Please upload your partial draft to Moodle, and email to your workshop groups****

Week 12. Week of November 15: Partial Draft Workshops

Due Sunday 11/15, 11:59 pm: Weekly progress report #10

For your weekly progress report, some questions for potential reflection: How do you feel about the 10-12 pages you have written so far? Where do you think you have the most work to do? Is there anything you are especially curious to hear or ask about during the workshop?

IN CLASS: Partial draft workshops

Please come to class prepared to discuss drafts.

Week 13. Week of November 22: Optional Individual Meetings

Due Sunday 11/22, 11:59 pm: Weekly progress report #11

For your weekly progress report, some questions for potential reflection: What were some of the comments from the draft workshop? What feedback was most helpful? Was there any feedback you think you won't take – and why?

NO CLASS: Optional individual meetings

Week 14. Week of November 29: Optional Individual Meetings

Due Sunday 11/29, 11:59 pm: Weekly progress report #12

For your weekly progress report, some questions for potential reflection: What is your plan to complete a full draft by the end of Week 15? What do you think is most important to work on next? Do you think the argument is clear – or are there ways to make it clearer? Are there important sources you haven't integrated yet?

NO CLASS: Optional individual meetings

Week 15. Week of December 6: Primary Source Presentation #2

Due Sunday 12/6, 11:59 pm: Weekly progress report #13 + presentation slide

For your weekly progress report, some questions for potential reflection: How would you describe your experience of research this semester? What surprised you about the process and/or the material you researched? What were some of the most exciting moments? What were some of the major challenges, and how did you address those challenges?

IN CLASS: Primary source presentations and reflections on the semester

Final Project Slides – Due Sunday, 12/13, 11:59 PM Please upload your slides or share a link on Moodle

Final Project Presentation – Monday, Dec 14, 10 am to 1 pm (location TBD)

FINAL PROJECT AND REFLECTION DUE DECEMBER 18, 12:30 PM