

HIST 403 Methodology and History

Semester: Winter 2011
Instructor: Elena Razlogova
Classroom: LB-1014
Time: Mon. 3-5:30 pm
Course website: <http://digitalhistory.concordia.ca/courses/historicalmethods/>

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Course Overview

This course will provide an introduction to historical methods—conducting research into and presentation of findings about historical subjects. Topics will include: critical and effective reading of historical sources; exploration of non-written sources as historical evidence; use of quantitative methods in history; concrete problems of interpretation encountered during historical research; and the presentation of findings through different forms of writing. Because this is required Honours course, it will have no particular geographical or chronological focus. In the course of the term, students will write and present to the other students an extended essay based on primary-source research.

Texts

Readings:

Articles, chapters, and examples linked from online syllabus.

Reference works:

Richard Marius and Melvin E. Page, *A Short Guide to Writing about History* (5th ed.; New York: Longman, 2005), on reserve at the library.

William Strunk and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style*, online.

Chicago Manual of Style, 15th ed., online.

Assessment

Successful completion of the course depends, most basically, on regular attendance in class, evidence of preparation and application, active participation in class discussions based on close readings of the required texts, and completion of all exercises and assignments *on time*.

1. Seminar participation.	35%
2. Structural Article Analysis	10%
3. Primary Source Analysis	10%
4. Term Paper	45%

Participation

History 403 is a seminar course, and thus demands that students read on a weekly basis and come to class prepared to discuss the issues arising from the readings. Attendance is compulsory. A significant proportion of the final grade will be based on contributions to the seminar discussions.

Deadlines

The penalty for late assignments will be 5% of the grade per day. No extensions will be granted except in cases of a DOCUMENTED emergency.

Assignments

Primary Source Analysis

Write a 1000-word analysis of a document—it can be a textual, quantitative, visual, aural source, or an oral history interview. Ideally, it should be a document you may use in your term paper. This is to be a close reading, an opportunity to examine the potentials and problems this source presents. Your interpretations of the source must take into account the nature of the evidence, e.g. consider who produced the source, why it was produced, the audience at which it was aimed or the purpose it fulfilled in its own time. You may incorporate this essay or parts of it into your final paper.

You will present an analysis of your document in class on the day appropriate for your type of source. The written analysis is due the day you present it in class.

Structural Article Analysis

Write a 600-word structural analysis of an academic journal article you consider a model for your own paper. Your analysis should include both an abstract or summary of the article (no more than half a page) and a discussion of the way the historian organized the argument, including an outline.

Advice:

- You may choose any historical article published in a scholarly journal; I recommend that you use one that you are reading anyway for some other purpose or one that you have read in the past. If there is nothing specific that springs to mind, go to the current periodical section of the library, and browse through current issues of history journals.
- In the first instance, read the article taking detailed notes; be sure in your notes to pay attention to structural elements (breaks in sections, numbering of sections, subtitles if any)
- After reading and taking careful notes, write a one-paragraph abstract of the article
- Then write a paragraph in which you explain in prose how the article was structured, followed by a brief outline of the article (about 1 page in the outline form); this brief outline can be a condensed version of the notes you took while reading

The point of the assignment is to consider how writers of scholarly historical works organize and structure the presentation of their arguments and findings. Be prepared both to hand in a formal written version and to present your analysis to the class; we will discuss, among other things, how historians introduce their articles, how they integrate specific evidence with larger arguments, what sorts of issues they bring up in their conclusions.

Structural Article Analysis is due on January 31.

Term Paper

In the course of the term, each student will work on a historical research project that will culminate in the production of an essay of about 20 pages in length. The project will be based on primary source research in a field determined by the student in consultation with me (along with other faculty members as necessary). Students should proceed as quickly as possible at the beginning of the term to determine what the source base of their projects will be. You should choose a subject that particularly interest you—the only restriction is that a body of primary sources must be available to you and in a language you can read, and that this body of sources must be large enough to sustain a 20-page paper. As appropriate, you may also use secondary sources for context or historiography, but the focus of the project (and the paper that will result) must be primary

sources. You may not, of course, use research you have done for a previous or concurrent course. Your project may be related to, but not the same as, your honours thesis project.

This assignment has several components:

1. A project proposal, due February 6

- Describe, in 2-3 pages, the general problem you hope to investigate and the specific sources you will use, including a bibliography, formatted properly according to the Chicago style.
- The proposal must convince its reader that the project is both interesting and feasible
 - Write your proposal imagining your audience to be a fellow honours student in history, but in a different field (so does not necessarily understand the context)
 - Some historiographical context may be indicated (although in is not necessary)
 - A clear sense that you know what to do and how to achieve it in the time available will make your proposal more convincing
- Specifically, your proposal should convey:
 - Part 1 (can be one long paragraph):
 - The topic of your study
 - Why your topic it is important (this would include any current historiographic approaches to your topic)
 - Your main research question and some provisional answers
 - Part 2 (can be one long paragraph):
 - What kinds of sources you plan to use
 - How you plan to obtain them
 - In what ways your sources will answer the main question you are asking
 - Bibliography (on a separate page):
 - Separate into primary and secondary sources
 - For primary sources, include names of archives, online databases, published document collections, and periodicals rather than individual articles and documents from these collections. For periodicals, (include date spans, i.e. New York Times (1910-1920)).
 - For secondary sources, include both historical works related to your topic and methodological or theoretical works (if any) you find useful for your project.
- The proposal will be assigned a grade which will factor into the overall grade assigned for the research paper

2. Presentation and Discussion of Paper in March and April

- Your paper is to be distributed electronically in class for discussion
 - The Sunday before your scheduled presentation, by 10 am, you will have your paper available for others to read via email. All students in the class will be required to read the papers and be prepared to discuss them
 - Your draft should be at least 10 pages long, double-spaced, and in addition to the main text, footnotes, and bibliography, has to include the paper title, the author's name, and page numbers.
 - After an open discussion of the paper, the author of the paper will be given an opportunity to respond.

3. A revised version of your paper, due April 18 by 11:59 pm

- About 20 pages long, with full scholarly apparatus (i.e. proper footnotes and bibliography)

- It should take into account comments on your first draft from other students and from me

The final grade for the project will take into account all of the components listed here.

Policies

Contact: If your question requires an extended answer, such as explaining a grade or advising on your paper topic, you should visit me during my office hours. For questions requiring a short answer you should contact me via email. Expect an answer over the phone only during my office hours—I do not check my voice mail regularly. I do not always check my email in the evenings or on weekends. Normally I will get back to you on the following working day. Check the syllabus and my email correspondence carefully before emailing your question—if it can be answered by reading my email announcements, assignment instructions, or other parts of the syllabus I will not get back to you. Make sure to include your full name in the signature—otherwise I will not know who sent the email. You may address me either as “Elena” or “Professor Razlogova.” It is in appropriate to begin your email with “Miss Razlogova,” “Hello Miss,” “Hello Professor,” or a standalone “Hello,” “Hi,” or “Hey.” Because your emails to me are official documents, you must use formal language (for example, full sentences and no “txt talk”) in phrasing your question. If the email is addressed, signed, or phrased inappropriately I will assume it is not addressed to me and will not answer it. Finally, course material is delivered during class time only. I will not summarize my lectures for you either over email or in person—if you miss a class, contact other students for their notes.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is an affront to me and to your peers. Plagiarism is submitting work that is not your own as if it were yours. This includes copying material, even a few sentences, from published or unpublished sources, from the internet, or from another student without citing the source. It also includes presenting another person’s ideas or paraphrasing the work of another person without citing the source. Plagiarism also includes handing in bought papers, papers obtained from free essay websites, or having another person write your paper for you. Anyone suspected of copying other people’s work *without clear acknowledgement*, or of any comparable act, will be reported to the Faculty of Arts and Science for plagiarism.

Syllabus: I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus during the year if/as necessary. Please check the online syllabus before every class.

Schedule

Unless otherwise noted, readings are from the web. In those cases, you are expected to either print out the item or to bring your laptop with the downloaded file so that you will have it with you in class.

- Jan. 3 Course Introduction
- Jan. 10 Brainstorming Paper Topics
- Jan. 17 Telling “the Truth”

Discussion:

Peter Novick, “Introduction: Nailing Jelly to the Wall,” in *That Noble Dream: The Objectivity Question and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

Thomas L. Haskell, “Objectivity Is Not Neutrality: Rhetoric vs. Practice in Peter Novick’s *That Noble Dream*,” *History and Theory* 29 (1990): 129–157.

Art Spiegelman, “The Problem of Taxonomy,” *New York Times*, December 29, 1991.

Art Spiegelman, *Maus, a Survivors Tale: My Father Bleeds History* (New York: Pantheon, 1986), excerpt.

Come to class with your favorite history book from the ones you have read for another history course at Concordia. Was the author “objective,” or “truthful”? Be prepared to explain your choice and your conclusion.

Background:

American Historical Association, “Standards of Professional Conduct.”

Royal Historical Society, “Statement on Ethics.”

Jan. 24

Asking Questions

Discussion:

Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 91 (Dec. 1986): 1053–1075.

Eric Hobsbawm, “On History from Below,” in *On History* (New York: New Press, 1998).

Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for ‘Indian’ Pasts?” *Representations* 37 (Winter 1992): 1-26.

Mitchell, Timothy. “Can the Mosquito Speak?” in *The Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Come to class with a post-1985 journal article that you think asks and answers useful historical questions. Counterexamples that ask useless questions are also welcome. Be prepared to explain your choice. The questions your articles answer may be different from the ones proposed by the readings.

Jan. 31

Writing History

Structural Article Analysis due.

Discussion:

Orwell, George. “Politics and the English Language” (1946).

J. H. Hexter, “Fernand Braudel and the Monde Braudellien,” *Journal of Modern History* 44, no. 4 (December 1972): 480-539 (Part III: Événement).

Robert Darnton, “It Happened One Night,” *New York Review of Books* (June 24, 2004).

James Miller, “Is Bad Writing Necessary? George Orwell, Theodor Adorno, and the Politics of Language,” *Lingua Franca* (December/January 2000): 33-40.

Butler, Judith. “A Bad Writer Writes Back.” *New York Times*, March 20, 1999.

Come to class with a post-1985 journal article that you consider a model for your own writing. Be prepared to explain your choice.

Background:

Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, excerpt.

Edmund S. Morgan, “The Labor Problem at Jamestown, 1607-1618,” *American Historical Review* 76 (June 1971): 608-9.

William Strunk and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*

Roy Rosenzweig, "Historical Note-Taking in the Digital Age," *Organization of American Historians Newsletter* (August 2007).

Feb. 7 Discussion of Paper Proposals

Project Proposal is due on Sunday, Feb. 6, by 10 am.

Feb. 14 Primary Sources: Written Evidence

Written Primary Source Analysis due.

Discussion:

Joan W. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry* 17 (Summer 1991): 773-797.

McSheffrey, Shannon. "Detective Fiction in the Archives: Court Records and the Uses of Law in Late Medieval England." *History Workshop* 65 (Spring 2008).

Robert Finlay, "The Refashioning of Martin Guerre," *American Historical Review* 93, no. 3 (June 1988): 553-571.

Natalie Zemon Davis, "On the Lame." *American Historical Review* 93, no. 3 (June 1988): 572-603.

Those who signed up to analyze a written document will present it in class.

Background:

Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), excerpt.

John Tosh, "Using the Sources," in *The Pursuit of History* (New York: Longman, 1999).

Feb. 21 No Class – Midterm Break

Feb. 28 Primary Sources: Quantitative Evidence

Quantitative Primary Source Analysis due.

Discussion:

Thomas L. Haskell, "The True and Tragical History of Time on the Cross," *New York Review of Books* (October 2, 1975).

Robert William Fogel and Stanley L Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (New York: Norton, 1995), excerpt.

George M. Dennison, "The Bellesiles Case and the Ethics of Scholarship," *Montana Professor* 14 (Spring 2004).

Michael A. Bellesiles, "Percentage of Probate Inventories Listing Firearms," in *Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture*. New York: Alfred P. Knopf, 2000.

Charles Joseph Minard, "Figurative Map of the Successive Losses in Men of the French Army in the Russian Campaign, 1812-1813" (1869).

Edward R Tufte, "PowerPoint is Evil," *Wired*, September 2003.

Those who signed up to analyze a piece of quantitative evidence will present it in class.

Background:

Gary Kornblith, "Making Sense of Numbers."

John Tosh, "History by Numbers," in *The Pursuit of History*.

Mar. 7

Primary Sources: Visual Evidence

Visual Primary Source Analysis due.

Discussion:

Mitchell, W. J. T.. "What Do Pictures 'Really' Want?" *October* 77, no. (Summer 1996): 71-82.

Curtis, James and Sheila Grannen. "Let Us Now Appraise Famous Photographs: Walker Evans and Documentary Photography." *Winterthur Portfolio* 15, no. (Spring 1980): 1-23.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." (1936) *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. New York: Schocken Books, 1985.

Gunning, Tom. "The Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)credulous Spectator." *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995.

Those who signed up to analyze a piece of visual evidence will present it in class.

Background:

Irene Bierman, "Images"

James Curtis, "Making Sense of Documentary Photography"

Tom Gunning, "Making Sense of Film"

Mar. 14

Primary Sources: Aural Evidence

Aural Primary Source Analysis due.

Discussion:

Corbin, Alain. "A History and Anthropology of the Senses." *Time, Desire, and Horror: Towards a History of the Senses*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1995.

Monson, Ingrid. "Hearing, Seeing, and Perceptual Agency." *Critical Inquiry* 34, no. (2008): 36-58.

David Suisman, "Co-workers in the Kingdom of Culture: Black Swan Records and the Political Economy of African American Music," *Journal of American History* 90, no. 4 (March 2004): 1295-1325.

Those who signed up to analyze a piece of aural evidence will present it in class.

Background:
Marion Jacobson, "Music"

Mar. 21 Primary Sources: Oral History

Interview Primary Source Analysis due.

Discussion:

Alessandro Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," in *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 1998), 63-74.

Kathleen M. Blee, "Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics: Lessons from Oral Histories of the Klan," *Journal of American History* 80 (1993), 596-606.

Brian Thom, "Aboriginal Rights and Title in Canada After Delgamuukw: Part One, Oral Traditions and Anthropological Evidence in the Courtroom," *Native Studies Review* 14, 1 (2001), 1-26.

Those who signed up to analyze an interview will present it in class.

Background:
Linda Shopes, "Making Sense of Oral History"

Mar. 28 Presentations of First Drafts

Student papers available by morning of March 27.

Apr. 4 Presentations of First Drafts

Student papers available by morning of April 3.

Apr. 11 Presentations of First Drafts

Student papers available by morning of April 10.

Apr. 19 Term Paper due