

EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY  
DIVISION OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

**REQUEST FOR INCLUSION OF A COURSE IN THE  
GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM:  
EDUCATION FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY**

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DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL: History & Philosophy

COLLEGE: Arts & Sciences

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1. Subject Code, Number, and Title: History 300. Researching and Writing History

2. Credit Hours: 3

3. Course Description

An introduction to the historian's skills. Exercises include compiling a bibliography, writing book reviews, and preparing a research paper. Required for the history major.

4. This course is (check one):

- an existing course with no revisions (need not go through the input system)
- an existing course with revisions (attach this form to Request for Course Revision form)
- a new course (attach this form to Request for New Course form)

5. Check the General Education requirement this course is intended to meet. If the course is to be proposed for more than one requirement, submit a separate form for each one.

- Effective Communication**
- Quantitative Reasoning (*QR designation*)**
- Writing Intensive (*WI designation*)**
- Perspectives on a Diverse World**
  - Global Awareness
  - U.S. Diversity
- Knowledge of the Disciplines**
  - Arts
  - Humanities
  - Science
  - Social Science
- Learning Beyond the Classroom (*LBC designation*)**

- Self and Well Being
- Community Service, Citizenship, and Leadership
- Cultural and Academic Activities and Events
- Career and Professional Development
- International and Multicultural Experience
- Undergraduate Research

6. Rationale. Provide a concise, clear, jargon-free explanation of why this is a General Education course and how it fits into this specific area of the program. (The rationale should explain to students why they are taking the course. It should address both why it is part of the General Education program and why it fits into the particular category.) This rationale should appear on the general course syllabus provided here and should be included in specific course syllabi given to students.

All students at Eastern Michigan University must take an upper-level writing course that further hones their writing skills and introduces them to the research methods and writing conventions of their chosen discipline. Writing, as much as research, is central to the discipline of history. This course will provide an introduction to the actual practice of history, which is undertaking research in primary and secondary sources and conveying the results of that research to others in the form of interpretive essays and books. In this class, you will learn how to locate primary sources – sources created in the historical moment by the historical actors and actresses – using a variety of means, as well as learn how to use library catalogs and databases to discover secondary sources created by other historians. You will gain an appreciation for the strengths and weaknesses of the different research methods and resources that historians use. The course aims to further develop your interpretive skills and to introduce you to the typical questions that historians ask of the past. The central focus of the class is to assist you in developing a research topic of your choosing, researching the topic in available primary and secondary sources, and writing a relatively brief argumentative research paper.

7. Clearly and concisely explain how this course meets each of the General Education outcomes for the requirement checked in number five (all outcomes should be addressed). To do this, (a) list the General Education outcomes for the requirement and explain how the course meets each outcome; and (b) explain, in general terms, the method(s) of evaluation to be used in the course and how these methods assess the degree to which students have met the General Education outcomes for this requirement.

*Develop and employ successful, flexible writing and reading strategies that support sustained inquiry in a discipline:*

(a) History 300 builds all semester towards completion of a small research paper, with students proposing topics early in the term, developing bibliographies, reviewing one of the key books in their bibliography, preparing an initial stab at a thesis, submitting an initial draft, and completing a final paper. At every point along

the way, feedback propels students forward, from comments on initial proposals that suggests how to focus research through peer and instructor feedback on the thesis, to a sustained instructor response to the initial draft. Lectures provide key guidelines for research and writing strategies, for instance, by providing simple techniques to weigh the value of a secondary source by judging who published it (university presses versus commercial ones, scholarly journals versus glossy magazines) and by noting its reliance on primary sources. Throughout the process, students meet as a class and in individual one-on-one sessions with the instructors. As students struggle, instructors can provide a helping hand; a student having difficulties finding primary sources might come to office hours and sitting next to the instructor, brainstorm about useful keywords for a database search or watch as the instructor performs a complicated Boolean search in one database or catalog, to be sent home to replicate the search in other databases and catalogs.

(b) Students will be assessed on their achievement of successful strategies primarily through the evaluation of their successive exercises designed to work them towards the goal of writing a final paper; the close one-on-one relationship that the instructor has with every student will further allow him or her to assess the ability of the student to sustain inquiry in the discipline. The early paper on primary sources will give instructors insight into which students are most likely to struggle.

*Use writing strategies that achieve the purposes for writing and address the expectations of audiences within a disciplinary context:*

(a) History 300 concentrates on the development of a clear thesis to introduce students to the central purpose of writing within history, to develop interpretations of historical events. When students bring their initial theses to class, we begin with an evaluation of what a thesis is and look at a variety of published sources and their theses; then, with the thesis on the board, students pair off and evaluate each other's thesis, which are returned to the authors, along with the instructors' comments. Students seem to learn more about developing theses by evaluating their colleagues' than in directly reflecting about their own. Finally, students are encouraged to think of themselves as professional historians and to imagine presenting these papers outside the context of the class itself, which some do, typically at the Undergraduate Symposium or the regional conference of Phi Alpha Theta, the honors society for history

(b) Students will be evaluated in their achievement of writing strategies appropriate to the discipline of history through the evaluation of their work, most notably from the syllabus below, the primary source paper, the book review, and the final paper. In their final paper students will be expected to have a strong thesis, use primary sources to back up that thesis, utilize significant secondary sources, perform critical analysis of both primary and secondary sources, and write clearly, with few errors in grammar and citations. Book reviews are expected to identify a thesis, provide a succinct summary of the key evidence, and critically evaluate the book's large findings.

*Formulate research questions and employ strategies for researching and responding to those questions:*

(a) Students work together with faculty to develop viable research questions from the topics they propose. From the initial proposal, students are asked to propose a historical question, one of a "why" or "how" variety focusing on causation or historical process. For projects in which the material is rich, but limited in scope, students are invited to explore it to develop a question that is historicist-rooted in a particular time and place-in nature. For topics in which there is a great deal of primary source material, students are advised to explore the secondary literature, to find a unique question that will permit them to focus on just a portion of the available primary sources. Much class time is given, including in the library and on-line, on the means to find source materials, especially the primary sources that are the keystone of good historical work. Students are given techniques as simple as the correct keywords to enter into a Library of Congress subject field search—"personal narratives", "correspondence", "sources"—together with the keywords they are researching, to limit library catalog searches to primary source materials.

(b) The final paper is the primary means by which student's are assessed on their ability to formulate a proper research question and engage in proper strategies for researching these questions. The success of the thesis rests on a strong historical question that it is answering; the quality of the paper intrinsically reflects a strong research program. The progressive nature of the class insures that students have developed certain abilities before they are permitted to proceed.

*Use discipline-genres to communicate information:*

(a) Students learn two key genres, the book review and the interpretive essay. These two genres represent the two forms of writing that account for most scholarly activity among professional historians. The interpretive essay can be delivered as a scholarly paper, written in the form of a journal article, or developed into a full-length book. The book review has its cousins the referee's report and the response to a scholarly paper at a conference. By giving their final paper as a paper at the Undergraduate Symposium or a Phi Alpha Theta conference, students can enjoy the experience of communicating their findings to others.

(b) In the assessment of their book review and their final paper, students will be expected to follow the generic formats of these forms of writing. The book review will identify the thesis, summarize the key points, and provide critical analysis. The essay will have a strong thesis and back it up with evidence drawn from primary sources.

*Understand conventions for communicating, disseminating, and interpreting information within a discipline:*

(a) Students are introduced to scholarly publications, both journals and university press books, as the primary means by which historians communicate with one another. They learn the stylistic conventions

that historians use, from how essays are typically structured to the citation style (Chicago Manual of Style) used within the discipline. Individual meetings with students are often used to explain why historians prefer certain conventions over those accepted by other disciplines, for instance, the relative ease of citing archival material in note form versus parenthetical citations.

(b) Students' understanding of disciplinary conventions will be primarily assessed through evaluation of their final paper. Secondary sources will be expected to be of the scholarly variety, and citation styles will be expected to conform to the Chicago Manual of Style/Turabian format. Furthermore, the structure of the final paper and of the book review will be expected to meet disciplinary conventions.

It should be noted that the History section has, until recent budget cuts, assigned two professors who had not taught the class to read a sizeable sampling of the students' essays each year and assess how well they met the section's own set of outcomes.

- 8. Attach a syllabus (1-inch margins and 10-12 pt. font). The syllabus must include the rationale from #6 above and clearly reflect the outcomes and methods of evaluation detailed in #7 above.

Please submit all materials in electronic form.

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### Action of the Department/College

#### 1. Department

Vote of department faculty: For **15** Against **0** Abstentions **0**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department Head

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

#### 2. College

\_\_\_\_\_  
College Dean

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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### Action of General Education Advisory Committee

Vote of General Education Committee: For \_\_\_\_\_ Against \_\_\_\_\_ Abstentions \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson, General Education Advisory Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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### Approval

\_\_\_\_\_  
Associate Vice-President for Undergraduate Studies and Curriculum

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Researching and Writing History**

### **History 300**

#### **Course Overview**

All students at Eastern Michigan University must take an upper-level writing course that further hones their writing skills and introduces them to the research methods and writing conventions of their chosen discipline. Writing, as much as research, is central to the discipline of history. This course will provide an introduction to the actual practice of history, which is undertaking research in primary and secondary sources and conveying the results of that research to others in the form of interpretive essays and books. In this class, you will learn how to locate primary sources — sources created in the historical moment by the historical actors and actresses — using a variety of means, as well as learn how to use library catalogs and databases to discover secondary sources created by other historians. You will gain an appreciation for the strengths and weaknesses of the different research methods and resources that historians use. The course aims to further develop your interpretive skills and to introduce you to the typical questions that historians ask of the past. The central focus of the class is to assist you in developing a research topic of your choosing, researching the topic in available primary and secondary sources, and writing a relatively brief argumentative research paper.

#### **Course Objectives:**

At the completion of this class, students will be able to:

- Identify what primary and secondary sources are, find relevant examples of both, and utilize them in an argumentative paper.
- Formulate research questions that will lead to strong interpretations.
- Develop strong theses around available sources.
- Create a conventional book review and an argumentative research essay.
- Read a secondary source critically by evaluating its thesis and the key evidence that supports it.
- Distinguish between scholarly and popular forms of history.
- Use the Chicago Manual of Style citation format.

#### **Typical Texts:**

A guide to writing history.

A style guide.

Some primary sources.

One or two secondary sources.

**Typical Assignments:**

**Topic Proposal:**

Write no more than a page describing your topic and a historical question or problem that might go with the topic. Also include the types of sources you would like to find and the possible direction you believe the evidence will lead.

**Primary Document Paper:**

You will be expected to read a collection of documents in its entirety and, guided by the class discussion, choose a particular historical question to settle based on evidence developed from several of the documents. Be advised that a 600-900 word argumentative essay needs to be narrowly focused on a specific question.

**Periodical assignment:**

You will be given a worksheet assignment on historical journals/periodicals to be done on your own in the library. It is a self-directed and self-evident assignment that tests your ability to locate scholarly articles on specific subjects.

**Bibliography of sources:**

You will need to develop a working bibliography that has some breadth. A bibliography of at least 10 sources, with at least 5 primary sources and 5 secondary sources, including at least one secondary source of book length, will be necessary for most projects. That said, some projects may be based in a particular newspaper or in the published papers of a single individual; in those cases, you need to identify not only the source, but a series of relevant documents from within that source. Finally, quantitative-type studies, for one, may utilize fewer primary sources, and, of course, there may be other instances in which fewer sources would prove adequate. If that appears to be the case for you, speak with the instructor to get clearance or guidance to possible sources.

**Book Review:**

From one of the secondary-source books in your working bibliography, choose the one that you think is of greatest substance and relevance, and write a short review of it, identifying its thesis, the historical controversies it raises, and its own strengths and weaknesses.

**Thesis Paragraph:**

This paragraph should include the major historical argument of your paper, a brief reference to the sources upon which the argument is based, and a narrative outline of your paper. You will need to hand in

two copies of this assignment; students will be evaluating each other's paragraphs as part of this assignment.

**First Draft:**

The first draft should be a complete draft of the paper, from 2500-3000 words long. Its citations should be according to the *Chicago Manual of Style* format.

**Final Draft:**

The final draft should incorporate changes due to the instructor's editing and your own rethinking of the subject. It should also include a full, annotated bibliography telling what each source is and how useful it was. You should hand in two copies of the final draft; one will be available for you to pick up after it is graded.

**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is the use, without proper citation, of words **and ideas** which are not your own. Merely paraphrasing somebody else's words does not relieve you of the obligation to provide a citation. Original thinking is the best way to avoid charges of plagiarism. Obviously, if you borrow a paper from a friend, cut and paste from the internet, or buy one from the internet or other service, that is the ultimate in academic dishonesty. Plagiarism of any kind will result in failure of this class; it may mean dismissal from the University.

**TYPICAL SCHEDULE OF LECTURES, ASSIGNMENTS, AND READINGS**

September 7: **Introduction**

September 9: **Choosing a Topic**

Marius, 75-98.

Rael, "Introduction" and "The Research Process," in "[Reading, Writing, and Researching for History](#)" 5-6, 39-40.

<http://academic.bowdoin.edu/WritingGuides/>

September 12: **The Nature of History**

Marius, viii-x, 1-11.

Hand in, by email attachment, your best paper, preferably one written for a history class.

September 14: **The Many Kinds of History**

September 16: **Written and Archival Sources**

["Making Sense of Letters & Diaries"](#), by Steven Stowe.

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/letters/>  
topic submitted for approval.

September 19: **Material, Visual, and Audio Sources**

["Making Sense of Documentary Photography,"](#) by James Curtis. <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/Photos/>  
proposed topics returned.

Primary Document assignment and primary document packet handed out.

September 21: **Oral History**

["Making Sense of Oral History,"](#) by Linda Shopes.

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/>

September 23: **Government Documents and Statistical Sources**

SEPTEMBER 26: **MAKING SENSE OF PRIMARY DOCUMENTS**

Marius, 29-50.

Rael, "How to Read a Primary Source," in "[Reading, Writing, and Researching for History](#)," 16-19.

<http://academic.bowdoin.edu/WritingGuides/>  
Read Primary Document packet.  
Primary document paper due.

September 28: **Library Session** (Halle Library)

September 30: **Finding Secondary Sources** (Halle Library)

OCTOBER 3 : **INTERNET PRIMARY SOURCES** (HALLE LIBRARY)

October 5: **Evaluating Secondary Sources**

JSTOR: find and read Dan Flores, "Bison Ecology and Bison Diplomacy: The Southern Plains from 1800 to 1850," *Journal of American History* 78 (1991).

Rael, "How to Read A Secondary Source," and "Some Keys to Good Reading," in "[Reading, Writing, and Researching for History](#)," 13-15, 22-23.

<http://academic.bowdoin.edu/WritingGuides/>

October 7: **Quantitative History Workshop**

["Making Sense of Numbers,"](#) by Gary Kornblith.

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/numbers/>  
periodical assignment due

October 10: office hour

October 12: office hour

October 14: office hour

October 17: office hour

October 19: **Outlining and Organizing Material I**

Rael, "Research Papers," in "[Reading, Writing, and Researching for History](#)," 34-38.

<http://academic.bowdoin.edu/WritingGuides/>  
Bibliography of sources due

October 21: **Outlining and Organizing Material II**

October 24: office hour

October 26: **Identifying and Constructing a Thesis**

Marius, 13-28

Rael, "How to Ask Good Questions," "What Makes a Question Good," "From Observation to Hypothesis," and "The Thesis," in "[Reading, Writing, and Researching for History](#)," 28-33, 52-58.

<http://academic.bowdoin.edu/WritingGuides/>  
book review due

OCTOBER 28: **IMPROVING SOURCES**

bibliographies returned

October 31: office hour

November 2: office hour

November 4: **Historical Writing and Drafting**

Marius, 51-71, 97-103

Rael, "Structuring Your Essay," "The Three Parts of a History Paper," and "History and Rhetoric," in "[Reading, Writing, and Researching for History](#)," 46-51, 59-60.  
<http://academic.bowdoin.edu/WritingGuides/>

November 7: **Writing Style**

Rael, "The Scholarly Voice: Hints on Crafting Historical Prose," in "[Reading, Writing, and Researching for History](#)," 68-70. <http://academic.bowdoin.edu/WritingGuides/>

November 9: **Citations I**

Rael, "Grammar for Historians," "Formatting Your Paper," "A Style Sheet for History Writers," "Presenting Primary Sources in Your Paper," "Presenting Primary Sources in Your Paper," and "Citing Sources," in "[Reading, Writing, and Researching for History](#)," 61-62, 65-67, 71-79. <http://academic.bowdoin.edu/WritingGuides/>

November 11: **Citations II**

Hacker, Diane. "[Research and Documentation Online](#)":  
<http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/history/footnotes.html>  
(Breeze through this, but be sure to look at all the pages herein)

Rael, "Advanced Citation," in "[Reading, Writing, and Researching for History](#)," 80-83.  
<http://academic.bowdoin.edu/WritingGuides/thesis-paragraph-due>

November 14: **Strengthening Theses**

Thesis paragraph returned.

November 16: office hour

November 18: office hour

November 21: office hour

November 28: office hour

November 30: **Class Discussion of Writing Difficulties**

Initial drafts due. (use the "Paper-writing checklist" in Rael, "[Reading, Writing, and Researching for History](#)," 84-85.  
<http://academic.bowdoin.edu/WritingGuides/>

December 2: office hour

December 5: **Revising and Editing**

Initial drafts returned.

December 7: office hour

December 9: office hour

December 12: office hour

December 14: office hour

December 19: **Conclusions**  
Final drafts due.