

## Senior Seminar in History (HIST 4999)

Spring 2025, Truman State University  
MC 208, TR noon-1:20  
Office: MC 227  
Office Hours: typically MWF 11:30-12:30 & 1:30-2:30 and by appointment

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### Description

Senior Seminar is the capstone experience for history majors. Combining and building on the knowledge in historiography and skills in research you have acquired so far, it culminates in a major, independent, original research project that is subject to rigorous academic standards. Passing the course proves that you have understood what it means to be a historian and earned your degree in history.

### Course structure

The course seeks to accomplish two tasks. The first is to offer guidance and insight into the strictures and standards according to which professional historians work. The second task is to create an environment conducive to executing an independent research project that is consistent with those standards. As such, we begin with a discussion about what exactly it is that historians do. In the remaining months, we pursue the research project. We work collectively and in increments, following each step in the writing process together, from deciding on a topic, choosing sources and developing a bibliography to writing drafts and revising. Throughout, we meet individually and as a group to give progress reports and to give and receive feedback.

A research paper is one that advances a persuasive, clear, and original *argument*. That it is original means that the argument needs to be yours. Though it often builds on a topic that you have begun to explore in another class, the paper must be a new project, not a recycled one. Academic dishonesty or plagiarism (whose definition includes recycled papers) in any aspect or at any stage of your work triggers an automatic F in the course and is grounds for expulsion from the university. More importantly, *it is part of your job as a historian to demonstrate that your work is original*. This is why you always see a real historian contrast his or her work to what has previously been written on the subject.

Completion of *all* assignments is *required* to pass the course. The completion of a portfolio is a graduation requirement. (Even if you are not graduating, you turn in your portfolio in conjunction with the capstone course at <http://portfolio.truman.edu>.)

This is a four-credit course with only three weekly face-to-face meetings with your professor. You will earn the fourth credit because this course incorporates increased content and collateral readings, including primary sources, as well as increased research and paper writing. It also includes higher-level critical thinking exercises that specifically develop analysis, synthesis, and evaluation rather than simple knowledge and comprehension. You are expected to complete 180 hours of work for this 4-credit-hour, writing-enhanced course. This includes class meetings, preparation for discussion, reading, research, and writing. Time management is essential.

This class has been designed to help satisfy the “writing-enhanced” requirement of the Dialogues Curriculum. As such, the various written projects will assist the quest to improve your writing and critical thinking skills as well as help you understand how interconnected are cognition, the writing process, and the final written product. As part of this mission, this class will provide the opportunities for you to work toward meeting the specific objectives of

Truman’s “writing-enhanced” requirement, especially writing as product to communicate your ideas to others:

- be able to write clear, coherent, and well-organized prose for a targeted audience
  - demonstrate a command of syntax, style, and tone appropriate to the task
  - exhibit mastery of punctuation, usage, and formatting conventions.
- See the syllabus addendum on Blackboard for additional class policies.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points</u>
Participation and attendance	100
Writer profile & strategies	100
Submission of preliminaries (topic and bibliography)	50
5-page draft:	50
15-page draft:	100
Peer review:	100
Presentation:	100
Draft & Final paper:	400

- **Participation.** Your participation is an important part of the seminar and is a significant portion in the evaluation of your performance. Participation means contributing to the learning of other students by engaging them with both rigor and respect.
- **Writer Profile.** Type up a two-page statement profile of yourself as a writer, laying out your strengths and weaknesses. Identify areas where you think you will need help and where you think you may be of help to others. Look back at something you wrote as a freshman, and consider how your writing has developed since then. What have you worked on over the years in terms of writing style?
  - assess your own writing to uncover strengths and concerns, and be able to generate strategies for improvement
- **AHA Standards.** Read the American Historical Association’s “Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct” and be prepared to discuss it. Think about what comprises a successful historical research paper. Be prepared to share your ideas.
- **AH rankings.** Read the assigned essays in *The Apprentice Historian*. Rank and grade them. Be prepared to justify your evaluations.
- **Topic Presentation.** Present the topic of your paper to the class.
- **Bibliography.** Turn in a list of all the sources that you have identified, separating primary sources, listed first, and secondary sources.
- **Methodology.** The methodology refers to the “how” of your research project. How are you using your source base? Do you need to conduct random sampling due to a plethora of primary sources (e.g., newspapers)? Or are you casting a wide net due to a scarcity of primary sources? Where will you find these sources? What historical approaches does

your topic emphasize: social, political, economic, cultural, etc.? How does this approach influence your choice of secondary sources?

- **Outline.** Create a plan of each section, stating which issues belong in which section, and showing the overall structure of your paper.
- **Annotated bibliography.** Pare down your sources and write a few sentences describing each and explain why they are useful to your paper.
- **5-page draft.** Develop one 5-page section of your paper focused on the historiography or literature review.
- **15-page draft.** Turn in fifteen pages; this can include your previous 5 pages, but if so, those five pages should be revised according to past feedback. This draft will be graded.
- **Peer Review.**
- **Senior Presentation.** Give a formal, professional ten-minute presentation to the department, describing your paper's topic and argument, what's been written about that topic previously, your contribution to the field, and the sources you use to make your argument. I expect everyone to be present for your peers' presentations.
- **Full draft.** Turn in as polished a draft as you can of the full 25 pages. This will be returned with detailed feedback so that you can make final improvements.
- **Final Paper.** This is it: a 25-page research paper that makes a clear, persuasive, original, and historically significant argument.

## Class Schedule

Week 1: Introductions

Writer Profile and previous projects.

The Historical Profession - AHA standards. Read and discuss the American Historical Association, "Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct,"  
<http://www.historians.org/pubs/free/ProfessionalStandards.cfm>

Read the assigned essays in *The Apprentice Historian* (on Brightspace). Rank and grade them. Be prepared to justify your evaluations.

Week 2: Present the topic of your paper to the class. Submit paper proposal & preliminary bibliography.

Week 3: Submit outline and discussion of methodology.

Week 4: Submit your annotated bibliography. Identify and annotate each source you plan to use

in your paper by (1) explaining who the author is, (2) summarizing the content, and (3) describing its value to your project.

Week 5: 5-page draft historiography due.

Week 6: First introduction

Weeks 7-8: Progress reports

Week 9: 15-page draft due.

Week 10: Progress reports

Weeks 11-14: Peer reviews

Week 15: Presentations.

**Final revised paper due:** Finals week. Turn in a 20-25-page research paper that makes a clear, persuasive, original, and historically significant argument.

## Addendum

Also see syllabus resources for students: <https://wp-internal.truman.edu/provost/syllabus-resources-for-students/>.

**Expectations** – My expectations of you as students in this class are fairly straightforward and not unlike those of any other college-level class:

1. I expect you to complete the assigned readings before class.
2. I expect you to come to class prepared to think about and discuss these readings.
3. I expect you to be fully present and engaged in class lectures and discussions. This means no inappropriate use of personal technology devices. If we are meeting remotely over zoom, you should have your camera turned on. If there is a reason you cannot or do not want to have your camera turned on, just please let me know.
4. I expect you to complete all assignments, and to turn all of them in on time.
5. I expect all written essays to be your own original work.

If you run into any problems that hinder you from meeting any of these expectations, please let me know. I think you will find that as with most of your professors I can be completely reasonable, but I cannot help you if you do not communicate with me or disappear from class without explanation. Remaining in touch is important. I do want you to excel in this class, and will bend over backwards to do what I can to ensure that you do. But please keep in mind that your instructors are people as well, and we have our breaking points. If I am bent over backwards and you keep pushing, I *will* break and you will not be happy with the consequences because you will fail the class.

You can expect me to provide timely feedback on questions, activities, and assessments. I typically provide feedback on assignments before the next class period. The best way to contact me outside of class is via email and typically I am able respond fairly quickly. If you don't receive a response from me (like, in more than a day) please try again because the email probably was lost, but first check your spam filter because thanks to Elon Musk my emails *will* go to spam. To avoid this problem, please add [marc@truman.edu](mailto:marc@truman.edu) to your email program's "allow" list. Please check with ITS if you need assistance with this problem. Assigned work is due at the time specified; if you anticipate you may struggle to meet those deadlines, you should discuss an extension with me in advance.

**Credit generation** – This is a four-credit course with three weekly face-to-face meetings with your professor (three weekly 50-minute for MWF classes, two 80-minute classes for TR classes, and one 3-hr period for evening classes, plus 6 "hours" [300 minutes] of outside-class time per week). You will earn the fourth credit because this course incorporates increased content and collateral readings, including primary sources, as well as increased research and paper writing. It also includes higher-level critical thinking exercises that specifically develop analysis, synthesis, and evaluation rather than simple knowledge and comprehension.

**Writing-enhanced** – This class has been designed to help satisfy the "writing-enhanced" requirement of Truman's LSP. As such, the various written projects will assist the quest to improve your writing and critical thinking skills as well as help you understand how interconnected are cognition, the writing process, and the final written product.

**Outcomes** – The major outcomes of this class include:

1. Demonstrate broad familiarity with the field of history and the events and trends that it covers.
2. Demonstrate significant familiarity with the major events and trends in history.
3. Demonstrate an appreciation of historiography and the range of fields and methods that historians deploy.
4. Demonstrate strong familiarity with the range of research protocols practiced by historians including the location, examination, and use of primary and secondary sources.
5. Demonstrate strong familiarity with professional standards to which historians adhere.
6. Demonstrate the ability to apply those protocols and standards in both directed and independent research.

**Requirements** – Our goal is to challenge existing assumptions, engage alternative viewpoints, and encourage critical thinking. Through the study of history, we seek to empower ourselves to be better citizens, and to provide ourselves with the skills necessary to play a positive and educated role in society. We need to be active constituents rather than mere recipients of our education. To accomplish those tasks, we should strive to create an open and supportive learning environment. Complete reading assignments before class so that you are prepared to carry on an intelligent discussion of the material in class. Lectures and discussions will complement the readings and assume the base level of knowledge that they present, so it is critically important that you keep up with the readings. Please drop me a note if you have any concerns or suggestions for improving the class.

**Attendance policy** – Students are expected to attend all their classes and participate actively in discussions. Poor or irregular attendance will adversely affect the quality of work and the course grade. A student who has to miss class must contact the course instructor and give a clear, valid explanation. Extended absences (for example, medical) should be documented (for example, by a note from the doctor). The student has the responsibility to make up any work missed, with deadlines at the discretion of the instructor. For university guidelines on attendance: [http://catalog.truman.edu/content.php?catoid=15&navoid=801&hl=attendance+policy&returnto=search#Attendance\\_Policy](http://catalog.truman.edu/content.php?catoid=15&navoid=801&hl=attendance+policy&returnto=search#Attendance_Policy)

**Regular and Substantive Interaction Policy**– Federal regulations related to financial aid require that students demonstrate that they are actively engaged in the courses they take. For the purposes of this class, establishing academic engagement requires, at a minimum, attendance at a class session or completion of one of the assignments for the first week of the semester. If you are unable to attend class or complete an assignment you must contact me. Failure to engage without an explanation by Saturday, January 18, 2025 will result in your removal from the course the following week. Under certain circumstances, removal could impact your scholarship eligibility or financial aid.

**Writing Center** – The Writing Center (<https://writingcenter.truman.edu/>), in Pickler Memorial Library 107, is open from 8 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday, and is a good resource for improving your writing. They can help you to brainstorm, adjust style(s), fix grammar, references, citations, and the like. Never be too embarrassed or ashamed to seek out help.

**Academic integrity** – Personal and scholarly integrity are expected of everyone in the class. Failure to live up to those responsibilities, risks earning a failing grade on the assignment/examination, a failing grade for the course, and/or in serious cases expulsion for the academic program or University. The University policy on academic dishonesty as published in the Student Conduct Code and General/Graduate Catalog applies ([http://catalog.truman.edu/content.php?catoid=20&navoid=1192#Academic\\_Dishonesty](http://catalog.truman.edu/content.php?catoid=20&navoid=1192#Academic_Dishonesty)).

The Truman State University Student Conduct Code (8.020.01) defines the term “academic misconduct” to include: 1) cheating, defined as using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information aids in any academic exercise; 2) fabrication, defined as falsification or invention of any information or citation in an exercise; 3) facilitating academic misconduct, defined as helping or attempting to help another in an act of academic dishonesty; and /or 4) plagiarism, defined as representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own in an academic exercise. Students who are caught committing acts of academic misconduct in this course will be subject to the full range of penalties, including failing the assignment and the course. In every case, the Dean of Student Affairs Office and the Vice President for Academic Affairs will be notified; these officials have the power to suspend or expel students for academic misconduct. For more information see these two websites: [http://catalog.truman.edu/content.php?catoid=11&navoid=491#Academic\\_Dishonesty](http://catalog.truman.edu/content.php?catoid=11&navoid=491#Academic_Dishonesty) and <http://www.truman.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/2014-Student-Conduct-Code.pdf>.

**ADA accommodations for students with disabilities** – The university is committed to making every possible effort to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Disability Services Office (x4478) as soon as possible. Also see <http://disabilityservices.truman.edu/>.

To obtain disability-related academic accommodations students with documented disabilities must contact the course instructor and the Office of Student Access and Disability Services (OSA) as soon as possible. Truman complies with ADA requirements. For additional information, refer to the Office of Student Access and Disability Services website at <http://disabilityservices.truman.edu/>

You may also contact OSA by phone at (660) 785-4478 or email [studentaccess@truman.edu](mailto:studentaccess@truman.edu)

**Notice of Compliance** – In compliance with federal law and applicable Missouri statutes, the University does not discriminate on the basis of sex, disability, age, race, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status in admission to or employment in its education programs or activities. The University complies with the regulations implementing Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972; Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975; and other state and federal laws and regulations.”

**Discrimination and Title IX** – Truman State University, in compliance with applicable laws and recognizing its deeper commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion which enhances accessibility and promotes excellence in all aspects of the Truman Experience, does not

discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, retaliation, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, or protected veteran status in its programs and activities, including employment, admissions, and educational programs and activities. Apparently political ideology is not included, so we can discriminate based on that. Faculty and staff are considered “mandated reporters” and therefore are required to report potential violations of the University’s Anti-Discrimination Policies to the Institutional Compliance Officer.

Title IX prohibits sex harassment, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking and retaliation. Truman State University encourages individuals who believe they may have been impacted by sexual or gender-based discrimination to consult with the Title IX Coordinator who is available to speak in depth about the resources and options. Faculty and staff are considered “mandated reporters” and therefore are required to report potential incidents of sexual misconduct that they become aware of to the Title IX Coordinator.

For more information on discrimination or Title IX, or to file a complaint contact the Institutional Compliance Officer (<https://titleix.truman.edu/>), Title IX and Section 504 Coordinator

Office of Institutional Compliance  
Violette Hall, Room 1308  
100 E. Normal Ave  
Kirksville, MO 63501  
Phone: (660) 785-4354  
[titleix@truman.edu](mailto:titleix@truman.edu)

The institution’s complaint procedure can be viewed at <http://titleix.truman.edu/files/2015/08/University-Complaint-Reporting-Resolution-Procedure.pdf> and the complaint form is accessible at <http://titleix.truman.edu/make-a-report/>.

**FERPA** – Education records are protected by the Family Education Right to Privacy Act (FERPA). As a result, course grades, assignments, advising records, etc. cannot be released to third parties without your permission. There are, however, several exceptions about which you should be aware. For example, education records can be disclosed to employees or offices at Truman who have an “educational need to know”. These employees and offices may include your academic advisor, the Institutional Compliance Officer, the Registrar’s Office, or Student Affairs depending on the type of information. For more information about FERPA, see <http://www.truman.edu/registrar/ferpa/>.

**Recording** – No recording in the classroom is permitted without the explicit and written permission of the instructor.

**Statement on disruptive behavior:**

“Behavior that persistently or flagrantly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students’ ability to learn and an instructor’s ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be asked to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Conduct.” *(From Washington State University, suggested by Lou Ann Gilchrist).*

**The minimum investment of time necessary by the average student to achieve the learning**



**goals of the course**, both in the class sessions and in autonomous learning activities. Apparently either the Missouri state Higher Learning Commission (HLC) or the Truman State University administration has mandated that all syllabi should contain information that documents the activities that warrant the credit hours awarded. For each hour in class, students should expect to devote approximately three additional hours per week to completing the course work. This is true for all classes.

You can access the University's standard attendance policy at <http://policies.truman.edu/policylibrary/attendance-policy/>.



**Emergency Procedures** – In each classroom on campus, there is a poster of emergency procedures explaining best practices in the event of an active shooter/hostile intruder, fire, severe weather, bomb threat, power outage, and medical emergency. This poster is also available as a PDF at this link: <http://police.truman.edu/files/2015/12/Emergency-Procedures.pdf>.

Students should be aware of the classroom environment and note the exits for the room and building. For more detailed information about emergency procedures, please consult the Emergency Guide for Academic Buildings, available at the QR code shown or at the following link: <http://police.truman.edu/emergency-procedures/academic-buildings/>

This six-minute video provides some basic information on how to react in the event there is an active shooter in your location: <http://police.truman.edu/emergency-procedures/active-shooter/active-shooter-preparedness-video/>.

Truman students, faculty, and staff can sign up for the TruAlert emergency text messaging service via TruView. TruAlert sends a text message to all enrolled cell phones in the event of an emergency at the University. To register, sign in to TruView and click on the “Truman” tab. Click on the registration link in the lower right of the page under the “Update and View My Personal Information” channel on the “Update Emergency Text Messaging Information” link. During a campus emergency, information will also be posted on the TruAlert website <http://trualert.truman.edu/>.

**Appropriate use of technology** – Appropriate use of technology is encouraged and inappropriate use is—well, inappropriate and detrimental to our common learning environment.

**Other random things I’m supposed to tell you:**

- I plan to provide prompt feedback on assignments, typically before the next class period.
- This class has no prerequisite or enrollment requirements.
- It has no expectations for prior knowledge/skills.
- It has no special equipment or technology requirements.