OVERVIEW: The purpose of this class is to give all history majors a chance to use their accumulated skills to write a short, sophisticated senior thesis on a topic of their choosing based largely upon primary-source documents. Each student will identify a suitable topic for research in conjunction with the instructor and, in some cases, also consult another faculty member who is expert in the proposed area of study. Students will prepare a thorough bibliography on the agreed-upon subject, conduct research in both primary and secondary sources, and write an approximately twenty to twenty-five page (about 5000-6000 words), double-spaced, typed paper. This page-length expectation, which does not include your bibliography, is NOT hard and fast. Feel free to write more if you need to. Write less if it is appropriate for your topic. The goal is to write a paper that is, in both conception and execution, of publishable quality in one of the many journals now publishing student historical research.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: By the end of the semester, students should be able to:
1) Design historiographically significant research questions.
2) Locate, evaluate and analyze primary-source materials and use them to construct a historical narrative and support historical arguments.
3) Evaluate relevant secondary literature in order to situate an interpretation historiographically.
4) Convey historical information and interpretations in a well-organized, sophisticated manner that follows proper rules of grammar and syntax in a style of appropriate to the discipline.
5) Demonstrate mastery of the citation standards of the history discipline.

ATTENDANCE AND GRADING: Because this class meets only a few times, you are expected to attend all classes. Absences will adversely affect your class grade. The final grade for the class will be determined as follows: final thesis--75%; class participation, attendance, and preliminary assignments--25%. The papers will be graded on the basis of: 1) the thoroughness of your research and your bibliography as well as the variety of sources used; 2) how well you substantiate your thesis with facts and quotations from primary sources; 3) the sophistication of your analysis; and 4) how well the paper is written and organized. See the grading rubric on Blackboard for all the facets of the thesis that will factor into your paper’s final grade. Papers will be downgraded ONE FULL LETTER-GRADE if late, unless an extension has been granted BEFORE the day the paper is due. Due to the nature of the smaller preliminary assignments, there can be no extensions granted for them except under the most extenuating circumstances. Computer or printer problems will not be a valid excuse for any late assignment. No work may be submitted electronically unless advance permission is given. Backup your work as you go!

THESIS TOPICS: Students must choose topics that meet the history discipline’s standards for significance and originality. The topic must also be feasible given the availability of primary sources at the student’s disposal, which in most cases means that the documents must be housed in the Washington area, though primary sources that are available on-line or in microform may suffice. Recycling a paper written for another class is not acceptable and will result in charges of academic
dishonesty, UNLESS you show the original paper to me at the beginning of the semester and explain how your work on the topic will be different or what new research and writing you plan to do on the subject. In any event, I must approve the ultimate focus and scope of each paper.

PLAGIARISM: I vigorously prosecute all suspected cases of plagiarism and cheating. Borrowing someone else's words without giving credit is plagiarism. Closely paraphrasing someone else’s work without making substantive changes to the content is plagiarism. Handing in a paper written completely or in part by someone else or for another class is academic dishonesty. But these facts do not mean you should footnote every sentence of your paper. Uncontroversial facts do not generally need citations at all. The most sophisticated papers will have no more than one or two (or at most three) footnotes per paragraph. If you are unsure of the rules, see me before you hand in your paper.

CLASS SCHEDULE

AUGUST 27: Introduction: What makes a historiographically significant research question, or in layman’s terms, a “good topic” (expertise, significance, feasibility, originality [i.e. not already “done”], availability of primary sources); ideally choose a topic based on the discovery of good primary sources, rather than looking for primary sources after choosing a topic; discussion of research topics under consideration; what is a primary source; where are they found; why do archives exist; how course will address elements of good writing; how to figure out if your topic has already been “done” and is feasible; department expert consultation; number of meetings needed to set your topic. START WORK ON A BIBLIOGRAPHY!!!

SEPTEMBER 3: By the end of this day you must have met with me in person to discuss your proposed topic. By Thursday, Sept. 4, you must have met with GW’s “faculty expert” on your proposed topic, and sent me an e-mail reporting the results of your discussion by that date.

CLASS DISCUSSION: How to Find Sources:

Bibliography--What should be in it and what should not? Where to start:

Books: things you know, bibliographies and footnotes of books you already know, ALADIN (identifying subject headings), BROWSE THE STACKS (in person and electronically), bibliographies of books found in ALADDIN and in the stacks, “following the footnote trail,” World Cat, Google Books, The Making of America (http://moa.umdl.umich.edu); Dissertations Online. What NOT to do on Google Books.

Articles: America: History and Life, Proquest, bibliographies and footnotes of things you already know about; J-STOR.

Primary Sources: bibliographies and footnotes of books and articles; National Archives search aids; Library of Congress search aids, Archives Grid; Archives USA; American Periodical Series; Early American Newspapers; Proquest Historical Newspapers (GW has The New York Times and The Washington Post; Library of Congress has many others including Atlanta Constitution, Boston Globe, Chicago Tribune, Christian Science Monitor, Los Angeles Times, and Wall Street Journal; those for the period 1860-1922 are online at http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov); Lexis-Nexis Academic.
SEPTEMBER 10: DUE AT THE START OF CLASS ON THIS DAY: 1) your two-page, double-spaced thesis proposal (including tentative title) and a two-page, single-spaced bibliography that includes your most important primary and secondary sources (begin the bibliography with a category for primary sources and then follow that with a category for secondary sources); and 2) a copy of at least one significant page of one major primary source you will use for your paper. Keep this primary source separate from your proposal and bibliography, as it will be passed around and shared with the class. Thesis proposals must include: 1) a clear description of your topic and its scope; 2) a brief discussion of what has been written to date on your topic and how what you are doing is either different or a necessary corrective; and 3) an explanation of the significance of your topic.

CLASS DISCUSSION: The Parts of a Research Paper
1) If necessary, finish discussion of how to find sources. 2) How many notes are enough? 3) Outlining. 4) The parts of a research paper: title, vignette, introduction (subject, scope, thesis, significance of thesis), historiography, background, organizational logic and clarity, tables, charts, illustrations, analysis, keys to good writing (clarity, brevity, variety, transitions, and sophistication), quotations, balance of content, maintains focus on stated topic, anticipates reader’s questions, conclusion (recap, significance, broader implications), footnote style, and bibliography. Note-taking strategies (secondary then primary, how to organize); always cite what you see; check the original source whenever possible, especially on matters central to your topic (never trust another scholar); quote other scholars VERY sparingly. Outlining and time allocation. How and when to edit.

SEPTEMBER 17: Class Discussion: Finish considering the characteristics of a great research paper. MAKE INTER-LIBRARY LOAN REQUESTS!

SEPTEMBER 24: NO CLASS, but send me five single-spaced pages of your research notes by e-mail as a Word attachment by class-time on this date. Notes will not be graded, but all academic honesty rules apply to notes submissions.

OCTOBER 1-8: NO CLASS. Ten pages of notes due to me by October 1, fifteen by Oct. 8.

OCTOBER 15: Three things due in class on this date: 1) Complete bibliography for your paper, including both secondary and primary sources; 2) historiographic section of your paper; 3) copies of three different primary sources from three different sources that are important to you paper; 4) each student must bring in a copy of a history article that you think is exemplary and give a no-more-than-five-minute presentation explaining why you think the article is so good (DO NOT SUMMARIZE THE CONTENT OF THE ARTICLE). The article need not be one you are using for your research paper for this class. The presentation should refer to the article’s style, sources, and organization.

OCTOBER 22-29: NO CLASS. Twenty pages of notes due Oct. 22; twenty-five due on Oct. 29.
NOVEMBER 5: The opening vignette of your paper is due in class on this date.
IN CLASS DISCUSSION: Writing issues. Students must be prepared to discuss their opening vignette, how they chose them, alternatives they considered, and other writing issues or problems that have developed. PICK UP VIGNETTES AT OFFICE HOURS MON. NOV. 10, 3:45-5:15

NOVEMBER 12: TWO COPIES (including title) of at least the first ten pages of your paper are due at the start of class. These should include edits of vignettes. Reminder: these will be graded. Second copy will be critiqued by each student’s assigned writing partner and returned to writer by November 19 in a manner to be agreed upon by each pair of students. On this day you will sign up for a meeting time on the 19th to discuss your paper’s first ten pages.

NOVEMBER 19: In lieu of class, we will meet one-on-one to discuss your initial submissions at times designated at the previous class meeting.

DECEMBER 3: Draft of entire paper due at start of class. Each student will make a five-minute presentation on his or her findings. Focus of the presentation should be on 1) your research question/problem; 2) your thesis or conclusion; and 3) the significance of your findings for your field.

DECEMBER 10: Final version of thesis due in my mailbox by noon.
THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE FOR HISTORY

TITLE PAGE and PAGE NUMBERING:
Every thesis should have a title page and all other pages should have page numbers)

INTRODUCTORY SECTION:
A thesis should have an introduction of several paragraphs. Ideally the paper will open with a vignette that draws the reader into the paper. The next paragraph will transition the reader into the research question. Finally, the introductory section should summarize the paper’s conclusions and its significance. Be sure your introduction explains the scope of your paper. The introduction should not give specific evidence to support your thesis. This section should not, in any form, say “this paper will….”

HISTORIOGRAPHY: The thesis needs a paragraph, or at most two, that summarizes the existing literature on your subject. The idea is to 1) explain to the reader how your study relates to the existing historiography; 2) show that your subject has either not been studied before or not been studied well; and perhaps 3) describe how a study of your subject will advance the historiography of your field.

ORGANIZING YOUR THESIS
There should be an OBVIOUS organizational logic to your paper.

Do not use subheadings for your paper. Students who use subheadings tend to put no effort into transitions, which are the hardest (yet most important) part of writing a history paper. You must come up with effective transitions from one part of the paper to the next and from paragraph to paragraph. You must also be sure that there is a logic to the order of your paragraphs.

Do not write one or two sentence paragraphs. And you should rarely use three sentence paragraphs.

EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS:
Check the original source whenever possible, especially on matters central to your topic; quote directly from primary sources whenever possible. Quote other scholars very sparingly. Quotations are used primarily to substantiate your argument. Secondarily they are used to convey the story in the participants’ own words. But you need to work hard to be sure that your paper has neither too many quotations nor too few.

Be sophisticated, not simplistic.

Use precise phrasing, not colloquialisms.

STYLE IMPERATIVES:
1) Vary word choice. Do not use the same important verbs or nouns more than once in a sentence or in consecutive sentences.
2) Vary sentence length and structure to make your writing more interesting
3) Use past tense in history papers. If you must switch between past and present tense, BE SURE TO BE CONSISTENT.
4) Do not connect what ought to be two sentences with a comma (known as “comma splices”) or with a comma followed by “however.”
5) Try to avoid writing “the fact that…”
6) Do not use “this” as a pronoun. “This” should almost always be followed by a noun or adjective.
7) Do not use contractions (weren’t, can’t, etc.) in formal papers. Do not use abbreviations in formal papers. Exceptions can be made only for terms that are USUALLY abbreviated, such as NATO or U.N., which should be written out the first time they are used but can be abbreviated thereafter.
8) Ship names and the names of books and newspapers must be in italics, NOT quotation marks and not underlined.

**QUOTATIONS:**
Do not use block quotations unless the quotation is more than two sentences long. Try when possible to avoid using block quotations. Single-space block quotations.

Only use ellipses (…) in the middle of a quotation, not at the beginning or the end.

*Punctuation goes inside quotation marks and before footnote notations, even if there is not punctuation mark in the original source.* This is correct: “I live in the United States.”
These are incorrect: “I live in the United States”.
Also incorrect: “I live in the United States”.

Make sure you have smooth transitions from your own words to quotations. You should almost never use a comma before a quotation, and almost never use a colon. Only use a comma before a quotation if it is necessary grammatically.

**Correct:**
“The landlady of Almack's thrives,” Dickens declared, describing her as “a buxom fat mulatto woman, with sparkling eyes, whose head is daintily ornamented with a handkerchief of many colours.”

Dickens wrote that “the landlady of Almack's thrives…[She is] a buxom fat mulatto woman, with sparkling eyes, whose head is daintily ornamented with a handkerchief of many colours.”

Dickens wrote: “The landlady of Almack's thrives….[She is] a buxom fat mulatto woman, with sparkling eyes, whose head is daintily ornamented with a handkerchief of many colours.”

The streets of the Lower East Side, Howe notes, were “lined with an endless array of pushcarts and peddlers selling every variety of product imaginable.”

**Incorrect:**
Dickens wrote, “the landlady of Almack's thrives…”

Dickens wrote “The landlady of Almack's thrives…”

Dickens wrote about Almack’s very vividly, “The landlady of Almack's thrives…”
Howe says that Lower East Side streets were, “lined with an endless array of pushcarts and peddlers selling every variety of product imaginable.”

**FOOTNOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY** (Unlike the other parts of the paper, these are single-spaced)

**Footnotes:** You must use footnotes (not endnotes) to explain where your information comes from. Use the following format for footnotes, which can be found in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th edition, or in Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th revised edition. There is an online version of the *Chicago Manual of Style* available for free through *ALADIN* (go to chapter 14, “Docuemtation Style I: Notes and Bibliography), but it is VERY long and difficult to navigate. Most of what you need is available in the “Citation Quick Guide,” available for free at [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html). But the quick guide does not tell you how to cite primary sources. For this subject, see the *ALADIN Chicago Manual Online*, chs. 14.240 and 14.241, plus 14.288-304 for government documents.

The key to citing primary sources is that you must provide everything the reader needs to easily find the precise document to which you are referring.

**Note that “Ibid” and “op. cit.” are not typically used any more.** Also note that footnotes are indented just like other written paragraphs.

**BOOK, first citation:**
1. Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York, 1985), 166-167. (Note that these book titles are in italics!)

**BOOK, subsequent citation:**
2. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 179. (This book title is also in italics!)

**JOURNAL ARTICLE, first citation:**
3. Oliver MacDonagh, "The Irish Famine Emigration to the United States," *Perspectives in American History* 10 (1976): 370-371. (The journal title is in italics, but the article title is not.)

**JOURNAL ARTICLE, subsequent citations:**

**Bibliography:** Your research paper MUST have a bibliography. Bibliographic entries must look like this:


Note that in bibliographies, every line except the first is indented (a hanging indent). With both notes and bibliographies, when in doubt, be consistent.

**Miscellaneous Reminders:** Be sure to number your pages. Be sure not to use contractions or abbreviations in a formal paper of this type. Do not double-space block quotations. Do not forget a title. Do not use sub-headings.