

## **HIST 200-01: Keys to Historical Research**

**Dr. Amanda Van Lanen**

**Section 01 Meets:** TTh 3:00-4:15pm

**Office:** SPH 237

**Phone:** 208-792-2684

**Email:** [alvanlanen@lcsc.edu](mailto:alvanlanen@lcsc.edu)

**Office Hours:** Wednesday 1:00-2:30pm; Thursday 10:30am-noon; or by appointment

### **Course Description**

This course is designed to introduce students to the methods and approaches to writing in the discipline of history. Through a series of case studies, students will learn to identify the problems of historical analysis, explain change over time, analyze source material, and evaluate historical arguments. Through a parallel series of writing assignments, students will also produce a substantial final research essay. Students will learn strategies for conducting primary and secondary research, constructing arguments, writing historically, and presenting arguments orally. In other words, this course will introduce the skills necessary to complete the senior level Research Seminar (SS 499/HIST 499), and to succeed as a student of history in general.

The central focus of this seminar is to develop research, interpretation, and writing skills. Extensive background knowledge of your chosen topic is not necessary. The point of this course is to be able to develop YOUR OWN sense of the past based on your research.

Students who join the class this semester should agree to make the following commitments:

1. Regular and reliable attendance.
2. Careful preparation. This involves preparing discussion notes, including points that you want to address in our discussion and your thoughts about the strengths and weaknesses of the author's arguments.
3. Participation that is forthright, consistent, and occasionally risk-taking. This includes respectfully listening and responding to others' comments in a mature dialogue. It also means taking an independent position based on your own reading of the evidence.

### **Course Objectives**

- Learn to think like a historian. By the end of the course, students will be able to distinguish key differences between various historical arguments and identify the thesis/interpretation of given works. This skill is foundational to understanding the field of historiography, which is the history of historical study.
- Develop research and library skills. Good research skills are essential for all historians. Students will practice the following skills through the process of writing an original research paper:
  - Use the library and the internet to find credible, scholarly sources.

- Evaluate the credibility and value of a wide variety of primary and secondary sources.
- Analyze historic documents.
- Use Chicago style citations to create footnotes and bibliographies.
- Develop research questions and effective hypothesis.
- Develop a plan to manage large amounts of information effectively.

### **Required Texts**

- Kate Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Or 9<sup>th</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press). NOTE: This is a very helpful reference work that you will want to keep.
- Other readings as listed on the course schedule.

### **Required Assignments**

We will spend the first half of the class learning about historiography, historical thinking, and the research process as a class by examining historic sources related to the decision to use the atomic bomb in 1945 as a case study.

#### **Participation and Short Assignments – 40%**

Active participation is essential. This includes attendance, attentiveness, thoughtful discussion, and respect for others' ideas. Unprepared attendance may be treated as an absence.

Short Assignments will be assigned periodically. These assignments are designed to improve your understanding of the course material. Some will serve to speed your term paper to its completion. Others will form the basis of in-class discussions, hence their role in participation and preparedness. These assignments count as part of your participation grade.

In the second half of the class, you will put what you have learned into practice by writing an original 8-12 page research paper on an American history topic of your choosing. The research paper will have the following components:

#### **Topic Proposal and Annotated Bibliography – 5 %**

The topic proposal should include a paragraph that does the following

- state the research question
- provide a brief explanation of the topic
- briefly explain what you hope to learn from the topic
- briefly explain why the topic is significant

The annotated bibliography should include a minimum of eight scholarly sources that address your topic. At least one source should be a primary source collection.

Each annotation should explain what the book is about and how it connects to your topic. Instructions for writing annotations are posted on Canvas.

### **Revised Topic Proposal and Outline 5%**

The revised topic proposal will include an introductory paragraph that includes a thesis statement and a detailed outline of the paper.

### **Supporting Paper #1: Evaluating Historians' Arguments 7.5%**

The purpose of the supporting papers is to help you develop a deeper understanding of your topic. These papers are separate from the research paper that you will write on your topic. For this supporting paper, write a 4-5 page historiographical essay that compares the different perspectives of historians who have written about your topic. Use at least three different historical arguments for your essay. Information about writing historiographic essays is posted on Canvas.

### **Supporting Paper #2: Primary Source Analysis 7.5%**

Your research paper needs to be based on a substantial collection of primary sources. For this paper, you will identify one or more primary sources for your research paper and write a 4-5 page analysis of that document with an argument that shows your own interpretation of the meaning and importance of these sources.

### **First Research Paper 10%**

This semester, you will write an original 8-12 page research paper on a topic of your choice relating to American history. Everyone will write their research paper twice. The first time you will write the very best paper you can. This is not a draft and should include all elements of your argument and appear professional and complete. In short, it will be graded on the same criteria upon which your final revised paper will be graded.

### **Revised Research Paper 20%**

This is a revision of your first research paper and require a substantial or minor rewrite, depending on my comments and those of your peers.

### **Presentation 5%**

In a 10-15 minute presentation, share the findings of your term paper to the class. You should present an argument that help the class make sense of the larger problems historical problems addressed in your paper. The presentation should be targeted to an audience with little or no expertise on your specific topic.

## **Course Policies**

**Academic Dishonesty:** Students in this course will abide by Lewis-Clark State College's policy on [Academic Dishonesty](#). In this course, any assignment completed without total academic honesty will be grounds for **failing the course** and will be reported to the appropriate school officials.

**Assignment Submission:**

- All assignments will be submitted through Canvas.
- Late assignments will be assessed a **10%** penalty for each day they are late unless you've made prior arrangements with me.

**Attendance:**

- Attendance is important for your success in this course. Please come to class prepared to participate in course activities.
- I realize that sometimes emergencies happen. If you are unable to attend class for any reason, including illness, please notify me as soon as possible. Attending class is like working a job, so please give me the same courtesy you would give an employer.

**Collaboration:** Research and writing can be very solitary activities. It is important to cultivate relationships and networks with other scholars. Research shows that we learn more when actively working with others, and collaboration often leads to the creation of new ideas. During the semester, we will engage in collaborative activities, such as discussions and peer-reviews. I encourage you to include your classmates in your collaborative network. They can be a valuable resource.

**Email:**

- Check your LCMail regularly and turn on notifications for components in Canvas, including announcements, graded assignments, etc.
- You can contact me through Canvas or at [alvanlanen@lcsc.edu](mailto:alvanlanen@lcsc.edu).
- I only check email during regular working hours (M-F, 8:00-5:00pm).
- I will reply to your message within two working days. If I have not replied within two working days, assume that I have not received your email.
- I try to return all assignments within a week of the due date.

**Course Schedule****Week 1**

- Tuesday, January 17 – Syllabus review
- Thursday, January 19 – Starting the research process. In-class brainstorming exercise.

**Week 2**

- Tuesday, January 24 – What does it mean to be a historian?
  - Read Gaddis chs 1-2 on Canvas and Historiography module on Canvas
  - Write a brief summary of the Gaddis's main arguments (200-250 words)
- Thursday, January 26 – Reference Resources
  - Read Presnell Ch. 2 on Canvas

**Week 3**

- Tuesday, January 31 – Ethics of doing history
  - American Historical Association Professional Division “The Ethical Historian: Notes and Queries on Professional Conduct,” Perspectives on History, May 1, 2015 <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/may-2015/the-ethical-historian-may-2015>
  - Nancy Isenberg and Andrew Burstein, “America’s Worst Historians,” Salon, August 19, 2012 [https://www.salon.com/2012/08/19/americas\\_worst\\_historians/](https://www.salon.com/2012/08/19/americas_worst_historians/)
  - Write a 250 reflection on “The Ethical Historian” and Isenberg. What did you learn about plagiarism from reading these articles?
- Thursday, February 2 – Using library databases and evaluating sources

**Week 4**

- Tuesday, February 7 – Historiography – Evaluating Textbooks
  - Read Textbook excerpts posted on Canvas
  - Write a 250–400-word paper that compares the three textbooks. What are the similarities and differences? What seems to be missing?
- Thursday, February 9 – Formatting bibliographies and managing research

**Week 5**

- Tuesday, February 14 – Evaluating Secondary Sources, Part 1
  - Read excerpts from Hasegawa and Rotter on Canvas.
  - Write a 2–3-page essay comparing their interpretations. Instructions on Canvas.
- Thursday, February 16 – Writing annotations and outlines

**Week 6**

- Tuesday, February 21 – Evaluating Secondary Sources, Part 2
  - Read excerpts from Maddox, Alperovitz, and Lifschultz and Bird on Canvas
  - Write a 2-3 page essay comparing Maddox with either Alperovitz or Lifschultz/Bird. Instructions on Canvas.
- Thursday, February 23 – Footnotes

**Week 7**

- Tuesday, February 28 -- Evaluating Sources, Part 3
  - Read selected primary sources, posted on Canvas
  - Write report on assigned documents. Instructions on Canvas
- Thursday, March 2 – Finding primary sources
  - Topic proposal and annotated bibliography due

**Week 8**

- Tuesday, March 7 - The Art of Writing
- Thursday, March 9 – Bring supporting paper #1 to class for peer review

**Week 9**

- Tuesday, March 14 –Analyzing Primary Sources
  - Supporting paper #1 due
- Thursday, March 16 – Using Statistics and Maps

**Week 10**

- Tuesday, March 21 – Bring Supporting Paper #2 to class for peer review
- Thursday, March 23 – Supporting paper #2 due

**Spring Break – March 27-31****Week 11**

- Tuesday, April 4 –Bring revised topic proposals and outlines to class for peer review
- Thursday, April 6 – Revised topic proposals and outlines due

**Week 12**

Tuesday, April 11 – Individual conferences as scheduled

Thursday, April 13 – Individual conferences as scheduled

**Week 13**

- Tuesday, April 18 – Bring copy draft of first research paper to class for peer review
- Thursday, April 20 - First Research Paper Due

**Week 14**

Tuesday, April 25 – Individual conferences as scheduled

Thursday, April 27 – Individual conferences as scheduled

**Week 15**

Tuesday, May 2 – Presentations

Thursday, May 4 - Presentations

Final Revised Research Paper due by end of day Tuesday, May 9