

History 4990

Senior Seminar

Summer 2025

**Instructor:**

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Offices: LH274 (Ogden)  
Telephone: 801-626-6706 (History department)  
Office meetings are available by appointment via email.

**Recommended Texts** (similar to History 4985):

William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style* (Longman; 4th edition, 1999). ISBN-13: 978-0205309023

Kate L. Turabian, et al, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (University Of Chicago Press; Ninth Edition, 2018). ISBN-10:022643057X

William Kelleher Storey, *Writing History: A Guide for Students* (Oxford University Press; 6th Edition, 2020) ISBN-10: 0190078413

**Class Description:** A seminar for History majors requiring the completion of an extensive thesis project. This course will consider the methods of the professional historian necessary for integrating primary and secondary sources with a focus on historiography, and provide practice with those skills for classroom teachers. Prerequisite: HIST SI3000 or HIST 4985.

**Grading Policies:** Grades will be determined on the following basis:

Class participation	20%
Senior thesis	80%

Grades: A: 90 - 100% B: 80 - 89% C: 70 - 79% D: 60 - 69% E: 0 - 59%  
(Grades at the high or low ends of these ranges will earn plus and minus grades.)

**Learning Goals:** By the end of the semester, students will have:

- Developed an understanding of the categories and concepts that historians use in their efforts to explain complex historical changes.
- Learned to identify major themes and meaningful periodizations in historical narratives.
- Applied the historical method by preparing lessons in the interpretation of primary and secondary documents and by using correct textual attribution in the Turabian method of citation.
- Practiced engaged with the ideas and works of others in a respectful and productive manner.

**Students with Disabilities:**

Any student requiring accommodations or services due to a disability must contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in Room 181 of the Student Service Center. SSD can also arrange to provide materials (including this syllabus) in alternative formats if necessary.

**Cheating Policy:** Cheating and deceit are not accepted at Weber State University. *Cheating on an quiz or assignment, or turning in someone else's work as your own, will result in an E for the class.* You may work together on your assignments and papers, but you must turn in your own work. If you quote from a book, article, or web site, you must properly quote and cite your work. **Avoid even the appearance of cheating or plagiarism.**

**Cell Phones, Texting, and Laptops:**

Put your cell phones on vibrate. Try to avoid leaving class to take a call, but an occasional emergency is understandable. There will be NO texting in this class. Laptops or other personal digital tools may be used to take notes or look up material relevant to class discussions. No other uses of laptops will be tolerated.

**Recording Classes:** Video or audio recording of any portion of lectures is only permitted in this class upon my authorization. If you would like to request authorization to record, please contact me. Unauthorized recording is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct, for which a student may be subjected to disciplinary action under P.M. 6-22, Student Code. Students who seek to record for purposes of accommodating a disability should contact the Disability Services Office at (801) 626-6413 or [dsc@weber.edu](mailto:dsc@weber.edu). See more info at <https://www.weber.edu/disabilityservices>.

**Campus Closure:** In the event of an extended campus closure, please look at your Weber State email for instructions on how we will continue the class via email and the online course system.

**Peer Reviews:** The class will be divided into peer groups. Groups will meet twice during class time during the semester. Peer members must send via email a copy of their current thesis draft to their fellow peer members a week before these meetings. At these meetings, peer members will critique each others work.

**Class Process:** Papers will be turned in as a digital Word file. The final draft will be a clean paper copy.

**Useful Research Resources:** Weber State University has some excellent research librarians that you can avail yourself of.

- Jamie Weeks, Archives and Digital Collections ([jweeks@weber.edu](mailto:jweeks@weber.edu), 801-626-6486)

**Institutional Policies:** Available at

<https://www.weber.edu/wsuiimages/academicaffairs/Forms/DigitalAddendumtoCourseSyllabus.pdf>

**Rough Draft of Senior Thesis:** Your rough draft should have at least half of your total expected words in it. Parts of the paper that have not been written should exist in an outline form inside your paper. A preliminary bibliography should be included. My feedback to you will include a preliminary grade in order that you can gauge your progress towards the final grade for the paper.

**Second Draft of Senior Thesis:** The second draft of your paper should have reached close to its final length, conclusions should be included, and no outlines within the paper will remain. Citations are included and a bibliography should be included. My feedback to you will include a preliminary grade in order that you can gauge your progress towards the final grade for the paper.

**Senior Thesis Paper:** Your Senior Thesis will meet the following criteria:

- 25-30 pages long, typed, double-spaced, in a twelve-point font, with one inch margins.
- It is a unique contribution to your chosen area of historical research. This requirement can be fulfilled by
  - using under-utilized or unutilized primary source materials;
  - identifying and addressing an unacknowledged problem of historical sourcing or interpretation;
  - applying conceptual categories in a way that offers new insight into established areas of historical scholarship;
  - making innovative use of interpretive theory in the analysis of your sources.
- In short, your paper must offer something in its interpretations or in its presentation of the evidence that cannot be found elsewhere.
- You need to have an *argument* that you are trying to *prove*. This is more than just retelling events that occurred; you must analyze those events and support a specific thesis.
- All of your citations need to be either footnotes or endnotes in Rampolla/Turabian form, the Notes and Bibliography style from the Chicago Manual of Style. The Online Chicago Manual of Style can be found at [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)
- You need to have at least 15 primary sources, and at least 15 secondary sources.
- You will have to have a bibliography also in Rampolla/Turabian form. The bibliography will be divided between primary and secondary sources.
- The grading rubric for your paper is located here: [http://faculty.weber.edu/eswedin/Site/standards\\_for\\_senior\\_thesis.htm](http://faculty.weber.edu/eswedin/Site/standards_for_senior_thesis.htm)
- You must follow the Style Guide.

**Style Guide:** These rules must be followed in your paper.

- Margins will be one inch and the font size should be 12 point.
- Ellipses do not normally start or end quotations, but are only used within quotations. Do not use the ellipse character, but use this character sequence: <space, period, space, period, space, period, space>.
- Any quote over three lines will be a block quote; block quotes will be single-spaced and double-indented.
- Know the difference between “its” and “it’s.”
- Know the difference between a semi-colon and a colon.
- Know what [sic] is and how to use it.
- Know what “Ibid” is and how to use it.
- The American style to put punctuation (period, comma, questions mark, semi-colon, colon) before the ending double quotation mark.
- No extra blank lines between paragraphs.
- Put page numbers on each page.

**Schedule:**

Date	Activities
May 5	- Introduction to class - <b>Email your History 4985 Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography to the instructor</b> - <b>Schedule online individual appointment with the instructor for later this week</b>
May 12	No class will be held
May 19	No class will be held
May 26	No class will be held; <b>Email current Senior Thesis draft to peer group members and to the instructor</b>
June 2	Class will be held. Peer group meeting during class
June 9	No class will be held; <b>Rough Draft of Senior Thesis to be emailed to the instructor; Schedule an online individual appointment with the instructor for later this week</b>
June 16	No class will be held
June 23	No class will be held
June 30	No class will be held; <b>Email current Senior Thesis draft to peer group members and to the instructor</b>
July 7	Class will be held. Peer group meeting during class
July 14	No class will be held; <b>Second Draft of Senior Thesis to be emailed to the instructor; Schedule online individual appointment with the instructor for later this week</b>
July 21	No class will be held
July 28	No class will be held.
August 4	No class will be held; <b>Senior Thesis Due, either as a paper copy or emailed to the instructor</b>
August 11	Class will be held. Each student will make a ten minute oral presentation on their thesis conclusions to the rest of the class. Your thesis will be returned to you with a grade and you must turn in two clean copies of your thesis by Friday in order to complete the class (one copy will be for the History department and the other copy will be for the university archives). An electronic copy in PDF format must also be turned in.

## Standards for Senior Thesis

### **The Superior Paper (A/A-)**

**Thesis:** Easily identifiable, plausible, novel, sophisticated, insightful, crystal clear. Connects well with paper title.

**Structure:** Evident, understandable, appropriate for thesis. Excellent transitions from point to point. Paragraphs support solid topic sentences.

**Use of evidence:** Primary source information used to buttress every point with at least one example. Examples support mini-thesis and fit within paragraph. Excellent integration of quoted material into sentences. Demonstrates an in depth understanding of the ideas in the assigned reading and critically evaluates/responds to those ideas in an analytical, persuasive manner.

**Analysis:** Author clearly relates evidence to "mini-thesis" (topic sentence); analysis is fresh and exciting, posing new ways to think of the material. Work displays critical thinking and avoids simplistic description or summary of information.

**Logic and argumentation:** All ideas in the paper flow logically; the argument is identifiable, reasonable, and sound. Author anticipates and successfully defuses counter-arguments; makes novel connections to outside material (from other parts of the class, or other classes), which illuminate thesis. Creates appropriate college level, academic tone.

**Mechanics:** Sentence structure, grammar, and diction excellent; correct use of punctuation and citation style; minimal to no spelling errors; absolutely no run-on sentences or comma splices. Conforms in every way to format requirements.

### **The Good Paper (B+ /B)**

**Thesis:** Promising, but may be slightly unclear, or lacking in insight or originality. Paper title does not connect as well with thesis or is not as interesting.

**Structure:** Generally clear and appropriate, though may wander occasionally. May have a few unclear transitions, or a few paragraphs without strong topic sentences.

**Use of evidence:** Examples used to support most points. Some evidence does not support point, or may appear where inappropriate. Quotes well integrated into sentences. Demonstrates a solid understanding of the ideas in the assigned reading and critically evaluates/responds to those ideas in an analytical, persuasive manner.

**Analysis:** Evidence often related to mini-thesis, though links perhaps not very clear. Some description, but more critical thinking.

**Logic and argumentation:** Argument of paper is clear, usually flows logically and makes sense. Some evidence that counter-arguments acknowledged, though perhaps not addressed. Occasional insightful connections to outside material made. Mostly creates appropriate college level, academic tone.

**Mechanics:** Sentence structure, grammar, and diction strong despite occasional lapses; punctuation and citation style often used correctly. Some (minor) spelling errors; may have one run-on sentence or comma splice. Conforms in every way to format requirements.

### **The Borderline Paper (B-/C+)**

**Thesis:** May be unclear (contain many vague terms), appear unoriginal, or offer relatively little that is new; provides little around which to structure the paper. Paper title and thesis do not connect well or title is unimaginative.

**Structure:** Generally unclear, often wanders or jumps around. Few or weak transitions, many paragraphs without topic sentences.

**Use of evidence:** Examples used to support some points. Points often lack supporting evidence, or evidence used where inappropriate (often because there may be no clear point). Quotes may be poorly integrated into sentences. Demonstrates a general understanding of the ideas in the assigned reading and only occasionally critically evaluates/responds to those ideas in an analytical, persuasive manner.

**Analysis:** Quotes appear often without analysis relating them to mini-thesis (or there is a weak mini-thesis to support), or analysis offers nothing beyond the quote. Even balance between

critical thinking and description.

**Logic and argumentation:** Logic may often fail, or argument may often be unclear. May not address counter-arguments or make any outside connections. Occasionally creates appropriate college level, academic tone, but has some informal language or inappropriate slang.

**Mechanics:** Problems in sentence structure, grammar, and diction (usually not major). Some errors in punctuation, citation style, and spelling. May have some run-on sentences or comma splices. Conforms in almost every way to format requirements.

### **The "Needs Help" Paper (C/C-)**

**Thesis:** Difficult to identify at all, may be bland restatement of obvious point.

**Structure:** Unclear, often because thesis is weak or non-existent. Transitions confusing and unclear. Few topic sentences.

**Use of evidence:** Very few or very weak examples. General failure to support statements, or evidence seems to support no statement. Quotes not integrated into sentences; "plopped in" in improper manner. Demonstrates a little understanding of (or occasionally misreads) the ideas in the assigned reading and does not critically evaluate/responds to those ideas in an analytical, persuasive manner.

**Analysis:** Very little or very weak attempt to relate evidence to argument; may be no identifiable argument, or no evidence to relate it to. More description than critical thinking.

**Logic and argumentation:** Ideas do not flow at all, usually because there is no argument to support. Simplistic view of topic; no effort to grasp possible alternative views. Does not create appropriate college level, academic tone, and has informal language or inappropriate slang.

**Mechanics:** Big problems in sentence structure, grammar, and diction. Frequent major errors in citation style, punctuation, and spelling. May have many run-on sentences and comma splices. Does not conform to format requirements.

### **The "Really Needs Help" Paper (D+/D)**

Is like **The "Needs Help" Paper** but the problems are more serious or more frequent.

### **The Failing Paper**

Shows obviously minimal lack of effort or comprehension of the assignment. Very difficult to understand owing to major problems with mechanics, structure, and analysis. Has no identifiable thesis, or utterly incompetent thesis. Does not follow paper guidelines for length and format. Plagiarizes.

(These guidelines are based on: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/med/rubric.html> )  
A simpler rubric will be used for the rough draft:

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**Scale: 0 failing (E); 1 poor (D); 2 fair ©; 3 good (B); 4 superior (A)**

#### ***Central Argument 1 2 3 4***

- ***Central argument is easily identifiable***
- ***Takes advantage of new insights and perspectives or approaches***
- ***Central idea is original and sophisticated***

#### ***Evidence 1 2 3 4***

- ***Primary sources are used to support arguments, giving specific examples***
- ***Excellent integration of quoted material into sentences***
- ***References and citations are correct, complete and responsible***

#### ***Structure 1 2 3 4***

- ***Argument is developed logically, leading to conclusion***
- ***Parts are clearly related to the whole***
- ***Integration of research materials is effective***

#### ***Analysis 1 2 3 4***

- ***Analysis is fresh and exciting***
- ***Thesis poses new ways to think of material***
- ***The conclusion answers questions posed in the introduction***

#### ***Writing 1 2 3 4***

- ***Sentence structure, grammar and diction excellent***
- ***Correct use of punctuation and citation style***
- ***Prose style is sophisticated***



<Sample cover>

Weber State University  
College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

*An Important Title:  
With an Descriptive Subtitle*

By  
Student Name

A Senior Thesis submitted to the Department of History  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of  
Bachelor of Arts

August 2025

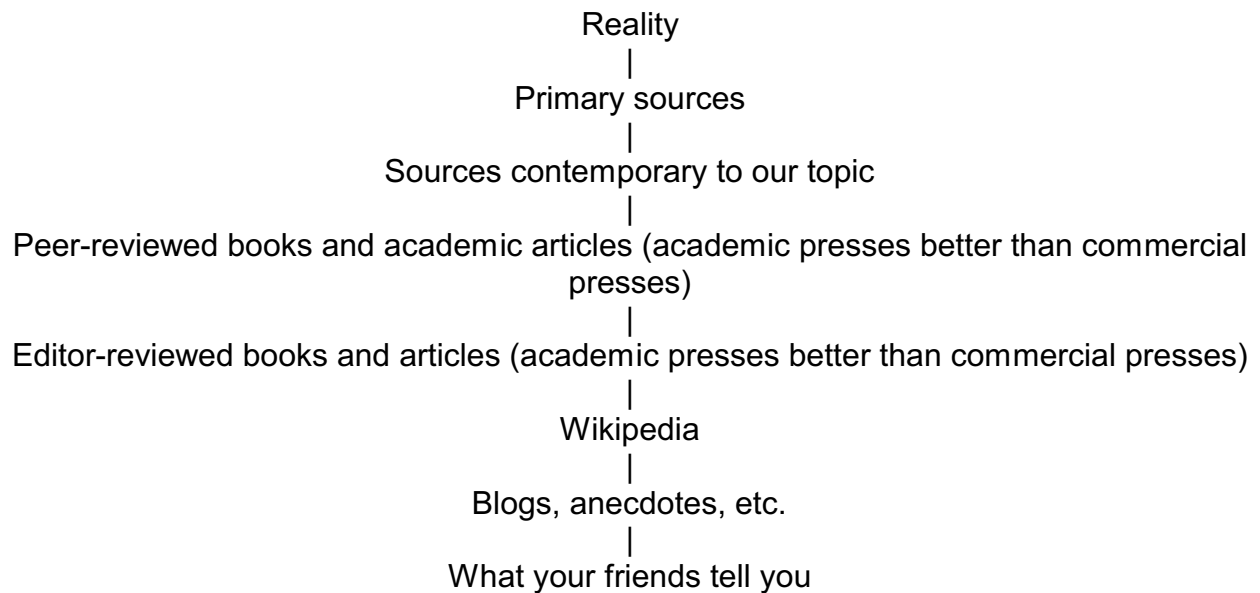
Approved:

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Dr. Eric G. Swedin

## Why Citations?

We use citations to create both credibility as the writer and to give the reader the opportunity to research our sources.



Always be aware of the ideologies and beliefs of the writer of any source and always be on the lookout for arguments against the self-interest of the writer (they are golden).

Always ask, what is the reputation of this source?