History 490-S **SENIOR RESEARCH SEMINAR** Fall 2012

John Schlotterbeck Class meetings: Wednesday 12:30-3:20 HH 223

Harrison Hall 232 Office hours: Monday 12:30-2:30

Phone and voice mail: 658-4591 Tuesday and Thursday 2:15-4:30

E-mail: [jschlot@depauw.edu](mailto:jschlot@depauw.edu)jschlot@depauw.edu and by appointment

Library Liaison: Tiffany Heeb (x4409; email: [theeb@depauw.edu](mailto:theeb@depauw.edu))

**Course Description.**

Senior Research Seminar is the capstone of your history major where you complete a significant semester-long research and writing project based on primary and secondary historical materials. Seminar hones your skills in defining a suitable historical topic for investigation, developing a workable research design, placing research in historiographical and in historical contexts, selecting a variety of suitable primary and secondary sources for analysis, and conveying your findings in clear prose and in effective oral presentations. While you need to frame the paper in the context of recent secondary literature, you must rely extensively on research in *primar*y documents and develop a thesis supported with adequate evidence.

History scholarship is a mostly a solo enterprise but enriched by peer support and feedback. You will work on your project as a part of a scholarly writing community. Many meetings include progress reports and peer reviews of each other’s work. By offering honest, constructive suggestions you contribute to improving everyone’s seminar project. Think of your seminar leader, history faculty members, reference librarians, and fellow students as team members who offer suggestions and insights to assist you with your work.

**Learning Outcomes.** By the end of the semester each student should:

1. Successfully complete an independent project that demonstrates advanced analytical and

research skills in history: defining a historical topic, creating a research design firmly within the secondary literature, selecting appropriate primary and secondary source materials, evaluating their reliability, placing them in historical and in historiographical contexts, and presenting your findings in a clear and organized narrative.

2. Participate regularly and effectively in a scholarly community through peer evaluation of

each other’s work.

3. Improve oral communication skills, including listening, participating in discussions, and

presenting clear, effective oral reports.

**Course Organization.**

*Since we meet only once each week, regular attendance, completion of preliminary assignments, and active participation is expected at all seminar meetings*. Missing *any* seminar meeting or scheduled conference will lower your final course grade. I will schedule conferences with throughout the semester. These sessions will be most productive if you are prepared to discuss your project. *Be sure to alert me of difficulties you are encountering at any time, so we can work out a way to resolve the problem and keep you on track towards completing your seminar project.*

Because researching and writing seminar papers can be daunting, we break the process into several stages. Building on “History Today,” where you discussed the nature of history and different ways historians undertake research, we start with a discussion of what constitutes a model seminar paper, development of advanced bibliographic skills, and brainstorming about defining good research topics. Over the rest of the semester, you prepare a series of assignments that advance different stages of the research project. A seminar paper requires much more thought, research, and writing time than several ten-page papers. *It is essential to follow the syllabus schedule and to complete each week’s assignments*. The final course grade reflects the quality of your work throughout the semester not just the final copy of the seminar paper.

**Guidelines.**

1. Choose a historical topic that really interests you!! Remember, you are working on

this project for an entire semester. What are you curious about from previous classes?

Which historical approaches from “History Today” are most intriguing to you? Focusing

on a specific event, person, or organization is one way to start; some students find a rich

primary source for their project. You may build on a paper from earlier classes, but the seminar work must be substantially new. *Be creative! Allow for serendipity!*

2. After surveying the most relevant secondary literature (books and scholarly articles)

think about ways to narrow your topic to make it manageable for a one-semester project that also allows you to go into enough depth to contribute to historical scholarship. Be sure there are enough secondary and primary sources on your topic; this may require narrowing or expanding the project’s initial scope.

4. Your research should be based on *primary* historical sources. You have access to an

enormous range of primary and secondary materials. West Library has many large document collections and there are numerous large historical databases on the web. You can order almost *any* printed source or microfilmed material through interlibrary loan. The DePauw Archives and Special Collections, Indiana University, Indiana Historical Society, and Indiana State Library all have extensive manuscript collections. I am happy to work with you in the library locating sources. *You should have at least one documented consultation with another faculty member who has special expertise on your topic.* Tiffany Hebb (x4409; email: [theeb@depauw.edu](mailto:theeb@depauw.edu) ) is the library liaison for our seminar; *you need to schedule an appointment with her early in the semester*.

5. Keep track of your seminar project in your notebook files. Jot down ideas as they come to you, make lists of sources you have ordered or located, add notes on primary research and secondary articles, and organize materials as you collect them. Apply for a locker in West Library to store your books and research notes.

6. Write early! Write often!! Writing history is hard work, and waiting until the end of the

semester to organize and write up your research is a recipe for disaster! Writing summaries of key research materials as you go along will be essential for drafting text. Break up the paper into several sections that you write independently. *Plan now to spend most of fall and Thanksgiving breaks on your project!*

7. Revise! Revise again!! Revise some more!!! Seminar papers go through multiple drafts; don’t expect the prose to come out right the first time. Use feedback received during earlier stages of the project to rewrite your paper. Don’t be afraid to reorganize sections

or refine arguments as you go along to ensure the paper hangs together as an analytical

whole. Everyone should acquire William Strunk, Jr., and E. B. White, The Elements of

Style [3rd (1979) or 4th ed., (2000)]. This is the best short writing manual every written.

8. If you need accommodation because of a disability, contact Pam Roberts, Coordinator for

Student Success and Disability Services, [pamelaroberts@depauw.edu](mailto:pamelaroberts@depauw.edu) or <http://www.depauw.edu/admin/acadservices/disability.asp> for required documentation. You should understand and adhere to DePauw’s Academic Integrity policy in the Student Handbook. Good learning can take place collaboratively, but cheating, plagiarism, submitting other’s work, etc. is a severe violation of this policy and may result in penalties ranging from a lowered grade to course failure or expulsion. For details see: <http://www.depauw.edu/univ/handbooks/dpuhandbooks.asp?ID=521&parentid=518>.

**Evaluation. You must complete all of the follow requirements):**

Research project (70%). The final copy of the paper and preliminary steps over the course of the semester. The research paper should be *a minimum of 30 typed, double-spaced, pages of text plus citations and a bibliographic essay for a total of about 40 pages.* Follow the Chicago (Turabian) footnote/endnote citation system explained in Charles Lipson, Doing Honest Work in College, 2nd ed. (2004), Ch. 6. Evaluation criteria include: placing your research within relevant historical literature, careful development of the topic, insightfulness of the analysis, skill in using primary sources, clarity of organization, and quality of writing.

Discussion participation, short oral presentations, and peer reviews (10%). Weekly preparation and participation in discussions; peer reviews of draft outlines, introductions, and text; and participation in presentation sessions by active listening and asking substantive questions.

Formal Project Presentation (10%). A formal 20-minute presentation of your research to the class that is a substantive talk organized and rehearsed beforehand and not informal comments about the paper or reading passages from the text. It should address your research goals, methodology, thesis, evidence, argument, and conclusions.

Formal paper commentaries (10%). Each student will read one complete seminar paper and write a four to five page commentary that you formally present to the class.

As an “S” course we will pay particular attention to improving skills in listening, in peer evaluation of student work, and in making oral presentations that are clear in organization and content and delivered effectively. S-certification is independent of course evaluation and based on those elements of the course devoted towards oral communication.

Note: Please bring **three** copies of each assignment marked with an \* to class for peer review.

Week 1-August 22: Introduction Seminar; Models of History Research and Writing

Reading: \*“Tartan and the Union Jack” British Recruitment Appeals During the Great War”

(2011 recipient, Charles A. Beard and Mary Ritter Beard Prize)

BI Session: “Doing Advanced Research in History: Library and Web Resources,” Tiffany

Heeb, Coordinator of Instruction Services, 2:15 pm, Instruction Room A, West Library

Schedule consultation with Tiffany Heeb.

Week 2-August 29: Finding Research Topics

\*Assignment: Write a separate paragraph for three potential topics for your research project.

Include pros and cons for each idea. State each topic concisely, list core research

problems or questions, and identify possible strengths and weaknesses of each

topic. Include personal and scholarly background in the topic, if appropriate.

August 30-31(Thursday-Friday): Individual conferences on research topics

Week 3-September 5: Refining Research Topics

\*Assignment: Write a revised two-page summary of your research topic, including tentative

research questions and how you will develop them and incorporating earlier feedback. List *specific* primary and secondary sources you have found. Start reading secondary sources on your topic for background, focus, and specific research questions. *Consult with a faculty member with expertise on your project*.

Week 4-September 12: Annotated Bibliographies and Historiography

\*Assignment: Prepare a preliminary *annotated* bibliography (1-2 sentences each) of key primary

and secondary materials including information regarding argument, methodology, usefulness, reliability, strengths, weaknesses, etc. Prepare a five-minute oral presentation on a scholarly article or book chapter that is central to your project. Bibliographies should follow the Chicago/Turabian system in Lipson, Doing Honest Work in College, Ch. 6, which includes examples for most kinds of sources. Finish reading secondary sources; start outline of historiography section.

September 13-14 (Thursday-Friday): Individual conferences on developing research designs

Bring revised topic summary and outline of historiographical section of the paper.

Week 5-September 19: Historiography and Research Design

\*Assignment: Prepare a three-page research prospectus or design of your research project. This

should include a draft of the historiographical section of the paper with clearly

stated research questions and contributions to existing scholarship and explains the feasibility of completing the project in a semester, identifies primary and secondary sources, and provides a preliminary organization of your ideas. Start reading primary sources

Week 6-September 26: Primary Sources

\*Assignment: Choose a *primary* source from your research to analyze in a five-minute

presentation to the seminar. It can be one you are very excited about or are finding

difficult to interpret or have learned to interpret in a different way. You should explain the historical context, content, possible bias, and significance of the document to your research project. Complete draft of historiographical section for peer review. Continue primary source research.

September 27-28 (Thursday-Friday): Individual conferences on revised research designs and

historiography.

Week 7-October 3: Thesis and draft outline

\*Assignment: Write one or two paragraphs on the main argument or thesis of your project and a

detailed outline of the body of the paper indicating specific primary sources for each section. This will change as your project develops but serves as a roadmap. Continue primary source research.

Week 8-October 10: Research (no class meeting)

October 11-12 (Thursday-Friday): Conferences with Instructor on revised outlines and writing.

\*Assignment: Bring ca. 10 pages of draft text with citations and a progress report on the project.

Continue primary research.

**F A L L V A C A T I O N**

Week 9-October 24: Writing

Read Strunk and White, Elements of Style, Sec. II, pp. 15-33.

\*Assignment: Continue writing with goal of having about 15-20 pages of complete text for

peer review. Be sure to cite sources in the draft. Continue writing and finish up

final primary research. Five-minute progress reports to seminar.

Week 10-October 31: Writing and Revising

Reading: Strunk and White, Elements of Style, Sec. V, pp. 61-85.

\*Assignment: Present a revised section of the body of the paper based on primary source

analysis for peer review. Continue writing.

November 1-2 (Thursday-Friday): Individual conferences with instructor

Week 11-November 7: Introduction and Conclusion

Reading: Strunk and White, Elements of Style, Sec. I, pp. 1-14, and IV, pp. 39-65.

\*Assignment: Revise draft introduction and write a draft conclusion for peer review. Finish

writing draft text and start revising old text. Turn in an additional 10-15 pages of

new material.

Week 12- November 14: Draft of Entire Seminar Paper Due

\*Assignment: First full draft due for peer reviews. Continue revisions, which may involve

reorganizing text and further research.

November 19-20 (Monday-Tuesday): Conferences to go over draft and plans for revisions

**T H A N K S G I V I N G B R E A K**

Week 14-November 28: Presentations and Peer Critiques

\*Assignment: Each student will make a formal 20-minute presentation of his or her seminar

project. Typed copies of the entire paper, including citations and bibliography,

should be give to me, your critic, and be available for other seminar members at

least 24 hours before class meetings. A student will provide written comments on each paper, but all members of the seminar should raise questions and offer suggestions for improvements based on the presentations.

Week 15: Presentations and Peer Critiques

December 5: Presentations II

December : Presentations III (date and time TBA)

December : Presentations IV (date and time TBA)

**December 11 (Tuesday): Deadline for turning in final copy of your seminar paper**.