



The Writing of History

HIST-3903-101

Fall 2026

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Charles Cox

Office: OD- 221

Office hours: M/W, 9-11, 2-3, and F, 9-10. Also by appointment.

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E-Mail and Communication Policy

Your MSU email is the official correspondence for this course. I generally try to respond within 24 hours, except on the weekend. On the weekends from Friday at 3pm to Monday at 8am, unless I deem the email important, I will not respond. I believe it is important for me to have my personal time, and I use the weekend to spend time with my family and friends.

If you are interested in majoring or minoring in history (**which you should be because History Majors/Minors Get Jobs!!**), you should contact the Department of History at 940-397-4258 or set up a meeting with me!!!!

Course Description

This course introduces students to historical research methods and writing. During the semester, students will learn skills that historians utilize to research and write history. Students will learn how to choose a historical topic, develop a research proposal, develop thesis statements, assess primary and secondary source material, outline ideas, and draft these ideas into a coherent, formal research paper. Students will utilize these skills to write a formal academic research paper (10-12 pages) based on primary and secondary research undertaken by the student.

By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- Develop an approach for researching and writing history papers
- Interpret a wide range of sources (both secondary and primary) that historians use to write history
- Critique secondary sources and the perspectives of primary sources.
- Conduct original research, synthesize that research into academic papers, and make an argument based on primary source evidence

Assigned Readings

Matt Upson, Holly Luetkenhaus, C. Michael Hall, and Kevin Cannon. *Information Now, Second Edition*. (University of Chicago Press, 2021). ISBN-9780226766119.

William Kelleher Storey, *Writing History: A Guide for Students*. (Oxford University Press, 2020). ISBN - 9780190078416.

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. (Hill and Wang, 1983 and 2003). ISBN – 9780809016341. Either version is fine.

Each student will pick one additional book based on their own research project.

Study Hours and Tutoring Assistance

Students should be aware of existing university support services to help them succeed in their academic journey. Please visit the following link to view tutoring and health services provided by the university. These services exist to help ensure student success. Please visit the following links for more information. [Student Health, Wellness, and Safety](#). [Tutoring and Academic Support Services](#). [Supplemental Instruction](#). [TRiO Student Support Services](#).

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

[Office of Student Conduct](#)

Generative AI Policy

This course only allows for limited use of Generative AI in course assignments. **Generating text via AI and citing it as your own is academic misconduct, and the instructor reserves the right to give that assignment an F!**

When can you use Generative AI in this course?

- The use of Generative AI is allowed in this course for the following: brainstorming your ideas, checking your grammar, as a study aid to help prepare for quizzes and exams.

When must you avoid Generative AI in this course?

- The use of Generative AI is not permitted for the following: Writing a draft of an assignment, writing entire sentences, paragraphs, or papers to complete assignments.

Why should you limit your use of Generative AI?

- Learning how to analyze information, how to think critically, how to communicate with others, how to discuss and engage with big ideas, and how to work with others is something that we do not want machines or AI to do for us. AI can be a supplemental tool, but your education and professional career depends on your ability to develop a broad skill set independent of reliance on AI functionalities.

Grading

Assignments	Points/Percentage
Attendance and Participation	150/ 10%
Book Reviews (50 pts each)	100/ 10%
Article Responses (20 pts each, 5 total)	100/ 10%
Presentation with Story Map	100/ 10%

Assignments	Points/Percentage
Final Paper (the assignments below will be broken up into the percentages of this category.)	550/ 60%
Two Topic Proposal	75/ 5%
Final Topic Proposal	75/ 5%
Primary Source Annotations (25 pts each, 2 total)	50/ 10%
Annotated Bibliography	50/ 10%
First Rough Draft (4-5 pages)	100/ 20%
Revision Plan (1-2 pages – Mandatory	0/ 0%
Second Draft (10-12 pages)	100/ 20%
Final Paper	100/ 30%
Total	1000/ 100%

Table 2: Total points for final grade.

Grade	Points
A	900-1000
B	800 to 899
C	700 to 799
D	600 to 699
F	Less than 600

Attendance and Participation 10%

This course is discussion-based and will produce intellectual engagement and development. Your success in this course depends on your preparation and review of materials before class. Discussions will form the foundation of this class, and your grade will depend on your active participation in class discussions and activities. Students who do not offer frequent and meaningful contributions to class discussions will not receive credit for attending/participating in the course. Students should offer meaningful contributions in each class. Students will be allowed three unexcused absences. Following those three, for each class you miss, you will be deducted 5 points.

Book Reviews 10%

Students will complete two book reviews during the semester. Each review should be between 650 and 850 words in length. The review should explain the thesis/arguments, intervention, archival research, and offer a brief summary of the book. The first review will examine William Cronon's, *Changes in the Land*. For the second review, students will choose a second monograph that pertains to their own research project. The professor will provide a rubric with more details. Each review will be graded for 50 points for a total of 100 points.

Article Responses 10%

Throughout the semester, you will five different articles that you will read. Each student will complete a 1-2 paragraph synopsis of the articles. The responses should discuss how the author approached the historical subject, conducted their research, and organized their article. The fifth article will be an academic article pertaining to the students' own work. The other four articles can be found on D2L.

Story Map and Presentation 10%

Reflecting on your writing is arguably just as important as the writing process itself. It is something I do with every project I work on. While you are writing your paper this semester, you will be creating a Story Map on [Knight Lab](#). You are required to make one new story on your Story Map each week. At the end of the semester, instead of doing a traditional presentation on your paper, you will do a presentation on your paper through your story map. Additional information on this project and the presentation is on D2L. Not only is this a good way for you to reflect on your writing process, but it also teaches you a Digital Humanities tool!

Final Paper 60%

The Final Paper will be broken into several assignments, as you will see below. Each assignment is designed to prepare and guide you through the writing process. Overall, each student is responsible for writing a 10-12 page paper based on primary and secondary sources on any topic related to American History from the Pre-Colonial Era to the advent of the 22nd Century. On a case-by-case basis, I will consider a project outside of the field of American History, but **you must schedule an appointment with me to talk it over!**

- Two Topic Proposals 5%
 - Students will create two research proposals for review by the professor. Each proposal should be 200-250 words for each topic, describing who or what the student plans to research and why it is important. The proposals should include: two initial questions that will guide your research, a discussion of what sources you would use, and the “so what,” why does your research matter?
- Final Topic Proposal 5%
 - Students will write a two-page essay (~500-600 words) that outlines their research topic. The essay should identify the research topic, outline questions that you hope to answer through your research project, outline potential primary and secondary sources that can be used in the project, and explain why this research is important or needed.
- Primary Source Annotations 10%
 - Students will annotate two different primary sources from their research project. They will write 1-2 pages on each source explaining its importance, purpose, and how they will use it in their own research. More information is provided on D2L.
- Annotated Bibliography 10%
 - Students will create an annotated bibliography that includes 10-15 secondary sources. These sources must be peer-reviewed publications (academic books/journal articles/edited volumes) that are not assigned in this course. Students should also include a list of primary sources (at least 5 primary sources) that will form the foundation for their research. Each annotation should summarize the source and explain why it is important to your research project.

- First Rough Draft and Peer Review 20%
 - Students will submit a rough draft (4-6 pages in length) of your final paper for peer review. Students will circulate drafts with one classmate who will offer feedback on the draft. Students should utilize feedback from me as well as their peers to contemplate revisions that they might make for their final research paper drafts.
- Revision Plan 0%
 - Students will complete a revision plan after meeting with the professor to discuss their first rough draft. Students should create a one-page revision plan that outlines what they will do to complete the final draft of the paper. This plan should include steps to answer any additional questions, a writing timeline, plans for editing, and any other additional information that might be relevant to completing the research paper. This assignment does not count for any points, but it is required. 0% of final grade.
- Second Draft 20%
 - Students will submit a second draft (10-12 pages in length) of a paper based on original research that incorporates both primary and secondary research on a historical topic. This draft should be revised and edited for both content and grammar. This draft should include footnotes as well as a completed bibliography.
- Final Paper 30%
 - Students will submit their Final Paper by **Thursday, December 11th at 11:59pm**. The final paper should be 10-12 pages in length based on original research that considers feedback provided by me. The paper should include completed footnotes and a completed bibliography.

Extra Credit

There could be opportunities throughout the semester for extra credit. If so, you will be informed in plenty of time to do it!

Late Work

I do accept late work, but for every 24-hour period that the assignment is late, 10% will be deducted from the overall grade.

Make Up Work/Tests

Students are permitted to make-up work and assignments if they have documented proof of their absence, spoken to me first, or have a university excused absence for a university function.

Important Dates

- Last day for term schedule changes: Aug. 27. Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).
- Deadline to file for graduation: Sep. 21. Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).
- Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:" Nov. 23. Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).
- Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Online Computer Requirements

****Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.*** Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. ****Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!!*** There are many places to access your class! Our online classes can be accessed from any computer in the world which is connected to the internet. Contact your instructor immediately upon having computer trouble. If you have technical difficulties in the course, there is also a student helpdesk available to you. The college cannot work directly on student computers due to both liability and resource limitations; however, they are able to help you get connected to our online services. For help, log into [D2L](#).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibit the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University

establishes has prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [MSUReady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled “Run. Hide. Fight.” which may be electronically accessed via the University police department’s webpage: ["Run. Hide. Fight."](#)

Grade Appeal Process

Update as needed. Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

Course Schedule

***Notice:** Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Week or Module	Activities/Assignments/Exams	Due Date
Week 1 8/24-8/30	Monday- Introductions and discussion of syllabus. Walkthrough of a Story Map. Wednesday- “What is History.” W. Caleb McDaniel, “How to Read for History”: https://wcaleb.org/blog/how-to-read. W. Caleb McDaniel, “How to Discuss a Book for History”: http://wcaleb.org/blog/how-to-discuss. - The 2-hour read method	First Article Response Due 8/30 11:59 PM- Usner, “The Significance of the Gulf South in Early American History” Don’t forget your Story Map entry!

Week or Module	Activities/Assignments/Exams	Due Date
Week 2 8/31-9/6	Monday: Reading for class - Storey, <i>Writing History</i>, pgs. 1-33 (Pt. 1: Getting Started) In-class activities - Discussion of Writing History - Writing the Two Topic Proposal Wednesday Reading for class - Upton, <i>Information Now</i>, pgs. 1-24 (Intro and Ch. 1: The Process) In-class activities - Brainstorming the Two Topic Proposal	Two Topic Proposal due 9/6 at 11:59 PM Don't forget your Story Map entry!
Week 3 9/7-9/13	Monday- NO CLASS! Labor Day! Wednesday Reading for class - Storey, <i>Writing History</i>, pgs. 34-41 (Pt. 2: Interpreting Source Materials) - Upton, <i>Information Now</i>, pgs. 25-54 (Ch. 2 and 3) In-class activities - A discussion regarding Primary and Secondary sources. Reading academic articles. - Tools to organize your research. - AI in History	Second Article Response Due 9/13 11:59 PM- Sharpless, "Cookbooks as Resources for Rural Research." Don't forget your Story Map entry!
Week 4 9/14-9/20	Monday Meet at the Library- Discussion about library stacks and online databases Wednesday Reading for Class Meet at the Library in Special Collections- Discussion with Alissa Russel regarding Special Collections and Archives - Storey, <i>Writing History</i>, 42-63 (Pt. 3: Writing History Faithfully)	Final Topic Proposal is due 9/20 at 11:59 PM Don't forget your Story Map entry!

Week or Module	Activities/Assignments/Exams	Due Date
Week 5 9/21-9/27	Monday Reading for Class - Storey, <i>Writing History</i>, 64-81 (Pt. 4: Using Sources to Make Inferences) In-Class Activity - Finding Primary Sources - How to Write a Primary Source Analysis - Schedule a meeting with me Wednesday: No official Class- Schedule a meeting with me to discuss Topic Proposal	Third Article Response Due 9/27 at 11:59 PM- Johnson, "On Agency" Don't forget your Story Map entry!
Week 6 9/28-10/4	Monday Reading for Class - William Cronon's, <i>Changes in the Land</i>, Preface-Ch.3 (xv-53) In-Class Activity - Discussion of Reading - Identifying Primary Sources Wednesday Reading for Class <i>Changes in the Land</i>, Pgs. 54-107 In-Class Activity - Discussion of Reading - Primary Source Day! Bring a copy of a primary source from your research	1st Primary Source Analysis Due 10/4 at 11:59 PM Fourth Article Response Due 10/4 at 11:59 PM Usner, "Frontier Exchange Economy" Don't forget your Story Map entry!
Week 7 10/5-10/11	Monday Reading for Class <i>Changes in the Land</i>, Pgs. 108-170 In-class Activities - Discussion of Reading - How to write a book review	Book Review for <i>Changes in the Land</i> Due 10/11 at 11:59 PM Don't forget your Story Map entry!
Weeks 8-16 will be all about the writing process. We will have fewer class periods, as you will see, so you have more time to write! Let's get writing!		

Week or Module	Activities/Assignments/Exams	Due Date
Week 8 10/12-10/18	Monday Reading for Class • Storey, <i>Writing History</i>, Pgs. 82-101 (Pt 5: Get Writing! Get Organized!) In-Class Activities • Formulating a research and writing plan. • Schedule Meetings with me Wednesday- NO CLASS: Meet with me individually to discuss research and writing plan.	Fifth Article Response Due 10/18 at 11:59 PM- This is an article based on your research. Don't forget your Story Map entry!
Week 9 10/19-10/25	Monday Reading for Class • Upson, <i>Information Now</i>, 55-84 (Ch. 4 & 5: Journals and Databases and Searching the Open Web) In-Class Activities • What is Historiography? • Crafting an Annotated Bibliography Wednesday- No Class! Work on your annotated bibliography!	Annotated Bibliography Due 10/25 at 11:59 PM. Don't forget your Story Map entry!

Week or Module	Activities/Assignments/Exams	Due Date
Week 10 10/26-11/1	Monday Reading for Class - Upson, Information Now, 85-94 (Ch. 6: Evaluating your Sources) In-Class Activities - What to do with an Annotated Bibliography and How to Draft the Paper Wednesday Reading for Class - Storey, Writing History, 102-109 (Pt. 6: Narrative Techniques for Historians) - Storey, Writing History, 110-117 (Pt. 7: Writing Sentences in History) - Storey, Writing History, 118-125 (Pt. 8: Choosing Precise Words) In-Class Activities - Editing your Sentences - How to Peer Review - Making Peer Review Groups	Second Book Review on a Book from Your Research Due 11/1 at 11:59 PM. Second Primary Source Annotation Due 11/1 at 11:59 PM. Don't forget your Story Map entry!
Week 11 11/2-11/8	NO CLASS THIS WEEK! Work on your First Draft (4-6 pages). I will be available if you would like to meet!	First Draft Due 11/6 (Friday) at 11:59 PM. Email it to your Peer Review partner as well! Please review your peer's paper before class on Monday! Don't forget your Story Map entry!

Week or Module	Activities/Assignments/Exams	Due Date
Week 12 11/9-11/15	Monday Reading for Class - Upson, <i>Information Now</i>, 95-116 (Ch. 7: Using Information Ethically and Conclusion) In-Class Activity - Meet with your Peer Review Partner to go over your draft. Wednesday Reading in Class - Storey, <i>Writing History</i>, 130-135 (Pt. 9: Revising and Editing) In-Class Activities - Drafting a Revision Plan. Work with your peer review partner. - Schedule a meeting with me for next week to discuss your Revision Plan	Revision Plan due 11/14 (Saturday) at 11:59 Don't forget your Story Map entry!
Week 13 11/16-11/22	No Class This week!!! - Meet with me to discuss Revision Plan and Second Draft. Be working on your First Draft!	Second Draft (10-12 pgs) Due 11/22 at 11:59 PM Don't forget your Story Map entry!
Week 14 11/23-11/29	No Class This Week! Happy Thanksgiving!!!	N/A Don't forget your Story Map entry! (Show me them turkey leg photos!)
Week 15 11/30-12/6	Monday- No Class! Meet with me to discuss the first draft and finishing the paper Wednesday- In Class Presentations on your Story Map	Story Map Due 12/6 at 11:59 PM
Week 16 12/7-12/13	Final Paper is due on December 9 (Wednesday) at 11:59 PM.	