

## Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences

# The Writing of History

# HIST 3903 Section 180

# Fall 2020

## Contact Information

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**Course Description**

This seminar is an introduction to the theory, practice, and art of historical research and writing. The goal is to develop skills in various sorts of historical writing. This course introduces students to the methods of historical research, including the framing of research questions; the location, analysis, and evaluation of sources; the construction of argument and counterargument; and the presentation of results. Much of the class will be conducted in a workshop format in which students edit and discuss each other’s writing. A primary element of the course will be the growth of critical thinking among students concerning the examination of historical themes and paradigms (examples, patterns, models, and standards) and in source selection and evaluation.

The course is built around a step-by-step process in constructing a well-written and cohesive research paper for an upper level history course. It will start with an introduction to the historical profession and some methodology. From there we will explore ways to select a topic for analysis and how to best acquire relevant documents and secondary sources that allow you to form and argue a cogent thesis. We will practice writing and critiquing one another’s written work, and continually edit and rewrite our own.

**Student Participation Clause**

Students in this course are held personally responsible for their own education and encouraged to excel. Active student participation includes, but is not limited to, classroom engagement, the maintenance of a weekly writing schedule, the completion of all assignments in a timely manner, adequate and earnest preparation for discussion and workshops, and, when necessary, individual meetings with the instructor. These elements are essential to the successful mastering of historical writing.

## Textbook & Instructional Materials

## Katherine Antonova, *The Essential Guide to Writing History Essays* (Oxford University Press, 2020), 9780190271169

## Mary Lynn Rampola, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. Either the 6th or the 7th edition. I prefer the 6th.

## Online: Various readings as assigned and posted to D2L

**Class format:**

This class will be conducted in a workshop format, supported by a D2L website, in which students discuss and, for most assignments (including the book review, summaries, annotated bibliography, and research project), edit each other’s work. The idea is that one learns writing not only by writing, getting feedback and rewriting, but by discussing what one has written and editing others’ writing as well, a process that helps to ingrain an understanding of clear and informative writing. Therefore, much of the process will involve discussion; thus attendance is important. The process aids the writer in better arguing his or her position clearly and cogently. *Students will be expected to keep critiques and feedback within the vein of constructive criticism and exploration, understanding that the purpose is to help your colleagues become better writers, not to tear down the author and his or her work.*

Since this collaborative editing process is just as important as the writing itself, a student’s grade for each assignment will be a combination of the assignment itself, both the original and the revised versions, *and* the student’s participation in workshoping, i.e., handing in edited copies, engaging in discussions in a positive manner, etc. Failure to complete any part of an assignment will result in a reduced grade for that assignment.

For all assignments email me your writing assignment before class and bring a printed copy with you. The assignments will then we discussed and critiqued.

Also be aware that the nature of this course, particularly in class, includes a lot of “busy work”. I will, throughout the semester, give short readings in class that you will expected to summarize (in class) in very brief three to four sentences. The reason for this is based on language acquisition theory. The more you practice summarization (a combination of quickly evaluating and distilling information into its relevant parts, and presenting the essential information in said document), the better and quicker you’ll become at evaluation and writing. Language and writing can only be improved with constant practice and repetition so that these skills become second nature to you. These skills, especially for those who practice them often, translate into more professional opportunities and potentially wealth. This is why supposedly tedious busy work is necessary in acquiring and perfecting skills necessary to compete in post-graduation professional life. Be better than your competition.

**Academic Integrity, Misconduct Policy & Procedures**

Refer to current student handbooks for university policy and 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.

**Notice:** Please understand the following – it applies to all assignments. If you in any instance “cut and paste” from any internet source without citing that source (plagiarism) or use unapproved internet sources you will fail the assignment in question and, depending on the severity of the offense, the professor reserves the right to employ any and all university sanctioned disciplinary actions.

## Grading

| Assignments | Percentage |
| --- | --- |
| Student participation in workshops, discussion, engagement | 10% |
| Summary of primary document (~100-150 words) | 5% |
| Summary of secondary document (~100-150 words) | 5% |
| Primary source analysis (~600 words) | 10% |
| Book review (~900 words) | 10% |
| Annotated bibliography | 10% |
| Historiographic essay (~1500 words) | 15% |
| Paper Proposal (~600-900 words) [narrative outline of argument] | 10% |
| Final Paper, including polished draft | 25% |

| Final Grade | Percentage |
| --- | --- |
| A | 90% plus |
| B | 80 – 89.9% |
| C | 70 – 79.9% |
| D | 60 – 69.9% |
| F | Less than 60% |

**Assignment Definitions**

1. Summary—Cogent and brief description of a source that identifies the main points of said source.
2. Primary Source Analysis—Cogent analysis of a primary source that briefly establishes the historical context of the source, identifies the purpose of said document, and posits biases of the author or creator of that source.
3. Book Review—NOT A BOOK REPORT!!! A critical evaluation of a secondary source (monograph) that briefly summarizes the work (thesis and points author uses to argue the thesis), identifies potential bias, and evaluates the work critically (does the writer adequate select and evaluate his or her sources, is the thesis well argued, are the points adequately supported by appropriate evidence, is the book well-written, etc.).
4. Annotated bibliography—A formal bibliography in which the author gives a brief description of each of the selected sources and points out how this information fits into his or her working thesis. Don’t personalize in your annotation, i.e. “This book will help me defend my thesis by …”.
5. Historiographic essay—This is an essay that evaluates and compares a selected number of secondary sources, identifying their strengths and weaknesses, and offers an evaluation of the published resources on a particular historical topic.
6. Paper proposal—This is a document that offers the audience a narrative of what the author intends to argue in a research paper. It should clearly set the context of the historical question/problem, offer a solid working thesis, present 3-4 points the author will use to argue the thesis, and, in the conclusion, explain why this historical investigation is relevant. Students should view this as an exercise that outlines the paper to be produced. My mentor called it a “narrative outline” in that it forces the writer to structure the paper in a cogent and logical way. A strong proposal gives guidance to the writer in focusing on proving the main thesis through specified points, and allows said writer to cut extraneous or peripheral (but still potentially interesting) material or avenues of thought.
7. Research paper—An argumentative essay that poses a thesis on a topic, historically contextualizes said topic, and supports the thesis with relevant primary and secondary sources of evidence. It should be well written, logically constructed, and critical of sources and other arguments.

As you can see, every assignment in this course is meant to build on previous assignments. In essence, you will be writing this final research paper throughout the course of the semester from the very beginning.

## Extra Credit

Under no circumstances are “extra credit” assignments given. Such assignments are inherently unfair to your fellow students. Do not request “extra credit.”

## Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Use of the MSU D2L program is 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.

## Attendance

This course is structured so that it is to the student’s advantage to attend all classes and participate in all discussions and workshops. From past experience, those students who choose not to participate on a regular basis are not successful.

## Online Computer Requirements

It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer in this class. ***Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered a legitimate reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments.*** 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!!!** Save your work, save it often, and save it in a variety of places, including the cloud.

## Institutional and COVID Policies

In general, the class policies concerning COVID are those implemented by MSU Texas and are subject to change as university policy changes. Please check university policies throughout the semester. Below are some of the things you should be aware of.

1. This is a face-to-face course. I will NOT be livestreaming the course unless a student tests positive or must go into quarantine due to exposure by an infected individual. It is the student’s responsibility to inform me, in writing (email is fine), of the situation. I will implement livestreaming within one class session to accommodate the sick or quarantined students.
2. Due to the policies on social distancing and attendance, seating charts and seat assignments will be used in this course. Each student must sit in a desk or chair with an affixed sticker allowing seating. That desk or chair cannot be moved for any reason and attendance will be taken by seating chart. Once you select a desk, you must sit in that desk and that desk alone throughout the semester.
3. Due to the possibility of a campus shut-down, the students are responsible for owning or having access to the necessary equipment and software to continue this course via distance learning. Below are the MINIMUM requirements as determined by the university.

**HARDWARE**:

PC Desktops and laptops (Use Windows' Operating System and PC Info to find your hardware information if you are unsure)

1. Intel Core (i3, i5, i7) processors; 4th generation or newer
2. 4 GB of RAM, 8 GB of RAM is highly recommended
3. 256 GB SSD Storage
4. Dual Band spectrum (2.4 GHz and 5 GHz) with 802.11ac or 802.11n

Mac desktops and laptops (Use Apple's About this Mac feature to find your hardware information)

1. Intel Core (i3, i5, i7) processors; 4th generation or newer
2. 4 GB of RAM, 8 GB of RAM is highly recommended
3. 256 GB SSD Storage
4. Dual Band spectrum (2.4 GHz and 5 GHz) with 802.11ac or 802.11n

PLEASE NOTE!!!: **Chromebooks are not recommended, as they will not work with D2L. You have been warned now, so do NOT expect me to make accommodations if distance learning is implemented during the semester.**

**SOFTWARE**:

Minimum Software requirements

Operating Systems:

1. Windows 10 (1709)
2. macOS 10.13 (High Sierra)

Web browsers:

1. Internet Explorer 11 (Windows)
2. Microsoft Edge
3. Safari
4. Firefox
5. Chrome

Conferencing Software:

1. Microsoft Teams
2. Zoom Web Conferencing
3. Skype for Business
4. Web X

Other supported hardware and software options are located at <https://msutexas.edu/it/_assets/files/basic-software-and-hardware-list.pdf>

1. If absent due to COVID infection or exposure occurs, it must be documented by the university. If you cannot make office hours, call during posted times. Otherwise, email or call to make a face-to-face or electronic meeting.
2. All documents relating to the course will be available on D2L. Check regularly.

## Instructor Class Policies

**Conduct**:  All students are expected to act as responsible adults. Any disruptions or distractions will be dealt with in an appropriate manner. Below you will find general guidelines covering certain actions and/or behaviors that are to be avoided. As a general rule any behavior that disrupts the administration of this class will not be tolerated.

Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment conducive to learning. In order to assure that all students have the opportunity to gain from the time spent in class, students are prohibited from engaging in any form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result, minimally, in a request that the offending student leave the classroom. Furthermore, the professor reserves the right to deduct points from the student’s semester total or remove the student from the course. **Arriving late is considered a distraction**. If arriving more than five (5) minutes late – DO NOT enter the classroom.

**Electronic Devices, Texting, and Phones:** The use of tape recorders, iPods, mp3s, or any other recording device in class is **prohibited**.  It is imperative that you turn off phones, all other communication devices, and electronic equipment before entering the classroom. The use of a telephone or texting device for any reason is prohibited. *On the first offense the student will be penalized 20 points on her or his participation score for the week. The second will result in the student being asked to leave the classroom. The professor reserves the right to expel and administratively withdraw a student from the class upon the third offense.*

**Laptops, Tablets, & etc.:** You must obtain permission from the professor to use laptops, tablets, and phones (or any other device capable of accessing the internet) in the classroom. Recent scholarship suggests that laptops and tablets are **major distractions** to fellow students and in general do not enhance learning and/or the classroom experience. Furthermore, there will be no surfing, texting, emailing, etc. in the classroom, unless I specifically ask the students to do so.

**E-mail**: Note that e-mail correspondence is the most effective and convenient way in which to communicate with me outside the classroom. The professor/student relationship is professional by nature and, accordingly, your e-mail correspondence should be constructed professionally.

**Attendance and your grade**: This course is structured so that it is to the student’s advantage to attend class regularly.  From past experience, students who choose not to attend on a regular basis are not successful.  I allow two, and only two unexcused absences. After that, each unexcused absence will result in a penalty to your participation grade. If you have a total of 3 unexcused absences, you will not be able to pass the course.

**Withdrawals (Course Drop):** The professor is NOT responsible for student withdrawals. The student is responsible for meeting all academic deadlines including withdrawal deadlines.

## 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 [Student Disability Office](http://www.mwsu.edu/student-life/disability).

## Grade Appeal Process: Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [Undergraduate Catalog](http://catalog.mwsu.edu/content.php?catoid=14&navoid=655#Appeal_of_Course_Grade).

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

**Course Schedule**

Week 1—Introduction to the Course and Policies

Aug. 25—Introduction to Class policies and goals, Conversation on doing research, and Summaries workshop. We will also brainstorm potential topics of interest to students for semester project.

Week 2—Academic Writing and the Discipline of History

Reading: Antonova, Chapters 1-3; Rampolla, Chapters 1-2, pp. 20-26, 31-34

Sept. 1—Summaries practice, Primary vs. Secondary sources and types

**Students must have a tentative TOPIC for term research project**

Week 3—Workshoping Primary and Secondary documents

Reading: Rampolla, 6-19; Antonova, 201-19, 248-59

Sept. 8—Looking at documents with a critical eye, identifying bias, evaluating sources. **You must find a primary source to produce a primary source analysis due on Sept. 15.**

Week 4—The Art of Summary

Reading: Antonova, Chapter 5

Sept. 15—Summarize one primary source, summarize one secondary source; critiquing summaries of colleagues in class.

**You will select one primary source and one secondary source related to your paper to summarize for next week.**

**DUE: primary source analysis**

Week 5—Research: Strategy, Availability, Selection

Reading: Antonova, Chapter 10; Rampolla, 66-83

Sept. 22—Students will do some research with electronic sources in class, present some of the sources they found, and offer a brief explanation of their potential usefulness

**DUE: summary of primary and summary of secondary sources**

Week 6—Paper Proposal, a Narrative Outline

Reading: Antonova, Chapter 6, pp. 118, 122-47

Sept. 29—Strategies to organize your thoughts into a cogent proposal. What you need to do is to think about how you intend to structure your final project, illustrating to the audience (me) that you’ve done enough preliminary research, can credibly construct an argument, offer a tentative thesis, and present how you intend to argue the thesis.

**You will beginning writing the paper proposal due the following week. This means that you will have to have done a significant amount of research for your project to structure a working thesis and develop the points you intend to use to prove that thesis.**

Week 7—Annotated Bibliography

Reading: review Antonova, 69-71, 75-79, 266-7; Rampolla, bottom of 24-26

Oct. 6—What is an Annotated Bibliography? Do I have enough resources? Workshoping how to do a solid annotation. In producing an annotated bibliography, form is very important.

BRING one of your resources to class for this exercise.

**DUE: Paper Proposal**

Week 8—Critically Analyzing the work of others: The Book Review

Reading: Rampolla, 26-28; Antonova, Chapter 8

Oct. 13—Learning to critique a book intended for research project. A “How to” sheet is posted on D2L. I will provide a couple of examples of academic reviews.

**DUE: Annotated Bibliography**

Week 9—The Historiographic Essay

Reading: Rampolla, 32-34; review Antonova, Chapter 8

Oct. 20—Learning what the Historiographic Essay is and how to do it. Your job will be to select 3-5 secondary sources and write a comparative critique of these sources, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and describe how they relate to one another in the context of your research. This exercises gets you to focus more on how resources fit your particular topic and illustrate the scholarship on your particular topic. Examples will be provided and examined in class.

**DUE: Book Review**

Week 10—The Writing of the Historical Paper

Reading: Rampolla, 39-65, 86-93; Antonova, 268-97

Oct. 27—Compiling your research and your reviews/historiographic essays into the beginnings of an analytical research essay.

Week 11—Workshoping the Historiographical Essay.

Nov. 3—Bring your Historiographical Essay for critique

**DUE: Historiographic Essay**

Week 12— Please make a thirty minute appointment during class time or office hours to discuss writing progress.

Nov. 10—Individual conferences during class time.

Week 13—Workshoping a Research Paper

**DRAFTS ARE DUE FOR IN CLASS WORKSHOPING AND CRITIQUE**

Nov. 17—We will be evaluating the work of others in this session.

Week 14—Polished drafts due to me by 5pm, November 24. I will evaluate, redline, and return them electronically by December 1 so you can rework, edit, etc. for the final paper.

Week 15—Continue to work on final papers. I will be available for electronic conferencing or phone calls with students if needed. Please book appointments at least one day BEFORE you need it.

**Final Paper due December 7 (Pearl Harbor Day!) at 5pm.**

**Guide for Editing Essays and Papers:**

**1. Is there a thesis? Is it clear or more implied?**

**2. Do the paragraphs present evidence and arguments in a clear and logical way to support the thesis?**

**3. Is each paragraph coherent? For example, does each paragraph have a topic sentence and is the body of the paragraph related to it?**

**4. Do the paragraphs flow smoothly in content and transition?**

**5. Are the grammar, spelling and punctuation correct?**