

Fall 2009  
History 480, Section 003  
Time: W 3:30 - 6:00 pm  
220 Satterlee Hall

Dr. Kevin Smith  
310-B Satterlee Hall  
Phone: 267-2560  
smithkd@potsgdam.edu  
Office hours: TTh 1:00-1:45 pm  
W 1:00 pm- 2:30  
and by appointment

## **Seminar in History: Modern America**

### ***Course Description***

The primary goal of this class is for each student to improve his or her ability to do individual research in primary and secondary historical sources and to write a 4,000-5,000 word (16-20 page) essay on a topic relating to U. S. during the twentieth century and/or the history of U. S. foreign relations since 1763. This work includes choosing a topic to investigate, using a variety of research tools, developing a record-keeping system, reading and reflecting, outlining, and writing multiple drafts of a historical essay with proper documentation.

In addition to engaging in the solitary and labor-intensive activities of researching and writing, a second goal of this class is to build the camaraderie that is essential to historical work. Sharing and discussing unused or under-used sources or asking new questions of more well-known sources with other scholars engaged in a similar task can be an enjoyable and enriching experience. As your research proceeds, the ability to give and receive critical readings of each other's writing will further this conversation.

The final essay you produce in this class should be one that demonstrates your skills as a historian and writer who can convey a story, analyze and interpret historical sources, and grapple with important questions. I hope you will be pleased enough with your work to search out an audience for your essay.

### ***Required Readings***

Marius, Richard, and Melvin E. Page. *A Short Guide to Writing about History*. 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2010.

Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2010.

### ***Attendance and Deadlines***

Attending class and meeting deadlines are essential in this class. More than one unexcused absence will result in an unsatisfactory group work grade. Arriving late or leaving early will also result in a lowered group work grade. Failure to turn in - on time- any of the components of the portfolio or to show up for an individual conference will result in an unsatisfactory portfolio grade. No late assignments will be accepted. The only excused absences are those with official documentation of active participation in college activities, religious beliefs, illness, or other emergencies (see the SUNY Potsdam Undergraduate Catalogue for the official college policy). Students can make up missed assignments only with this documentation. Absences due to participation in college activities must be documented in advance.

### ***Course Requirements and Evaluation***

The bulk of the course work is individual research and the production of a historical essay. You will also complete a number of assignments in addition to the final essay that will document your progress in

producing your essay. Your course work will also include individual conferences with me.

The class will also be divided into working groups focused on related (however loosely) topics. Members of these smaller groups will read and comment on each other's work. These critical evaluations in writing and in class sessions are an important part of your course work. By critiquing your classmates' work, you should not only help them to improve their papers but also learn to recognize ways that you can improve your own essay.

**Percentages in parentheses indicate weight of each item in determining final grade.**

**Final Paper  
and Portfolio: 60%**

Your final paper must be titled, typed, and double spaced, using 12 pt. font (meaning about 250 words per page). The essay must be based on a mix of primary and secondary sources, it must be 4,000-5,000 words (16-20 pages) long, its pages must be numbered, and it must be documented using footnotes or endnotes in the Chicago style. Your final portfolio should include copies of all assignments, your record keeping sample, rough drafts, all evaluations of your drafts from me and your peer reviewers, and any other documents you think are pertinent.

**Group Work  
and Presentations 20%**

Your group work grade will be based on your participation in peer review sessions, written peer reviews, individual sessions with me, and a brief presentation of your work.

**Written Assignments 20%**

Written assignments include library assignments, your topic paragraph, historiographical essay, and introduction. Like your final paper, these should be typed, titled, double-spaced in 12 pt. font, and the pages should be numbered.

**Total 100%**

All grades, including your final grade, will be translated into the college four point system on the following basis:

0-59	0.0 - F		77-79	2.7 - B-
60-62	1.0 - D		80-82	3.0 - B
63-66	1.3 - D+		83-86	3.3 - B+
67-69	1.7 - C-		87-89	3.7 - A-
70-72	2.0 - C		90+	4.0 - A
73-76	2.3 - C+			

### *Plagiarism*

Standards of academic honesty and plagiarism are described in the SUNY Potsdam Undergraduate Catalogue. Subject to college appeal procedures, students determined to have violated standards of academic honesty may receive an immediate 0 in the course. You may not paraphrase without citations. You may not use exact quotes without quotation marks and citation. You must cite the use of other people's ideas at the end of the first paragraph of the section in which you use those ideas. You must also cite all factual information that is not common knowledge; a good rule of thumb on this is that if you can find it in an encyclopedia, it is common knowledge.

### *Documented Disabilities*

Any student who feels she or he may need academic adjustments or accommodations based on a documented disability should see me after class, during my office hours, or by appointment. Students needing an Accommodation Plan should see Sharon House, Coordinator of Accommodative Services.

### *Class Schedule and Reading Assignments*

- 9/2:** 3:30-4:45: Introduction: Topics, Sources, Research, and Writing Overview; Popular/Scholarly and Primary/Secondary Sources; Reference Sources and Reference Librarians  
5:00-6:00: Using Library Reference Works and Bibliographical Material

Reading: Syllabus and Assignment Guidelines

- 9/9:** 3:30-4:45: Finding Sources and Making Arguments; Discussion of possible topics  
5:00-6:00: Finding Books; Primary and Secondary Sources; Interlibrary Loan

**Due: Reference Assignment**

Reading: Marius, xi-93.

- 9/16:** 3:30-4:45: Discussion of record keeping, progress on finding sources, and possible topics  
5:00-6:00: Finding Articles; Using Online Sources and Archive Paper Collections

**Due: Book Research Assignment**

Reading: Marius, 94-149.

- 9/23:** Outlining and Writing Drafts; Discussion of style and documenting sources

**Due: Journal Research Assignment**

**Topic Paragraph**

**Record Keeping Sample**

Reading: Marius, 150-213.

- 9/30:** Workshop Historiographic Essay and Bibliography

**Due: Historiographic Essay and Bibliography (four copies)**

**10/7:** Workshop First Draft; Discuss Problems

**Due: First Draft (four copies): Outline and At Least Five Numbered Pages of Writing**

**10/14:** Workshop Introduction; Discuss Problems

**Due: Introduction (three copies)**

**10/21:** Individual Sessions

**Due: Revised Outline, Bibliography, and Introduction at Individual Conferences**

**10/28:** Individual sessions

**11/4:** No Class: Writing Week. I'll be in my office for optional individual sessions

**11/11:** Presentations; Exchange Second Drafts; Discuss Problems

**Due: Second Draft (three Copies): Full Essay with Title, Footnotes, and Numbered Pages**

**11/18:** Presentations; Workshop Second Draft; Discuss Problems

**11/25:** No Class: Thanksgiving Recess

**12/:2** Individual Sessions

**12/9:** Individual Sessions

**12/14: 5:00 pm Due: Portfolio, including Final Essay with Title, Numbered Pages, Footnotes, and Bibliography**