

Fall 2010  
History 480, Section 003  
Time: TTh 9:30 - 10:45 am  
104 MacVicar Hall

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

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

### *Assignment Guidelines*

#### **Class Readings**

The one book you are required to read in this course is a slim volume with a substantial amount of information and wisdom packed into it – just what I expect from your research papers. Richard Marius and Melvin E. Page’s *A Short Guide to Writing about History* focuses on the particular requirements of our discipline. Still, his work can also be a useful reference in other settings in which you are required to write. Read Marius and Page quickly, but take enough notes so you can go back to the book as a reference tool.

The Marius and Page book has a section, entitled “Documenting Your Sources,” which provides guidelines for endnotes or footnotes based on the *Chicago Manual of Style*. This is the footnote or endnote style required for this class. You may use either endnotes or footnotes (both of which your computer will insert for you). From here on, when I use the word footnote, I mean either footnote or endnote. They are the same in terms of style. The only difference is whether they are placed at the bottom of the page (footnote) or at the end of the text (endnote). Mary Lynn Rampolla’s *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History* provides more extensive information on the Chicago style and serves as a reference guide to other important issues to consider when writing history.

**I will check your footnotes and bibliography. If you do not carefully follow the Chicago style, you will lose points.**

I will also evaluate all of your writing, but particularly that of your final essay, for clarity, an issue discussed well by William Strunk, Jr. and E. B. White, in *The Elements of Style*, which I have placed on reserve in the library.

Finally, I will evaluate your essay for its contribution to the historical discipline. This includes your choice of sources, how well you use them, and your interpretations of those sources. Marius and Page address all of these issues and much more. Make extensive use of your books; they are good companions.

#### **Topics**

Your topic must be on some aspect of U. S. history during the twentieth century and/or the history of U. S. foreign relations since 1763. Your topic must focus on a particular issue, event, or person, but it must also show how that issue, event, or person contributed to broader trends in

American history.

As Marius and Page note, when researchers are given the freedom to choose a topic, they often find that freedom harrowing. Nevertheless, try to enjoy the freedom. But remember, you must pick a topic with adequate sources for a research paper of 4,000 to 5,000 words. You must also meet deadlines throughout the course. **So get started picking your topic immediately.**

## **Assignments**

### **1) Reference Sources Assignment**

Requires you to show that you can use the reference sources that you learned about in the first library session.

### **2) Book Research Assignment**

Requires you to demonstrate your ability to search for books on online catalogues.

### **3) Journal Research Assignment**

Requires you to demonstrate your ability to search for articles in periodicals (magazines, newspapers, scholarly journals) online and in paper volumes. The journal assignment will also include a submission with the address of one Internet site you have visited with an accompanying paragraph evaluating the historical merit of the site.

### **4) Topic Paragraph**

Your topic paragraph should include the major questions that you will address in your essay, your argument, your counter-argument, and some of the most important sources you will use. Your topic may shift in its emphasis, but this paragraph does commit you to a particular area that your final research paper must reflect.

### **5) Record Keeping Sample**

This assignment asks you to demonstrate how you will record bibliographic information and take notes as you do research. You may use any method you wish, from note cards to computer data bases, as long as it provides a mechanism not only for maintaining a usable note-taking system but also for connecting your research notes to the source from which they came. **You must also include a statement of how you plan to back up any information you store in a computer.**

### **6) Historiographic Essay and Bibliography**

This assignment asks you to write a 3-4 page (750-1,000) word essay in which you draw together a group of **secondary** sources that address the topic you have chosen for your research paper. Your task in this assignment is to use your sources to discuss the current state of historical interpretation concerning the topic. For each source you discuss, you should include a footnote

in the Chicago Style and state the main argument that the author is making about his or her subject. You should then explain how your argument builds on these previous interpretations. Your essay should discuss at least three reference sources, five book sources, and five journal sources, and any pertinent online sources. You will have read some of these sources, skimmed others, and only read about others. Because this essay is due early in the semester, it is a starting point and a demonstration of the work you have completed, not a definitive list of the sources that will appear in your final essay. Still, it should help you to define your topic and refine your argument about that topic. It will also help you to define your counter-argument; that is, the interpretations about your subject that you will challenge.

You must also attach a bibliography in Chicago-style format to the historiographical essay, which should contain all of the sources that you have consulted so far.

Bring **four copies** of your historiographical essay and bibliography, one for me, one for yourself, and one for each of your peer group members.

### **7) Peer Review Forms**

When you workshop, or peer review, your colleagues' work, you will fill out a **peer review form**, which you will give to the author. Authors should retain these forms for inclusion in his/her final portfolio.

### **8) Outline and First Draft (minimum of 5 pages, numbered)**

This assignment will remind you that an important component of this seminar is revision. If you are accustomed to turning in papers at the end of the semester, the due date of the first draft by October 1 might seem unreasonable. By the end of the semester, however, I hope you will agree that the best way to complete a research paper is to write, even as you continue to research. The five pages of writing can be any part of your essay, not necessarily the first five pages. Bring **four copies**, one for me, one for yourself, and one for each of your peer group members. The outline may be sketchy at this point, but writing it should help you to conceptualize your essay.

### **9) Introduction**

This assignment is intended to help you clarify your topic, argument, and counter-argument(s). It should be between 2-3 pages (500-750 words) in length, and you should bring **three copies**, one for me, one for you, and one for your peer reviewer, to class. While this will not be the final draft of your introduction, it should provide a clear statement of the historical question (or questions) that surround your topic. It should also state briefly the interpretations that earlier historians have offered (as you have already explained in your historiographical essay). Finally, it should state clearly your own interpretation, or argument.

### **10) Revised Historiographic Essay, Introduction, Bibliography, and Outline**

The revised historiographic essay and introduction that you bring to your first individual session should demonstrate improvements in clarifying your topic, the historical question that you are

addressing regarding that topic, previous historical interpretations, and most importantly, your own argument. The bibliography and outline should be as extensive as possible. As such, they provide a chance to discuss problem areas, adequacy of sources, and strengths of your work as you head into the final six weeks of the class. Different topics have different source requirements, but for a rough estimate of adequate sources, see the sample research paper in Marius and Page.

### **11) Second Draft-Full Essay with Footnotes, Title, and Numbered Pages**

This draft is a much more definitive document than the first draft in terms of your argument and counter argument(s), your analysis, and your decisions on which sources are most important. You must have footnotes for all material that requires documentation. I will pay close attention to footnotes-both their presence and their form. I do not expect polished writing on this draft, although the more time you have spent on writing, the easier it will be to write the final draft. **You must submit three copies** of the second draft, as you did for your introduction.

### **12) Presentation**

I will hand out a separate sheet that explains this assignment

### **13) The Final Essay-Polished Essay with Footnotes, Numbered Pages, and Bibliography**

The final essay is simply the last step of a semester's process – if you have conscientiously completed all the other steps. Remember, the footnotes and bibliography must follow *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Throughout the evaluation process, I will address the adequacy of sources with you. Peer reviews should also address this issue.

### **14) The Portfolio**

The portfolio must be organized chronologically in a pocket folder. It is a record of your research and writing process. The portfolio must contain the reference sources assignment, book research assignment, journal research assignment, topic paragraph, a sampling of your record keeping system, historiographical essay, bibliography, outline, and your final essay, as well as all evaluations of your drafts from me and from peer reviewers. If you have other documents you think are pertinent, feel free to include them as well.

### **15) Individual Sessions**

I will have two mandatory individual sessions with you throughout the semester. Because these will often take the place of class sessions, I will expect you to treat them as class sessions. Missing an individual session is the same as missing a class period.