

**HSTRY 596/597**  
**History Research Seminar**

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**Seminar purpose:** The purpose of this seminar is to guide you through the entire research cycle, from the elaboration of a research idea to the completion of a significant and substantial piece of historical analysis. The seminar facilitates this process by breaking it down into smaller, intermediate steps: identifying a suitable topic, establishing the feasibility of the topic by locating relevant sources, developing a formal research proposal, and writing up research in sections that form the building blocks of the final work. The seminar culminates in a twenty-minute conference-style presentation and the submission of the seminar paper itself.

**Seminar paper:** The model for the seminar paper can be either a scholarly journal article or a lengthy chapter in a book or dissertation. In other words, the seminar paper should be of substantial length (30-45 pages) and should represent historical scholarship that is original in the question it asks, the approach it takes, or the sources it employs.

**Seminar process:** The seminar provides a collegial context in which to carry out individual work. The seminar is a place to present work in progress, to try out ideas, and to engage in critical but supportive commentary. We will meet at intervals for presentation and discussion, according to the timetable below. You should also be meeting with your subject specialist. Any written assignments (prospectus, drafts, etc.) submitted to the seminar should also be shared with your subject specialist.

**Schedule of seminar meetings:**

September 26

Introduction to seminar

October 3

Discussion of research tools and practices – What tools do you use to identify sources? How do you organize your sources? How do you take notes? How do you work with your sources as you write? Come to this session ready to share your answers to these questions. Our aim will be to share information and decide what works best for each of us, given the demands of our field and our personal inclinations.

At this meeting you should also be ready to affirm that you have been in contact with your subject specialist, initiated discussion of potential topics, and begun exploratory research.

October 10

Submission of two-page project proposal. Discussion of proposal.

October 31

Presentation and discussion of the research prospectus

Your prospectus should include a statement of the problem or question, the approach(es) you expect to take, the relationship of your topic to the existing historiography, the sources you expect to consult. Your prospectus should consist of a three-to-four page statement of your research topic or question, the approach(es) you expect to take, the relationship of your topic to the existing historiography, the sources you expect to consult, and the possible conclusions you envision. Three or four pages should be adequate; attach a short bibliography (about a page) of primary and secondary sources, bringing your prospectus page count to four or five. The presentation of your prospectus should be about ten minutes.

November 14

Interim report – the state of your research; working outline

Offer extemporaneous remarks (i.e., don't read a presentation) on the state of your research. What is working? What isn't working? How have you adjusted your topic in light of your research? How are you envisioning the structure of your essay? Please bring a working outline of your project for review and discussion.

December 5

First essay section due. Ten-minute presentation.

Large research projects seem less daunting when they are broken into distinct pieces. For this meeting and the two that follow, write up a portion of your research (7-10 pages). In general, each section should address one of the main topics in your working outline.

January 16

Second essay section due. Ten-minute presentation.

February 20

Third essay section due. Ten-minute presentation.

As of this week, you will have completed three substantial pieces of writing. These constitute the building blocks of your seminar paper. As you combine and revise these elements, strive for style and consistency. In the days ahead, link your sections with effective transitions; add an engaging introduction and an effective conclusion to produce a complete draft.

March 6

Presentation of final draft.

This should be a formal presentation of your work. Prepare 20 minutes of remarks. (The model is a conference presentation.) Be sure to invite your subject specialist.

March 18

Final draft due.

Submit a copy to me and to your subject specialist. I will consult with your subject specialist to determine your grade for the two-quarter seminar.