Course Syllabus HIS271G

History: Research Methods and Problems

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Course Description
The course will explore the theory and practice of history by investigating classical issues of historiography and extending the student’s techniques of historical analysis and research. This will include an inquiry into the nature of the discipline, historical theory (e.g. problems of structuring, periodization, positivism/idealism, historical materialism, et al.), the notion of historical truth, the auxiliary sciences, comprehensive research techniques (archives, libraries, research aids, advanced bibliographical research, research logs, annotated bibliographies), writing and organization (to include an introduction to advanced methods of note-taking via databasing), classical and modern research trends and the so-called new histories.

The course will combine lectures and class discussion. Lectures will introduce and complement readings, highlight aspects of special interest, and provide alternative evaluations. Discussions will better illuminate controversial points of assigned readings in an interactive fashion.

Course Prerequisites
HIS101P

Learning Objectives
After this course, you should be able to: identify and explain classic historiographical issues and key historical theories related to the nature and evolution of the discipline; identify and explain the key elements and relevance of the auxiliary sciences; have a clear understanding (based on practice) of comprehensive bibliographical research using research logs and annotated bibliographies at the simulated master’s level; be able to identify and explain traditional vs modern historical attitudes and approaches.

Course Schedule
Week 1: Introduction – Aims of course, syllabus, explanation of assignments
Distribution of bibliographical-critical assignments
Choice of topic for research log

Week 2: What is History? Definition and Nature of the Discipline
Discussion: The limits of historical knowledge. How much can we know?
Reading: Elton 1.1-1.3, Tosh Prefaces and 1 and 7, Carr 1

Week 3: History: The Idiographic and the Nomothetic Approach
Discussion: Is history an art or a science?
Reading: Elton 1.4-1.5 and 2.1-2.2, Carr 2-3

Week 4: Historical Causation – Objectivity and Value Judgment
Reading: Carr Preface and 4, Tosh 7

Week 5: Theories of History: Structures, Periodization
Diachronical/Synchronical History, Historicism, Historical Materialism
Discussion: Does history follow any set of recognizable laws?
Reading: Carr 5-6, Tosh 8

Week 6: Finding the Evidence: Libraries (On-Line and Off-Line; Manuals, Bibliographies–Retrospective and Serial, Abstracts, Journals) and Archives
Reading: None

Week 7: Midterm Exam (in 1st class meeting; returned/discussed in 2nd class meeting)

Week 8: Handling Evidence: Auxiliary Sciences I. Introduction, Chronology, Datation
Reading: Review Tosh 4-5.

Week 9: Handling Evidence: Auxiliary Sciences II. Historical Geography, Genealogy, Heraldry
Reading: None

Week 10: Handling Evidence: Auxiliary Sciences III. Paleography, Epigraphic, Diplomatic, Sphragistics, Numismatics
Reading: None

Week 11: Writing: Research notes and data-bases.
Reading: Elton 3, Tosh 6

Week 12: Traditional Themes: Politics, Biography, Ideas
Reading: Tosh 3

Syllabus: History: Research Methods and Problems  Spring 2014
Week 13: New Themes: Economy, Society, Mentality; Quantitative history, Oral history, Psycho-history
Reading: Tosh 9-11.

Week 14: The Uses and Abuses of History
Exercise and discussion: Reading Op-ed pieces with historical argumentation
Reading: Elton preface, Tosh 2

Week 15: Final Exam (see college exam schedule)

Course Materials
Textbooks:

Case Studies and Additional Readings: Reader to be purchased at Crazy Copy

Course Assessment

The students will be evaluated on the basis of their performance as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Scale of 20</th>
<th>Scale of 100</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biblio-critical papers</td>
<td>17.0-20.0</td>
<td>85-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research log</td>
<td>16.1-16.9</td>
<td>81-84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotated bibliography</td>
<td>15.3-16.0</td>
<td>77-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm examination</td>
<td>14.5-15.2</td>
<td>73-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final examination</td>
<td>13.7-14.4</td>
<td>69-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>13.1-13.6</td>
<td>66-68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.3-13.0</td>
<td>62-65</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11.5-12.2</td>
<td>58-61</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10.7-11.4</td>
<td>54-57</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10.0-10.6</td>
<td>50-53</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Below 50</td>
<td>0-49</td>
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</tbody>
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Grading Scale of Vesalius College
Vesalius College grading policy, in line with Flemish Educational norms, is as follows:

Further description of assessment activities:

Syllabus: History: Research Methods and Problems Spring 2014
Written Assignments

Short Bibliographical Critical Papers
Four each brief *bibliographical-critical papers* (1-2 pps. each) will be completed, one each for a bibliography, specialized reference book, journal, and web site (see annex for required format and list of titles to choose from). The instructor will select one student from each category to present orally the results of their assignment, for exemplary discussion.

Research Log on a Research Topic
(Topic list will be emailed.)

The research log should indicate the following, in the order given:

*Research Topic*

*Search Strategy: Medium and Method*
- Lists the various media searched (e.g. VUB library catalogue; Historical Abstracts on-line; Google; Virtual Library History; vols. 1995-2005 of the Bibliographie Annuelle de l’Histoire de France; select Bibliography in course reader – with each medium followed by search criteria/method (e.g. browsed; or term/word search on “British” AND “Egypt”, and date conducted). For Internet media include advanced search delimiters used (e.g. domain limiters like *.edu or *.ac.uk, language limiters, etc.).

*OPACs or printed bibliography results*
- Provides a consolidated summary of search results (e.g. title list in full bibliographical format with call numbers) of all OPAC or print media searched.

*WWW results*
- List titles of website, URLs and date accessed.

*NOTE: Do not confuse this with the single bibliographical data log example in the reader, taken from my own personal database! Do it like described above in points 1-4*

Annotated Bibliography on Research Topic Chosen for Research Log
The bibliography will include all relevant titles found among those listed in the research log and should have the following basic annotations:

*Library location and call number (VUB, ULB, KBR use are mandatory – if located in another Belgian library, provide call number only, if not located indicate “N/A in Belgium”)*

*Several sentences on the relevance of the work to your paper*

*For source anthologies you would list the actual documents in the anthology that you would propose to use (again with one sentence on relevance to topic)*

*Note that if you consult more than just the mandatory three libraries, this could improve your grade.*

All papers will be submitted in two forms

*As hard copies,* stapled, not in a plastic cover.
As electronic copies, emailed to me, according to the following naming conventions for the attachments:

Naming Conventions

Short Bibliographical Critical Papers
- Biblio271_Lastname_Firstname.doc
- RefBook271_Lastname_Firstname.doc
- Journal271_Lastname_Firstname.doc
- WebSite271_Lastname_Firstname.doc

Research Log
- ResLog271_Lastname_Firstname.doc

Annotated Bibliography
- AnnBib271_Lastname_Firstname.doc

NOT using the proper naming convention for the electronic file will take 5% off your paper grade.

Due Dates
1st Class Period Week 2: Bibliographical-critical paper: bibliography
1st Class Period Week 3: Bibliographical-critical paper: specialized reference book
1st Class Period Week 4: Bibliographical-critical paper: journal
1st Class Period Week 5: Bibliographical-critical paper: web site
1st Class Period Week 10: Research Log
1st Class Period Week 13: Annotated Bibliography

Examinations
The midterm and final examinations will be short answer tests. The mid-term will cover weeks 1-6; the final weeks 8-14.

Grading Criteria

The following criteria will be applied in assessing your written work:

Evidence of understanding of the concepts, theories and ideas developed in the course. Grades for papers are based on how far students meet the qualitative goals for each paper as outlined in syllabus, reader, and class explanations.

Academic Honesty Statement
Academic dishonesty is NOT tolerated in this course. Academic honesty is not only an ethical issue but also the foundation of scholarship. Cheating and plagiarism are therefore serious breaches of academic integrity.

Following the College policy, cheating and plagiarism cases will be communicated in writing to the Associate Dean for Students and submitted to the Student Conduct Committee for disciplinary action.

If you refer to someone else’s work, appropriate references and citations must be provided. Grammar, spelling and punctuation count, so use the tools necessary to correct before handing in assignments.
Appendix I – Short Bibliographical Critical Papers

The following information must be included for each of the Short Bibliographical Critical Papers, by individual category of assignment. Take particular note that in most cases, as regards structure, you must distinguish between macro- and micro-structure. Example: in a typical general encyclopedia, the macro-structure might be preface, entries in alphabetical order, index, etc.. Micro-structure will relate to each entry, and might typically be headword, short summary of entry, main entry, footnotes, cross-references, further reading, signed author. This information is, of course, indicative, and will not apply equally everywhere.

**Bibliography**
Author, *Title*. Place: Publisher, Year. Edition (if not first)
Geographical scope (e.g. countries or regions covered)
Chronological scope (e.g. period covered)
Topical scope (e.g. political, social, economic, etc. history)
Scope of publications (e.g. journals or catalogues used for references in the bibliography itself)
Structure (micro/macro as appropriate)

**Reference Book**
Author, *Title*. Place: Publisher, Year. Edition (if not first)
Geographical scope
Chronological scope
Topical scope
Structure (micro/macro as appropriate)

**Journal**
Title
Library located in
Available issues
Published since
Publication rhythm
Publisher
Chronological scope
Geographical scope
Topical scope
Structure (micro/macro as appropriate)

**Web Site**
Title and URL
Date accessed
Sponsor (if identifiable)
Individual author (if identifiable)
Chronological scope
Geographical scope
Topical scope
Structure (micro/macro as appropriate)
Links to (only go to the 2nd level!)

Bibliographies
American Bibliographical Center. Historical Abstracts (1955-).
http://www.ebscohost.com/academic/historical-abstracts

CNRS: Bibliographie Annuelle de l'Histoire de France (1956-)
http://bhf.revues.org/index.html


Specialized Reference Books / Historical Dictionaries
Biographical
Balteau, J. et al. (eds.). Dictionnaire de biographie française. (1933-)
Stephen, Leslie et al. (eds.). Dictionary of National Biography, 27 vols. (1885ff.)

Reference Books
Encyclopedia of Antislavery and Abolition, (Eds.) Peter P. Hinks and John McKivigan (2006)
Kinder, Hermann et al. Atlas of World History. (most recent edition)
Mourre, Michel. Dictionnaire encyclopédique d'histoire, 8 vols. (1978)
Ploetz. Der Große Ploetz. Die Daten-Enzyklopädie der Weltgeschichte Daten. - Fakten - Zusammenhänge. (Newest edition you can find)
Taddey, Gerhard and Michael Behnen (Eds.). Lexikon Der Deutschen Geschichte . (2002)

Select Journals Available in Belgian Libraries
American Historical Review
Annales Economies Sociétés Civilisation
Balkan Studies
English Historical Review
French Historical Studies
French History
German History
Historische Zeitschrift
Journal of American History
Journal of Economic History
Journal of Interdisciplinary History
Journal of Modern History
Journal of Social History
New England Quarterly
New York Historical Society Quarterly
Pennsylvania Magazine of History & Biography
Revue Historique
Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française

Web Sites
American and British History Resources On-line
   www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rulib/socsci/amhist.html
American Studies Electronic Crossroads
   www.georgetown.edu/crossroads/home.html
Center for History and New Media
   chnm.gmu.edu
   www.arl.org/scomm/edir
Electronic Text Center
   etext.lib.virginia.edu
Historical Text Archive
   www.msstate.edu/Archives/History/archive.html
Historical US Documents: odur.let.rug.nl/~usa
Horus Web Links to History Resources
   www.ucr.edu/h-gig/horuslinks.html
Library of Congress: American Memory
   lcweb2.loc.gov/amhome.html
Modern History Source Book
  www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook/html
Voice of the Shuttle Web Page for Humanities Research
  vos.ucsb.edu/
WWW-VL History Central Catalogue
  www.ukans.edu/history/VL