**HIST 502 - Dissertation Writers' Seminar**

**Mondays, 2:00-4:40**

Spring Semester, 2023

Location: Rush Rhees 305

Instructor: Tom Devaney

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Office: Rush Rhees 364/Lattimore 208

Office Hours: Thursdays 2-4pm, and by appointment

The purpose of this course is to help students launch their dissertation projects and its chief outcome will be the dissertation prospectus. To that end, we will work on identifying topics, locating primary sources, engaging with the research literature, finding and applying for external research funding, and drafting and revising the prospectus. We will also discuss related topics, such as archival research practices and presenting work in progress at conferences and other meetings. This course is envisioned as a collaborative enterprise: though each student will focus on their own project, peer support and feedback will be an important part of all we do. Selected faculty members will also meet with the seminar to discuss their own work. This will be an opportunity for you to learn from professors of all ranks about how they transformed an idea into a manuscript. When available, faculty members will provide copies of their own prospectus, grant applications, or other pertinent material that might help the seminar participants better develop their proposal.

Leaded brass figure. Magdeburg, c. mid-12th century. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

**Course Information**

*Course Website:* Please check our course’s Blackboard site regularly as I will post some of the course readings, details about upcoming assignments, and other items of interest. We may also conduct discussions on Blackboard.

*Communication:*Please come speak with me if you have any questions or concerns about the class. I can be more understanding of your needs if you bring them to my attention before they become a serious problem. I am available during regular office hours without an appointment. If you cannot make posted hours, please contact me to schedule a better time. You may, of course, also speak to me by e-mail or Zoom.

*Attendance:* Attendance at all class meetings is mandatory. As this seminar meets just once a week, any absences will detract from your ability to fully participate in the course. I reserve the right to lower grades for excessive absences or, in extraordinary cases, to withdraw students from the class. If you must miss class for an unavoidable reason, please let me know in advance.

*Credit hours:* The Department’s credit hour policy on graduate courses is to award 5 credit hours for courses that meet for the equivalent of 3 periods of 50 minutes each week. Students enrolled in HIST 502 are expected to devote at least two hours each week, *in addition to regular reading and writing assignments*, to research on their prospectus topics.

*Academic Honesty:* All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester's Academic Honesty Policy. More information is available at: [www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/](http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/). You are encouraged to discuss course readings and assignments with your fellow students. However, all written work must be done independently and not in collaboration with another.

**Accommodation and Support**

*Accommodations:* I encourage you to talk with me about any concern or situation that affects your ability to complete your academic work successfully. Students requiring accommodations should contact Office of Disability Resources in Taylor Hall, 585-276-5075. For information about the process, please see <https://www.rochester.edu/college/disability/>. Additional resources are available through the Learning Center, 1-154 Dewey Hall, 585-275-9049. You can learn more about them at: <https://www.rochester.edu/college/learningcenter/graduate/index.html>.

*Writing Help:* We will discuss each writing assignment in detail. I am also always willing to talk about writing assignments individually: to help you plan an essay, work through the process, or go over a past paper. Another very useful resource is the U of R Writing, Speaking, and Argument Center, which is dedicated to helping writers at all skill levels to improve. You can schedule an online appointment with a writing tutor at <https://writing.rochester.edu/tutoring/virtual-tutoring.html>.

**Assignments**

The core of the course will be the dissertation proposal, the purpose of which is to demonstrate the feasibility and significance of your project. Per the graduate handbook, “the dissertation proposal should explain the significance and originality of the proposed topic. It includes a statement of justification, a working argument, hypothesis, or set of questions to be answered, a preliminary bibliography and primary source list, and a tentative chapter outline and plan of work. Proposals generally range in length from 15 to 20 pages of narrative in addition to the bibliographies.” We will discuss the various components of the proposal at length.

**The department’s schedule for the prospectus is below:**

* March 1 – prospectus draft due to advisor
* First week of April (April 3-7) – final draft due to advisor and committee members
* Defense must be scheduled by April 15 (in practice by April 14)
* Third week of April (April 17-21) – prospectus defense

**For the purposes of this class, there will also be a number of other assignments.** Some of these are intended to facilitate our class discussions. Some of them will familiarize your audience (this class) with your materials in a way that should allow us to respond more effectively to your work. All of them should help your research project evolve over the course of the semester.

**List of assignments:**

1. Identify and read two articles that are close to your dissertation topic and write a three-page essay on how the authors’ arguments, sources, and methodology are similar to and different from your planned work. Your essay should be emailed to me and other seminar participants by 5pm on **Friday, Jan 27.**
2. Prepare a one-page abstract on your dissertation topic. This should be emailed to me and other seminar participants by 5pm on **Friday, Feb 3.**
3. Read (at least) three doctoral dissertationsthat are close to your topic. You will then compare them to published books based on these works to see how the author’s arguments, organization, and style have changed over time. A five-page analysis of this exercise should be circulated essay needs to be circulated electronically to other seminar participants by 5pm on **Friday, Feb. 10**.
4. Prepare a list of archives and research libraries that you intend to use in your dissertation research and email to all by 5pm on **Friday, Feb. 10**.
5. Write an essay that discusses (1) the secondary literature related to your topic, (2) how your work will contribute to the historical debate on the theme that you are researching; and (3) the methodology you intend to employ in analyzing your sources. Your essay should be emailed to all by 5pm on **Friday, Feb 17.**
6. Email a ***blank*** funding application to all by 5pm on **Friday, Feb 17.**
7. Complete all sections of a relevant funding application and email to all by 5pm on **Friday, Feb 17.**
8. Email your C.V. to all by 5pm on **Friday, Feb 17.**

**Grading**

Participation and attendance: 35%

Minor writing assignments 20%

Dissertation prospectus: 45%

**January 23: Identifying and focusing on a topic**

In this first meeting, we’ll talk each student’s current stage in identifying a dissertation topic, a committee, and the timetable for completing and defending the prospectus. We’ll also talk about the structure of the prospectus and of the defense.

**January 30: Main arguments**

Professor Flores will join us to discuss identifying major themes and arguments. What are the main arguments that you are trying to tackle in your dissertation? How have scholars addressed these questions? What is new about your approach to this subject? How will your research contribute to a greater understanding of the issues that you are exploring?

***Reading:***

* David Hollinger, “Historians and the Discourse of Intellectuals,” in *New Directions in American Intellectual History*, ed. John Higham and Paul Conkin(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1979), 42-63.
* George I. Sánchez, “Educational Crisis in Mexico,” *Butrava* 6 (1942): 4-7.

***Writing:*** Identify and read two articles that are close to your dissertation topic and write a three-page essay on how the authors’ arguments, sources, and methodology are similar to and different from your planned work. Your essay should be emailed to me and other seminar participants by 5pm on Friday, Jan 27.

**February 6: Identifying Sources, Databases, and Archives**

We’ll discuss how to think about source collections with Professor Sierra and then we’ll will meet with Lara Nicosia, History Resource Librarian, about advanced approaches to identifying sources and databases that you can access in this stage of your dissertation work as well as possible research libraries and archives that might prove useful later on.

***Reading:***

* Pablo Sierra Silva, *Urban Slavery in Colonial Mexico: Puebla de los Ángeles, 1531-1706* (Cambridge: CUP, 2018)

***Writing:***

* Prepare a one-page abstract on your dissertation topic. This should be emailed to me and other seminar participants by 5pm on Friday, Feb 3.

**February 13: Methodologies and Working in Archives**

Professor Raz will join us to discuss research strategies. We will also talk about your lists of sources, databases, and archives and your essays on dissertations close to your topic and the subsequently published monographs.

***Reading:***

* Mical Raz, Between the Ego and the Icepick: Psychosurgery, Psychoanalysis and Psychiatric Discourse *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 2008, 82 (2): 387-420.
* Mical Raz, Psychiatrists and the Transformation of Juvenile Justice in Philadelphia, 1965-72*,* *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 2018 Volume 73, Issue 4: 437–463.
* Mical Raz, Treating Addiction or Reducing Crime? Methadone Maintenance and Drug Policy under the Nixon Administration, *Journal of Policy History,* 2017, 29(1): 58–86

***Writing:***

* Your essay should be emailed to me and other seminar participants by 5pm on Friday, Feb 10.
* Prepare a list of archives and research libraries that you intend to use in your dissertation research.

**February 20: Review of the Literature and Methodologies**

With Professor Lenoe, we will discuss the essays on the secondary literature related to your research topic and methodological approaches to your topic.

***Reading:***

* Matthew Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses: Stalinist Culture, Social Revolution, and Soviet Newspapers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), introduction and conclusion.

***Writing:***

* Write an essay that discusses (1) the secondary literature related to your topic, (2) how your work will contribute to the historical debate on the theme that you are researching; and (3) the methodology you intend to employ in analyzing your sources. Your essay should be emailed to all by 5pm on Friday, Feb 17.

**February 27: Experiences in Writing a Prospectus, Research, and Articles 1**

We will discuss the process of writing a prospectus, doing archival research, writing the dissertation, and publishing a subsequent article broadly related to the topic.

***Reading:***

* Thomas Devaney, dissertation prospectus and book prospectus
* Thomas Devaney, “Spectacle, Community, and Holy War in Fourteenth-Century Cyprus,” *Medieval Encounters* 19.3 (2013): 300-41.
* Thomas Devaney, “Virtue, Virility and History in Fifteenth-Century Castile,” *Speculum* 88.3 (July 2013): 721-49.

***Writing:***

* Draft of Prospectus due to me, seminar participants, and dissertation advisor by March 1

**March 6: no class (spring break)**

**March 13: no class (Devaney at conference)**

**March 20: Revising the prospectus**

We will workshop everyone’s prospectus draft.

***Reading:***

* Your colleague’s drafts

**March 27: Experiences in Writing a Prospectus, Research, and Articles 2**

John Burden (PhD Yale) will join us for a conversation about the process of writing a prospectus, doing archival research, writing the dissertation, and publishing a subsequent article broadly related to the topic.

***Reading:***

* John Burden, “Standardizing Penances in the Ottonian Empire: Goals, Methods, and Limits.” In *Standardization in the Middle Ages*, *vol. 2: Europe*, ed. Line Cecile Engh and Kristen Aavitsland. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, forthcoming 2023.

***Writing:*** Email a blankgrant application that you will be completing for Week #12 to all participants so that we can discuss them.

**April 3: From Prospectus to Book 1**

Professor Theobald will join us to discuss the process of turning the completed dissertation into a book.

***Reading:***

* Brianna Theobald, Reproduction on the Reservation: Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Colonialism in the Long Twentieth Century (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019).

***Writing:*** Final version of prospectus due to me and dissertation committee this week.

**April 10: Writing Grant Proposals**

We’ll talk about strategies for competitive applications with Professor Weaver and also discuss your completed grant applications.

***Reading:***

* Stewart Weaver, Carnegie Foundation proposal
* Stewart Weaver, Tatyana Bakhmetyeva, and Daniel Wayne Rinn, “Climate Witness: Oral Environmental History and Community-Based Research—A Case Study from Trans-Himalayan India,” *The Oral History Review* 49 (2022): 56-76.
* “Dr. Karen’s Foolproof Grant Template,” <http://theprofessorisin.com/2011/07/05/dr-karens-foolproof-grant-template/>

### Guide to Preparing Fellowship Applications, <https://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/professional-life/resources-for-graduate-students/graduate-school-from-start-to-finish/guide-to-preparing-fellowship-applications>

***Writing:***

1. Complete all sections of a relevant funding application and email to all by 5pm on Friday, Apr 7.
2. Email your C.V. to all by 5pm on Friday, Apr 7.

**April 17: From Prospectus to Book 2**

Professor Fleischman will discuss the process of turning the completed dissertation into a book.

***Reading:***

* Thomas Fleischman, Three Little Pigs: East Germany’s Green Revolution, 1945-2014, Weyerhaeuser Environmental Books, University of Washington Press, (2020), introduction.

**Writing:**

* Prospectus defense and oral qualifying examinations this week (these should be scheduled no later than April 14).

**April 24: last day of class**

Our goal for today will be to reflect on the prospectus and defense process as well as think about next steps as you launch into the dissertation.