

Historical Research Methods

COMM 7330-1 • Spring 2010 • T 6-9 p.m. • 2920 LNCO

*“What historians do ... is to interpret the past for the purposes of the present
with a view to managing the future.”*

—John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History*, p. 10

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Office hours: MW 3-4 p.m. and gladly by appointment.

Where’s my office? 2618 LNCO (at the end of the faculty office hallway).

Required:

- ▶ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). ISBN 978-0-19-517157-0.
- ▶ James D. Startt and Wm. David Sloan, *Historical Methods in Mass Communication* (Northport, Ala.: Vision Press, 2003). ISBN 1-885219-21-0.

Recommended:

- ▶ Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001). ISBN 978-0-8014-8560-2.

Overview

This course is designed to introduce you to historical inquiry and research methods within a communication context. We’ll focus on collecting, verifying, and interpreting evidence, as well as writing compelling historical narratives.

These elements will coalesce in a project of value to you. You and I will negotiate the exact form. Incremental assignments will build to your final project: for example, an essay exploring a methodological question to help you prepare for comps, a conference paper ready for submission, the methods chapter of your dissertation, or something of comparable practical and scholarly value.

We’ll consider: What is history? What principles guide interdisciplinary historical research? What roles do paradigms, theories, models, contexts, and viewpoints play in historical scholarship? What are the current methods of writing and researching communication history? What audiences are interested in this type of scholarship? What makes “good” communication history?

We’ll read a variety of reviews, articles, chapters, and books. Also, you’ll lead us in at least one discussion of assigned readings, and you’ll write a journal-quality scholarly review of a book that reflects your area of study.

Our Social Contract

Attendance:

- ▶ I expect your weekly presence and participation. If you have any problems or conflicts, just let me know.
- ▶ University policy online: <http://www.acs.utah.edu/sched/handbook/attend.htm>

Academic honesty:

- ▶ I assume your commitment to the Student Code and the academic integrity it promotes.
- ▶ Student Code online: <http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html>

Accommodations:

- ▶ I choose not to make accommodations in course content, requirements, or expectations.
- ▶ The policy online: <http://www.admin.utah.edu/facdev/index.html>
- ▶ Disability accommodation information: <http://www.sa.utah.edu/ds/>

Expectations:

You: Take responsibility for your learning and progress. That includes a sense of scholarly inquiry, consistent contributions to the success of our seminar, and commitment to a project that will contribute toward your degree.

I: Pledge to provide resources, guidance, substantive feedback, and honesty.

We: Are colleagues in learning, and our collaboration makes this a seminar.

Assignments:

	Percent of course grade
▶ Participation/contributions	(10)
▶ Lead discussion on reading(s)	(15)
▶ Book review reflecting your area of study	(25)
▶ Your project	
• Idea	
• Proposal	(10)
• Draft	(10)
• Final version	(30)

Assignment formats and styles:

- ▶ Submit assignments on paper on the days due.
- ▶ Double-space your text. Indent the first line of each paragraph by 0.5 inch. Don't add extra space between paragraphs. Use a serifed font like Cambria or Times New Roman. Use 12 pt. type.
- ▶ Most history journals follow Chicago style. However, you should use the style appropriate for your specific application (dissertation, target publication, etc.). Whatever you use, be consistent and accurate.

Week by Week Guide

- ▶ Life's unpredictable, so this will likely change.
- ▶ Read each assignment *by* the day listed.
- ▶ Unless otherwise noted, readings are on Blackboard/WebCT in the Readings folder (organized by subject).

Come prepared to contribute a *verbal* analytical reading form (see version on Blackboard)—or a less formulaic but constructive reaction—for each reading. Please be ready share a few minutes of your thoughts, ideas, reactions, etc.

1. **Tuesday, Jan. 12** Syllabus, schedule; introductions, info sheets.
Read: Gaddis, Chs. 1-3.
Discussion: Informally share areas of interest.

2. **Tuesday, Jan. 19** Overview of historical method.
Read: Gaddis, Chs. 4-8.
Sign up: To lead article discussions.

3. **Tuesday, Jan. 26** Overview of historical method.
Read: “What is History About” (Slatta); “Power of History” (Appleby).
Discussion: Paradigm Chart (in Resources folder).
Due: Project idea—2-3 pp. describing your area of interest, including 3-4 *preliminary* research questions (ungraded).

4. **Tuesday, Feb. 2** Perspective and bias.
Read: “Bias in Historical Description” (McCullagh); “Objectivity and Historicism” (Kloppenbergr).
Discussion: The “objectivity” question.

5. **Tuesday, Feb. 9** Evidence and verification.
Read: Startt and Sloan:
 Ch. 7, “Historical Sources and Their Evaluation”;
 “Truth and Causation” (Barzun and Graff).

6. **Tuesday, Feb. 16** Evidence and verification.
Read: “Past is a Foreign Country” (Lowenthal); “Image and Artifact” (Sandweiss).

7. **Tuesday, Feb. 23** Issues of historical method—How-to.
Read: Startt and Sloan:
Ch. 4, “Basic Procedures and Techniques”
Ch. 5, “Searching for Historical Materials”
Ch. 8, “Explanation in History”
“Method of History” (Yodelis-Smith).
Due: Project proposal.
- Tuesday, March 2** NO CLASS—Glen at ethics conference.
8. **Tuesday, March 9** Issues of historical method—State of the discipline.
Read: “Where Have All the Historians Gone?” (Sterling and Keith).
Discussion: IRB and history?
9. **Tuesday, March 16** Issues of historical method—Interdisciplinarity.
Read: “Toward a Troubleshooting Manual” (Schudson).
Due: Book review.
- Tuesday, March 23** NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK.
10. **Tuesday, March 30** Theory and models.
Read: “Black Bicycle Corps” (Mangun); “Hypodermic Model History” (Bineham).
Discussion: Use of theory in history.
11. **Tuesday, April 6** *Guest speaker:* Professor Marouf Hasian.
Read: “On the Use and Abuse of History for Life” (Nietzsche); “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” (Foucault).
12. **Tuesday, April 13** Writing and narrative.
Read: Startt and Sloan: Ch. 9, “Writing”;
“Breaking Stones” (Forde); “How to Write Journalism History” (Copeland); “Hell of a Place” (Cone).
Discussion: Writing as a hydrofoil.
Due: Project draft.
13. **Tuesday, April 20** Presentations on your research.
14. **Tuesday, April 27** Presentations on your research.
- Tuesday, May 4** **Due:** Project final version—in my mailbox by 4 p.m.