

HIST 494: Honours Seminar

Simon Fraser University

Spring 2018



Meetings: Fridays 1:30–5:20 pm, AQ 5046

Canvas: <https://canvas.sfu.ca/courses/37256>

Coordinator: Dr. Tina Adcock (tina.adcock@sfu.ca)

Office hours: Wednesdays and Fridays 12:00–1:00 pm, AQ 6236

Course description

This iteration of the Honours Seminar builds on successful foundations developed by Drs. Bidisha Ray and Sarah Walshaw over the last several years. It has four aims:

- To continue cultivating a sense of intellectual community among Honours students in the Department of History, a process begun in HIST 400;
- To cultivate a sense of intellectual community between Honours students and senior members of the Department of History, especially faculty members;
- To give each student time and space to explore empirical case studies and historiographical, theoretical, methodological, or professional approaches and issues within the discipline of history and the historical profession of special or pressing interest;
- To undertake a set of term-long research projects as a cohort, the fruits of which will be presented and celebrated at a Departmental reception at the end of the term.

Learning objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able:

- To discuss select empirical case studies and historiographical, theoretical, methodological, or professional approaches or issues within the discipline of history and the historical profession;
- To practice the skill of framing intelligent questions and comments about scholarly materials and topics beyond your particular specialization(s);
- To design, in consultation with others, an appropriate term-length archival research project, and to plan and prepare a poster based on your research into primary and secondary sources;
- To acquire and/or hone skills associated with the effective visual presentation of scholarly sources and arguments;

- To practice and hone the skills of analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating primary and secondary sources in oral and written forms, and in tandem with your peers.

Course organization

Each week of the seminar will include the following components:

- An “Hour of Power,” in which students will take turns choosing scholarly material relevant to their intellectual interests generally, and/or their Honours thesis specifically, and leading discussions based on that material;
- “Historians at Work,” in which History faculty members and special guests will visit the seminar and discuss some aspect of their research or career. In weeks where no such visit occurs, we will learn about approaches or issues germane to seminar members’ research or interests;
- Dedicated time to work on term-length archival or other research projects.

Course readings

There are no required texts for this course. All readings will be made available on, or will be linked to from the course’s Canvas website.

Readings should be completed for the date under which they are listed. To give our meetings the best chance of success, please ensure that you allow sufficient time to read all assigned pieces carefully and critically each week.

Course evaluation

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Participation	15%
Discussion leadership	10%
Critical reading responses	30%
Archival research project:	
First draft & peer review	5%
Final draft	25%
Critical processual reflection	15%

Participation

Please plan to attend every meeting. If you have to be absent unexpectedly, please let me know as a courtesy. If you know in advance that you will have to miss a meeting (i.e. due to religious observances/practices, athletic competitions, interviews for professional programs), please let me know as soon as possible.

Please come to class with hard copies of the readings, or with the files easily accessible on a laptop or tablet. You should be prepared to reflect critically on readings and other material that we shall encounter. I also expect you to listen to guests and peers and engage with their viewpoints, and to practice expressing your ideas and arguments clearly, concisely, and convincingly.

As part of your participation in this course, you are expected to do the following:

- **Prepare for and participate in seminar discussions.** You should come to class prepared to discuss the thesis and main arguments of each reading. You should also consider, as best you can, the merits and demerits of each reading's engagement with and proposed contributions to the scholarly literature, its theoretical/methodological approaches, and its use and deployment of evidence and source material. You may also wish to reflect upon how these readings shed relevant light upon current events or issues, or connect usefully to material you have learned in other courses. If you are reading material assigned by faculty guests, you should prepare one or two questions to ask them during their visit.
- **Assign material(s) for and lead one "Hour of Power" discussion,** for which you will sign up at our first meeting. I will outline the expectations related to this task in a separate handout.

I also encourage you to participate in the intellectual life of the Department by **attending monthly colloquia** (held the third Thursday of each month from 10:30–12:00 in AQ 6229) **and special presentations** such as the Mirhady Endowed Lecture (February 8), the Ian Dyck Memorial Lecture (March 15), and the "Violence, Victims, Extremism" panel (April 5). You may also wish to attend events hosted by other cognate departments or units at SFU (e.g. the Centre for the Comparative Study of Muslim Societies and Cultures, the Centre for Scottish Studies) that align with your intellectual interests. I will do my best to notify you of events that may be of interest to one or more of you.

For each such event you attend, you may (but are not required to) submit a **critical reflection**, approximately 1-2 pages long, that engages with the event's content in some way. For each such reflection you submit, up to a maximum of three reflections on three separate events, you will receive **extra credit for participation**. Reflections should be uploaded to Canvas, and should be submitted no more than a week after the event takes place. They will not be graded, but should be of a standard similar to work you would submit to be graded in this or other senior-level courses, i.e. well written, logically argued, and virtually free of typos or grammatical errors.

Course assignments

Over the course of the term, you will write **three critical reading responses**. Each should use one or more readings from a particular week as a jumping-off point. You may choose to respond solely to the assigned reading or readings; in that case, you should prepare your response before that week's meeting and submit it before the beginning of class. Or you may choose to reflect on the discussion inspired by that reading or readings as well as its content; in that case, you should upload your response to Canvas within one week of the relevant meeting. Each reading response should be **2-4 pages long**. If you wish, you may submit four responses, and I will drop the lowest grade. I will provide further information about this set of assignments on a separate handout.

Your principal assignment in this course will be an **archival research project**, which you will undertake either individually or in pairs, as you prefer. Early in the semester, you will select one or more collections of primary sources, held at SFU or elsewhere, upon which your project will be based. You will then upload a **1-page statement of intent** (for SFU-based projects) or **proposal of work** (for non-SFU-based projects) to Canvas no later than **Monday, January 15**. This will not

be graded. Following an orientation to working in special collections and archives, you will have some class time each week to work on your project. We will have an **informal check-in on Friday, February 9**, at which each person or pair will present a brief report on their project and its progress to date, including both their successes and challenges. We will celebrate the former and brainstorm collectively about ways in which you might overcome the latter.

You will bring a **first draft of your poster** to our meeting on **Friday, March 16**. It is vital that you complete this draft on time, as that day in class you will be trading drafts with a classmate or pair of classmates. Each of you will critique the other's draft in class, using guidelines I will provide. In order to obtain the 5% of your course grade assigned to this exercise, you must submit a draft poster for review **and** complete a peer review of another poster. You will need to upload a copy of your draft poster and your peer review to Canvas by the end of that day, so that I can refer to them when reading and grading your final draft and allied critical processual reflection.

Having considered your peer reviewer's (or reviewers') comments, you will then incorporate whatever changes you believe are necessary into your final draft. You must upload the **final draft of your poster** to Canvas by **Monday, April 2**. I will arrange to have them printed in time for the departmental event at which they will be displayed, and at which you will present them to faculty members, graduate students, and other members of the Department. The date of this event is yet to be confirmed, but it will likely take place on **Thursday, April 5** or **Friday, April 6** around midday.

On or before **Monday, April 9**, you should also submit a **critical processual reflection** on the experience of undertaking this research project, and of working in physical or virtual archives. Even if you choose to work with a partner, you should still each submit a separate reflection, although I realize that the content may overlap. To assist in this endeavour, I suggest you keep a regular log or diary during the term of your work on this project. You will also situate your endeavours within the context of at least some of the critical material we will read and hear about archives and special collections; I will provide a short list of suggested readings for those who wish to engage more deeply with this multidisciplinary body of scholarship. The reflection should be **5-6 pages long** but I will accept reflections of up to 10 pages, if you are feeling inspired or enthusiastic.

Policies regarding assignments

Please submit assignments as follows:

- Critical reflections on Departmental or other events (optional): Upload to Canvas
- Critical reading responses: Upload to Canvas
- Statement of intent/proposal of work: Upload to Canvas
- First draft of poster: Bring hard copy to class **and** upload a copy to Canvas
- Peer review of another person's/pair's poster: Upload to Canvas
- Final draft of poster: Upload to Canvas
- Critical processual reflection: Upload to Canvas

For all assignments except your poster (for which I will provide instructions separately), please include your name, the date, and some kind of descriptive title on the first page. A separate title page is not necessary. Please also number the pages of the assignment. All assignments must be word-processed, using standard 1-inch margins, at least 1.5-inch spacing, and 11- or 12-point font. Please use Chicago style (notes and bibliography) for footnotes or endnotes, and for lists of works cited. If you need a refresher on this style of citation, here is a quick general guide: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

I am committed to helping you succeed in this course. I understand that personal, medical, or other circumstances sometimes arise that inhibit your ability to submit the best work of which you are capable. If this should happen to you, I will entertain requests for extensions of a reasonable length, i.e. normally no more than 3 business days. Extensions must be requested at least a day in advance of an assignment's due date. However, I cannot grant extensions for the first or final drafts of the poster, or for the peer review of the first draft, due to their collaborative or time-sensitive natures. Please get in touch with me as soon as possible if you anticipate any problems meeting the deadlines for these course components.

If no arrangement for an extension has been made, a late assignment will have **3%** of its final mark subtracted for each day it is late, including weekends, up to a maximum of **seven days** or **21%**. After that point, assignments will not be accepted except by prior arrangement.

Academic honesty

By enrolling in classes at SFU, you have consented to a student contract that includes a commitment to academic honesty:

<http://www.sfu.ca/students/calendar/2015/spring/fees-and-regulations/student-contract/academic-honesty.html>

It is your responsibility to ensure that you understand what constitutes academic dishonesty, which includes but is not limited to plagiarism. This guide clarifies what actions are considered academically honest and dishonest at SFU:

<http://www.sfu.ca/students/academicintegrity/resources/academichonestyguide.html>

Classroom etiquette

Please arrive to class in a timely fashion. Please also do not leave the room during our meeting unless it is physically unavoidable. We will have one or more breaks each week in which you can go to the washroom, fill your water bottle, get food or coffee, make phone calls, and so on.

Please turn your cell phones to silent and refrain from using them during class. Feel free to use your laptop, tablet, or netbook to take notes or look up things of relevance to our discussions, but please don't use such devices in ways (Facebook, YouTube, online shopping etc) that will disrupt the attention of others around you. This is particularly important in a seminar setting.

I may make changes to the syllabus during the term. I will notify you promptly if I do so. You will always be able to find the most recent version of the syllabus on the course's Canvas homepage.