

SYLLABUS: HISTORY 440
SENIOR RESEARCH PROJECTS

1. Course Description¹: HIST 440 Senior Research Project. (1) An historical inquiry culminating in a capstone project and presentation that demonstrates command of historical research methods, prepared under the supervision of a faculty member. Required of all Option 1 and Option 3 majors. Prerequisite: senior standing and permissions from the departmental chairperson and instructor.

2. Course Rationale: Students need a common academic experience at the conclusion of their undergraduate academic career. HIST 440 emphasizes active learning that is student-driven but guided by a faculty mentor; it promotes the further development of students' understanding of historical thinking and historical methodology. Working in conjunction with their faculty mentor, they will apply what they have learned to complete a capstone project. The individual supervision of a faculty member provides opportunities for tutorials that are beneficial for both the student and faculty member.

3. Course Objectives:

A. Knowledge Objectives. The student will acquire a better understanding of subject matter previously dealt with in an advanced course.

B. Skill Objectives. By the end of the course, the student should be able to:

- **identify and understand** the key components of historical thinking—how theories and context influence the various ways historians think about historical episodes and construct their interpretations
- **identify and understand** historical methodology—how historians use primary and secondary sources to establish historical facts and interpretations of historical events, developments, trends, and/or actors.
- **apply** historical methodology to **evaluate** historical evidence in order to construct and support persuasive arguments
- **explain** their own ideas and interpretations of historical events, developments, trends, and/or actors in an organized, logical, and persuasive fashion, in oral and/or written form

4. Course content and format: Due to the nature of this course, its content will vary. It is envisioned that this capstone project will be based upon subject matter previously dealt with in an advanced course. The student and faculty mentor will identify the topic and nature of the project. The student will do considerable additional reading and engage in

¹ **NOTE: THIS COURSE IS A UCC-21 TIER 3 “W” COURSE: SEE UCC-21 REQUIREMENTS AND INFORMATION BELOW**

an ongoing mutual interchange with their professor about the subject matter and historiography. These projects

- a. may include **the revision of a research paper or analytical essay previously completed by the student or research resulting in a power point or video project.**
- b. **Additionally, students will write a brief essay (300-400 words) on what they have learned about historical thinking and methodology while engaging in their project.**

5. Course Texts: Reading about research methods may include reference to:

- Jules R. Benjamin, A Student Guide to History, New York: St. Martin's 1991.
- Mark Hellstern, Gregory Scott, and Stephen Garrison, The History Student Writers' Manual, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998.
- Richard Marius, A Short Guide to Writing About History, New York: HarperCollins, 1995.

6. Methods of evaluating student performance: Rubrics will be used to guide the process of assessing the diverse projects undertaken by students and their reflective essays.

7. Evaluation of the course: Regular evaluation procedures are not useful for courses involving one-to-one contact, so the course may be evaluated by any of the following: by instructor and student in their discussions, by faculty learning from previous individual supervision of capstone experiences, through peer evaluation of course materials and faculty-student interactions, and through faculty discussion of cumulative departmental management of previous capstone experiences.

UCC-21 Tier 3 “W”

HIST 440 is a **capstone course for History majors**. It provides the students with the opportunity to engage in an active learning process that is student-driven but guided by a faculty mentor. Students work one-on-one with their faculty mentor. This experience emphasizes student acquisition of historical knowledge and an understanding of historical thinking and methodology. **This course enables students to demonstrate that they are able to complete the transformation from *Experience to Action*.**

HIST 440 carries a “W” designation in the WISER+ model. The projects that constitute the Senior Research Project involve intensive writing. Students write drafts and revise their work based on feedback from their faculty mentor. In the case of power point presentations and video projects, students will write and revise the text for those projects based on feedback from their faculty mentor. The course provides students with the opportunity to work closely one-on-one with a faculty mentor whose comments and advice will help them to improve their writing skills. By promoting the development of collegiate-level writing skills, the course will fulfill the objective of the “W” designation

in the WISER+ model. The writing-intensive designation constitutes a continuous thread in HIST 440.

HIST 440 addresses the following cognitive skills:

UCC-21 Transformations	Experience to Information	Information to Knowledge	Knowledge to Judgment	Judgment to Action
Cognitive Skills	1. Recognize the importance of context	2. Analyze data to reveal existing patterns of information or to create new patterns	3. Use multiple sources of information and knowledge in forming judgments	4. Communicate effectively—in oral, visual, and written modes, and in more than one language (natural and/or symbolic)

In summary, students engage in a focused learning experience in which they explore a topic at greater length and in greater depth than is possible in other courses. Thus, students learn advanced methods of inquiry and research that structure the highest levels of disciplinary work in history. Secondly, **students are asked to complete a major research project that culminates in a substantial written work** or its equivalent in a other format. The project is student-driven and enables students to utilize and demonstrate their grasp of skills developed over the course of their studies and to draw on the information and experience they have gained from their previous course work. In this way, students are able to call upon and further develop the skills they have learned to produce a major piece of writing that will stand as the culmination of their undergraduate careers. The course also asks **students to create a smaller written assignment, a “reflective essay” where they are given the explicit task of reflecting on their development as history majors.** Together, these requirements provide the opportunity for students to present and reflect on their own personal development. Given the nature of these written assignments and the fact that the production of written texts is the one of the main ways that history majors take action in the world, HIST 440, by its very nature, fulfills the Tier 3 requirement that students demonstrate their ability to write at an advanced college level.

C. Assessment

The HIST 440 instructor will gather data from *three* sources.

First, the instructor will employ a rubric used to assess the student’s writing abilities. This rubric will evaluate the student’s ability to 1) present a clear, effective argument or interpretation, 2) develop the student’s argument or interpretation in a persuasive fashion, 3) organize the student’s material in a clear, effective manner, 4) employ proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation, and 5) employ proper source citation.

Second, the instructor will gather information from the reflective essay that students will write as part of this course. In this essay students will be asked to reflect upon their growth as a writer as a result of this course and the faculty mentor’s feedback.

Student learning outcomes will be assessed based on the semester-long project that the student has undertaken in conjunction with the designated instructor and an essay that asks students to reflect upon the process of completing that project.

The following chart outlines possible assessment methods for HIST 440.

UCC-21 Transformations	Cognitive Skills	Sample Assessment Methods (this is not an exhaustive list of assessment, but merely a list of potential methods of assessment)
Experience to Information	1. Recognize the importance of context	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research paper that requires students to place primary source documents in historical context 2. Essay based on historical documents (i.e. diaries, memoirs) that requires students to analyze those document in their historical context 3. Power point presentation that requires students to place primary source documents in their historical context 4. Video project that requires student to place primary source documents in historical context
Information to Knowledge	2. Analyze data to reveal existing patterns of information or to create new ones	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research paper that requires students to analyze data to reveal existing patterns of information (including historiography) or to create new ones 2. Essay based on historical documents (i.e. memoirs, diaries) that requires students to analyze data to reveal existing patterns of information or to create new ones 3. Power point presentation that requires students to analyze data to reveal existing patterns of information or to create new ones 4. Video project that requires students to analyze data to reveal existing patterns of information or to create new ones
Knowledge to Judgment	3. Use multiple sources of information and knowledge in forming judgments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research paper that requires students to use multiple sources of information to develop the thesis of their paper 2. Essay based on historical documents (i.e. diaries, memoirs) that requires students to use multiple sources to develop the thesis of their essay 3. Power point presentation that requires students to use multiple sources to develop the thesis of their presentation

<p>Judgment to Action</p>	<p>4. Communicate effectively— in oral, visual, and/or written modes, and in more than one language (natural and/or symbolic)</p>	<p>4. Video project that requires students to use multiple sources of information to develop the thesis of their video</p> <p>1. Reflective essay charting the student’s development (i.e. academic and personal) through the course of study</p> <p>2. Any of the above exercises that ask students to communicate their knowledge in written or visual form</p>
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