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American Public University System

The Ultimate Advantage is an Educated Mind

**School of Arts and Humanities
HIST 691
Independent Study: Research Proposal**

**3 Credit Hours
8 Weeks**

Graduate students are required to have completed all core and concentration courses prior to enrolling in this Capstone course.

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Instructor Information

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Course Description

Preparation for the Master of Arts in History Capstone (Thesis) seminar begins on day one of a student's graduate program of study. The theories, research methods and analytical skills, and substantive knowledge obtained through their master's curriculum provide the basis for the thesis project. Students are required to develop primary and secondary source materials on their research topic and address the writing requirements as described in the syllabus and classroom assignments. The thesis proposal must provide a clear description of a question or problem and a proposed method of answering the question or solving the problem. Guidance on the

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format of the research proposal and a sample proposal are contained in the APUS Thesis Manual. Students may not take the thesis seminar until all other courses are successfully completed.

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Course Scope

HIST 691 is an eight week course. It is designed to enable you to fully flesh out the focus of your intended thesis for use in HIST699 and develop an initial proposal. It will also allow you to explore the historiography of your subject as you research for your formal thesis literature review. Lastly, it will enable you to highlight/validate the interpretative originality of your thesis statement and project in general. Put simply, you will be able to frame your thesis questions in such a way that your work will augment the existing historiography of your subject, which is a key assessment of the thesis project in HIST699, or in any credible piece of scholarly research.

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Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Discern the purposes and types of historical research, the various methods and designs for a research proposal, and the steps in the research process.
2. Evaluate past and current research in order to formulate researchable problems related to the topic and thesis.
3. Justify the scope of the topic and significance of potential findings related to the proposal.
4. Develop a cogent introduction, review of the literature, and methodology pertaining to the specific research topic.
5. Write a complete research proposal and literature review for the thesis.

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Course Delivery Method

This course delivered via distance learning will enable you to complete academic work in a flexible manner, completely online. Course materials (Located in Resources in SAKAI) and access to the online learning management system (SAKAI) will be made available to you. Online assignments are due by Sunday evening of the week except as otherwise noted and include discussion questions (accomplished in Forums), examinations, and individual assignments submitted for review and evaluation by the Faculty Member. Assigned faculty will support the students throughout this course.

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Course Materials

REQUIRED TEXTS

Bui, Yvonne N. *How to Write a Master's Thesis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009.

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

OPTIONAL RESOURCES

Foner, Eric. *The New American History*. Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1997. (For US history concentration students)

Howell, Martha C., and Walter Prevenier. *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.

Presnell, Jenny L. *The Information-Literate Historian: A Guide to Research for History Students*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Marius, Richard. *A Short Guide to Writing about History*. New York: Longmans, 1999.

The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Turabian Citation Guide Online

http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html

IMPORTANT NOTE: The Department of History and Military Studies requires conformity with the traditional University of Chicago Style Manual and its Turabian offshoot. Citations will follow traditional endnote or footnote attribution. Do not use parenthetical (MLA) variation.

Copyright/Fair Use Notice: Electronic readings may be provided by way of licensed materials in the Online Library, but also in keeping with Fair Use exemptions for educational purposes under U.S. Copyright Law.

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Evaluation Procedures

Forum Assignments: 60% of your grade (6 Forum postings)

Building a thesis is often a solitary experience, but for one to excel it really requires input from multiple perspectives. In this class you will receive that from your fellow students and your advisor. You will gain the perspective of the other students in the class through four Forums. Respond to the Forum question(s) of the week in a main post that is at *minimum* 250 words and at *maximum* 500 words (exclusive of bibliographical information). Please see the Student Rubric for Forum Questions in the Resources section of the classroom.

I expect all posts to be thoughtful (making good, reasoned, well-written points), thorough (accurate and complete in its response), and insightful (a response that is on point, and relevant to the thesis element). The *minimum* length for a quality response to another student should be 100 words, with a *maximum* being 250 words.

Proposal and Literature Review: 40% of your grade

This is your formal presentation of your specific topic and thesis argument, along with a comprehensive list of primary and secondary sources.

Each student submits a proposal before officially beginning work on the thesis. Its purpose is to demonstrate to the thesis advisor and content specialist that the project is worth doing and manageable; that the research question is sound and worthwhile; that the thesis contains some element of originality; that the proposed method is appropriate to the research question; that the student has the requisite knowledge to carry out the method; that the student is conversant (or becoming conversant) with the appropriate literature bearing on the question; that significant primary sources can be obtained; and, that the scope of the project is reasonable for a master's thesis. Only when the thesis advisor officially approves the proposal may the student consider that he or she is formally working on a thesis.

Each thesis proposal also includes a literature review. It tells your audience what we already know about your specific subject (what other historians have published), and where specifically you will be making an original argument and contribution to the field. You accomplish this with the proposal, and also a very detailed list of all relevant primary and secondary sources. The Proposal and Literature Review should be between 500 and 1000 words, not including your bibliographical listing at the end of primary and secondary sources.

Upon the successful completion of this class you will then be ready to take HIST 699. The first major assignment in HIST 699 is the Proposal and Literature Review. You will use the recommendations from your fellow students and your advisor in this class to revise your work for HIST 699.

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Overview of Course Assignments

| Grade Instruments | Points | Percentage |
|---|------------|-------------|
| Week 1: Forum #1, Introductions Forum and Time Period | 10 | 10% |
| Week 2: Forum #2, Time Period Historiography | 10 | 10% |
| Week 3: Forum #3, Topic Historiography | 10 | 10% |
| Week 4: Forum #4, Original Argument | 10 | 10% |
| Week 5: Forum #5, Primary Sources and Archives 1 | 10 | 10% |
| Week 6: Forum #6, Primary Sources and Archives 2 | 10 | 10% |
| Week 8: Proposal and Literature Review | 40 | 40% |
| Total | 100 | 100% |

Please see the [Student Handbook](#) to reference the University's grading scale

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Course Outline

| Week | Topic | Readings and Videos | Assignments |
|---|----------------------------------|---|--|
| <p>Week 1: (Course Objectives 1-4)</p> | <p>Welcome and Topic Sharing</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bui: Overview of the master's degree, Selecting a research Topic • Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct • Chicago Manual of Style primer. Look in the Resources tab in the classroom. • Read Academic Dishonesty Policy. Look in the Resources tab in the classroom. | <p>Forum #1: In a minimum of 250 words, explain your academic and professional background and how this course fits into your objectives. Be sure to include what APUS program you are in and what APUS or other graduate courses you have taken.</p> <p>Also, describe the general topic and time period you are considering for your thesis.</p> <p>Finally, attest to the AMU/APU Honor Code in the Introduction Forum by reading and replying with your typed signature.</p> <p>Post your initial response to the Forum by THURSDAY. Respond to at least two other students by SUNDAY of Week 1.</p> |

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| Week | Topic | Readings and Videos | Assignments |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <p>Week 2: (Course Objectives 1-4)</p> | <p>Time Period Historiography</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bui: Using the literature, Conducting ethical research • Graduate Rubric • The Graduate Guide. <i>Look in the Resources tab in the classroom.</i> | <p>Forum #2: Based on your response in Week 1, research and write a historiographical synopsis on your period of interest that identifies key historians, their writings, and their changing interpretations over time.</p> <p>Remember you are researching <i>broad</i> historiographical trends, and not specifics related to your thesis.</p> <p>Post your initial response to the Forum by THURSDAY. Respond to at least two other students by SUNDAY of Week 2.</p> |

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| Week | Topic | Readings and Videos | Assignments |
|---|---------------------------------|---|---|
| <p>Week 3: (Course Objectives 1-4)</p> | <p>Topic Historiography</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bui: How to write chapter one, How to write chapter two | <p>Forum #3: What specific person, movement, or topic that existed in your time period are you interested in exploring for your thesis?</p> <p>Who are the main historians who have written about your specific interest? Provide a historiographical analysis on how their interpretations have changed over time on this specific topic.</p> <p>Remember now you are looking as the <i>specific</i> topic for your thesis, and how its historiography fits into the general trends identified last week.</p> <p>Post your initial response to the Forum by THURSDAY. Respond to at least two other students by SUNDAY of Week 3.</p> |

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| Week | Topic | Readings and Videos | Assignments |
|---|--------------------------|---|--|
| <p>Week 4: (Course Objectives 1-4)</p> | <p>Original Argument</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bui: How to write chapter three, How to write chapter four • Watch this example of How to create a literature review • Primary and Secondary Sources. What is the difference? | <p>Forum #4: Writing a master’s thesis requires an original argument. Based on what you have read and discussed in the first three weeks of this class, how might you approach your topic in a unique way?</p> <p>Consider the following questions and answer all that are most appropriate: Is there an area in which you disagree with the majority of historians? Is there an aspect of your topic that historians have not adequately explored? Which historians would agree and disagree with your interpretations? What additional research do you need to perform to explore your unique argument?</p> <p>Post your initial response to the Forum by THURSDAY. Respond to at least two other students by SUNDAY of Week 4.</p> |

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| Week | Topic | Readings and Videos | Assignments |
|---|--|---|---|
| <p>Week 5: (Course Objectives 1-4)</p> | <p>Primary Sources and Archives Part I</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bui: How to write chapter five, Final Formating • Ask a Librarian at the Library of Congress • Good Scholarship | <p>Forum #5: It is time to turn your attention to primary research, as this forms the core of the master’s thesis.</p> <p>What types of primary research have other historians who have written on your topic used? With this in mind, identify a body of primary research that you can use to support your topic.</p> <p>Also, find an archives that might contain original documents that would support your work. Contact an archivist there and inquire about the possibility of remote research, or if you can visit the archives (depending on your location). Inquire if they can email you container lists of relevant archival collections.</p> <p>Report back to the class the archives and archivist you contacted.</p> <p>Post your initial response to the Forum by THURSDAY. Respond to at least two other students by SUNDAY of Week 5.</p> |

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| Week | Topic | Readings and Videos | Assignments |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>Week 6: (Course Objectives 1-4)</p> | <p>Primary Sources and Archives Part II</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Primer. <i>Look in the Resources tab in the classroom.</i> • Resources for the Historical Profession from the American Historical Association | <p>Forum #6: Based on your initial explorations into primary research last week, and your continued investigations this week, present a comprehensive list of primary sources you plan to use for your thesis. How will these support your unique argument?</p> <p>Post your initial response to the Forum by THURSDAY. Respond to at least two other students by SUNDAY of Week 6.</p> |
| <p>Week 7: (Course Objectives 1-5)</p> | <p>Preparing Proposal and Literature Review</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Web Research. <i>Look in the Resources tab in the classroom.</i> • Deep Web Searching. <i>Look in the Resources tab in the classroom.</i> | <p>Work on Proposal and Literature Review</p> |
| <p>Week 8: (Course Objectives 1-5)</p> | <p>Submitting Proposal and Literature Review</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Turnitin Training • Review Turnitin for Students document. <i>Look in the Resources tab in the classroom.</i> | <p>Submit Proposal and Literature Review by Sunday of Week 8.</p> <p>You MUST post your Proposal to the Assignments list as a Word Document AND to the Proposal Forum to receive a grade.</p> |

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Policies

Please see the [Student Handbook](#) to reference all University policies. Quick links to frequently asked question about policies are listed below.

[Drop/Withdrawal Policy](#)

[Plagiarism Policy](#)

[Extension Process and Policy](#)

[Disability Accommodations](#)

Writing Expectations

Assignments completed in a narrative essay or composition format must follow the accepted guidelines of the American historical profession, which is the *Chicago Manual of Style*. This course will require students to use the citation and reference style established by Kate Turabian in *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), which is the most readily available distillation of the *Chicago Manual*. See [Chicago Style Manual](#).

The *Chicago Style Manual* for book-length works and its *Turabian* offshoot for research papers have long been the standard across all fields of study, as well as much of the publishing industry. These texts cover the layout and production gamut--including rules for chapter headings and subheadings, abbreviations, alphabetizing non-English names, and table design/designation.

1. Front matter--e.g., [title page](#), copyright statement, dedication, table of contents, lists of illustrations or tables, acknowledgements, [abstract](#).
2. Narrative with [scholarly attributions](#).
3. Back matter--[bibliography](#), appendices.

Citation and Reference Style

Students will follow the Turabian or Chicago Manual of Style as the sole citation and reference style used in written work submitted as part of coursework to the University.

History papers are distinguished by standardized notational schema. These display the primary and secondary sources being quoted or used in the construction. Your professors will certainly call for footnotes or endnotes, but also may request a formal bibliography:

[Footnotes](#), the primary focus in Turabian, are used to indicate the source of a quotation, paraphrase, or resources--as well as to add explanations or digressions outside the flow of the main narrative.

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Bibliography is a device at the end of the paper, which highlights the materials cited as a separate, alphabetized list in addition to the endnotes or footnotes.

Turabian and the *Chicago Manual* use sequential Arabic numbers. The numbers are normally collective and at the end of quotations, paraphrased sentences, or paragraphs for collected references. Note numbers:

- o May be in-line, but preferably set in raised [superscript](#).¹
- o Should come at the end of the paragraph and collectively account for the resources used. Do not insert for each sentence. The exception is if a short quotation is used within a paragraph. Then cite as appropriate for the information preceding the quotation, the quotation itself (after commas, quotations marks, periods, or other final diacritics), and at the end of the paragraph if needed for subsequent information.
- o Must follow one another in numerical order, beginning with 1 and running continuously throughout the paper.

For a full explanation go to: <http://www.apus.edu/Online-Library/tutorials/chicago.htm#notation>

Late Assignments

Because we strive to make this as near a physical classroom environment as possible, all students must adhere to the due dates listed in the course home page. Should you expect to have a problem meeting a deadline, you should notify me as soon as you are aware of the situation. Because of the nature of the Forums—they are to simulate actual discussions as if we were meeting together weekly and sharing in an actual physical setting—any submissions made past the posted due dates will NOT be graded unless prior arrangement is made with me. Any other late assignments will lose one letter grade per unexcused late day. If the final thesis is late, it receives a zero.

Netiquette

Online universities promote the advance of knowledge through positive and constructive debate--both inside and outside the classroom. Discussions on the Internet, however, can occasionally degenerate into needless insults and “flaming.” Such activity and the loss of good manners are not acceptable in a university setting--basic academic rules of good behavior and proper “Netiquette” must persist. Remember that you are in a place for the fun and excitement of learning that does not include descent to personal attacks, or student attempts to stifle the discussion of others.

- **Technology Limitations:** While you should feel free to explore the full-range of creative composition in your formal papers, keep e-mail layouts simple. The Educator classroom may not fully support MIME or HTML encoded messages, which means that bold face, italics, underlining, and a variety of color-coding or other visual effects will not translate in your e-mail messages.
- **Humor Note:** Despite the best of intentions, jokes and--especially--satire can easily get lost or taken seriously. If you feel the need for humor, you may wish to add “emoticons” to help alert your readers: ;-), :), ☺

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Disclaimer Statement

Course content may vary from the outline to meet the needs of this particular group.

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Online Library

The Online Library is available to enrolled students and faculty from inside the electronic campus. This is your starting point for access to online books, subscription periodicals, and Web resources that are designed to support your classes and generally not available through search engines on the open Web. In addition, the Online Library provides access to special learning resources, which the University has contracted to assist with your studies. Questions can be directed to librarian@apus.edu.

- **Inter Library Loans:** The University maintains a special library with a limited number of supporting volumes, collection of our professors' publication, and services to search and borrow research books and articles from other libraries.
- **Electronic Books:** You can use the online library to uncover and download over 50,000 titles, which have been scanned and made available in electronic format.
- **Electronic Journals:** The University provides access to over 12,000 journals, which are available in electronic form and only through limited subscription services.
- **Smarthinking:** Students have access to ten free hours of tutoring service per year through [Smarthinking](#). Tutoring is available in the following subjects: math (basic math through advanced calculus), science (biology, chemistry, and physics), accounting, statistics, economics, Spanish, writing, grammar, and more. Additional information is located in the Online Library. From the Online Library home page, click on either the "Writing Center" or "Tutoring Center" and then click "Smarthinking." All login information is available.

Request a Library Guide for your course (<http://apus.libguides.com/index.php>)

The AMU/APU Library Guides provide access to collections of trusted sites on the Open Web and licensed resources on the Deep Web. These are specially tailored for academic research at APUS:

- Program Portals contain topical and methodological resources to help launch general research in the degree program. To locate, search by department name or navigate by school.
- Course Lib-Guides narrow the focus to relevant resources for the corresponding course. To locate, search by class code (e.g., HIST500) or class name.

If a guide you need isn't available yet, let us know by emailing the APUS Library: librarian@apus.edu

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