

**Masters Seminar
History 5800
LSC Common Area- C214 (Fall) and C210 (Winter)
Tuesday: 2:35 to 4:25**

**Dr. Justin Roberts
McCain 1169
Available by Appointment**

This class designed to introduce students to the study and practice of history at graduate, professional, and faculty levels. This will be an advanced discussion seminar about historiographical, theoretical, ethical and methodological issues in the study of history. We will explore the epistemological ground on which historical knowledge is created, address the relationship between popular and academic history and ask what makes history unique as a discipline. We will also discuss practical research and writing strategies, approaches to sources and interpretations, pitfalls that you may encounter in your research, PhD applications, grant and conference applications, the ongoing Stokes seminar papers, your thesis proposal and the organization of conferences. Guests will attend some of the seminars to help you consider paths after the MA and the process of thesis writing as well as to introduce you to resources at the university. Some sessions will include writing workshops. Participation in the Stokes seminar will be a mandatory part of this seminar. We will meet for two hours each week throughout the academic year. All incoming M.A. students are expected to register for the course, as well as attend all sessions; a final PASS/FAIL will be assigned as a grade.

Attendance and Participation:

There are three musts here. You must attend and participate in every seminar. You must get your readings done carefully and fully before each session and be prepared for a discussion. You must notify me in advance if you are unable to attend a seminar session.

Oral Presentation Assignments

Historiography Presentation:

You will choose a significant historian from the last century who has worked or is working in a field that interests you. You will give a presentation to the seminar of that scholar's intellectual biography, situating them in their historical and historiographical context. You should consider some of the following questions as you develop your presentation. Where did they study and who were their influences? What major historical questions or problems were they concerned with? What did they argue? Were they involved in a major historiographical debate? Did they have a particular methodological approach or style? Did they tend to favor particular kinds of sources? How did they use them? Did they embrace a particular theoretical perspective? How did their work evolve or change over time? What influence did they have on your field? How was their work received? Pay attention to not only their work but also book reviews and discussions of their work. There is no need to go over fifteen minutes for this presentation. Questions will undoubtedly follow. These presentations will take place in the Winter semester after you have had a chance to begin your thesis research and after we have spent several months in this seminar discussing historiography.

Primary Source Presentation:

You will bring to the seminar a short excerpt or example of a primary source (visual, textual, material or auditory) that relates to your intended thesis research. Bring enough copies for everyone to share. Be prepared to give a short presentation on why this source interests you and how you intend to use it for your research. Explain how the source came into being and the difficulties that historians face in using this source or finding sources like this. Tell us how the source relates to your current research and the larger context in which it can be situated. Bring copies for everyone of a short bibliography of ten secondary sources that would help us better understand the context for this source. You may do this presentation during any class in either semester. Let me know one week in advance.

Required Texts:

Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*
[Available at the Dalhousie Bookstore]

John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past*
[Available in digital form through Dal Library or you can order a copy online]

Keith Jenkins, *Rethinking History*
[Available in digital form through Dal Library or you can order a copy online]

Excerpts from books not available online will be made available by the instructor.

Recommended Texts:

Niall Ferguson, *Virtual History*

Fall Semester

Week 1 September 6

Come prepared to discuss your research interests. We will get to know each other as a group and talk about the expectations for this course and for the MA program as a whole. We will also begin to examine the discipline of history and historical thinking. The following three readings will inform some of our discussion. Be sure to do them in advance.

Readings:

"Life as a Grad Student," Chapter 4 in *Becoming an Historian* (Canadian Historical Association)
<http://www.chashcacommittees-comitesa.ca/becoming%20a%20historian/chapterfour.shtml>

Jill Lepore, "Just the Facts, Ma'am: Fake memoirs, factual fictions, and the history of history"
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2008/03/24/just-the-facts-maam>

Anthony Grafton, "The Nutty Professors"
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/10/23/the-nutty-professors?currentPage=all>

Week 2 September 13

Readings:

Doris Kearns Goodwin, "How I Caused that Story"

<http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,197614,00.html>

Richard J. Evans, *In Defense of History*, 89-110.

Research assignments for this session:

1. Research carefully the controversy around Michael Bellesiles, *Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture* and come ready to create a history of the event as a group and analyse what was at stake and its outcome. There are many websites that discuss the controversy. Be careful. Some of the websites are more trustworthy than others. We will focus on this particular case.
2. Familiarize yourself as well with the details of the ethical controversies surrounding the work of David Abraham, Stephen Ambrose and Doris Kearns Goodwin.

Week 3**September 20****Readings:**

Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*: 1-39

Keith Jenkins, *Rethinking History*: 1-32.

We will explore research strategies and methodologies and general thesis writing strategies this week

Week 4**September 27****Readings:**

Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*: 40-65

Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*

[<http://faculty.washington.edu/heagerty/Courses/b572/public/StrunkWhite.pdf>]

This week we will have an in-class writing workshop. We will read excerpts from anonymous undergraduate papers and consider the best way to improve them. I will provide these in class.

We will also begin planning the graduate conference you will organize. We will work on this throughout the year.

Week 5**October 4****Readings:**

Keith Jenkins, *Rethinking History*: 33-83.

"Funding Graduate Study," Chapter 3 in *Becoming an Historian* (Canadian Historical Association)

<http://www.chashcacommittees-comitesa.ca/becoming%20a%20historian/chapterthree.shtml>

This week we will study academic conferences and funding and grant applications.

Week 6

October 11

No Class

**Week 7
October 18**

Readings:

Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*: 66- 112.

Elizabeth Lewis Pardoe, "Listen More, Judge Less: Lessons from Jim Grossman"
<http://histociety.blogspot.ca/2013/12/listen-more-judge-less-lessons-from-jim.html>

This week we will discuss PhD applications and the process of doing a PhD in History. We will also consider the job market for academic careers and about other possible pursuits after a PhD.

**Week 8
October 25**

Readings:

Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*: 113-196

Assignment:

Examine the History subject guide in the Dalhousie Library in advance of class.
<http://dal.ca.libguides.com/history?hs=a>

This week we will explore Dalhousie library resources and online databases that may be useful in your field.

**Week 9
November 1**

Readings:

Interviews with EP Thompson, Natalie Zemon Davis and CLR James in Henry Abelove, ed., *Visions of History*, 3-26, 97-122, 263-278.
[Available in digital form through Dal library]

Interviews with Historians: Carol Berkin
<http://earlyamericanists.com/2013/12/17/interview-with-historians-carol-berkin/#more-6412>

Explore several of the Interviews on the "Top Young Historians" list and pay attention to their personal anecdotes
<http://bonniekaryn.wordpress.com/top-young-historians/>

This week we will reflect on the differences between popular and academic histories and historians.

**Week 10
November 8**

No Class

Week 11
November 15

Readings:

Gaddis, *The Landscape of History*: 1-52

This week we will consider the drafting of your thesis proposals.

Week 12
November 22

Readings:

Gaddis, *The Landscape of History*: 53-152

Week 13
November 29

Readings:

Niall Ferguson, "Virtual History: Towards a 'Chaotic' Theory of the Past," in Ferguson, ed., *Virtual History*, 1-90.

Winter Semester

Week 14
January 10

Richard J. Evans, "What is History- Now?" in David Cannadine, ed., *What is History Now?* : 1-18.

Simon Schama, *Dead Certainties: Unwarranted Speculations*: 3-20, 319-327.

[optional: Finish reading section 1 of Schama: pages 21-72)

This week we will have a second session devoted to thesis proposals. Be prepared to discuss yours.

Week 15
January 17

This week we will have a second writing workshop and explore the elements of a strong thesis

Week 16
January 24

Martha C. Howell, "Technical Analysis of Sources," in Howell, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods*, 43-69.

This week we will have a session devoted to different kinds of primary sources and we will contrast and compare the use of quantitative and qualitative sources.

Week 17
January 31

This week we will ask, "What should I do after my History MA and what have I gained from graduate study?"

Week 18
February 7

Readings:

Explore "The Thesis Whisperer" blog
<http://thesiswhisperer.com/>

Recommended:

Joan Bolker, *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day: A Guide to Starting, Revising, and Finishing Your Doctoral Thesis*

This week we will talk about what to expect during your thesis research and writing and what to expect at the oral defense.

Week 19
February 14

Readings:

"Publishing your Work," Chapter 6 in *Becoming an Historian* [Canadian Historical Association]
<http://www.chashcacommittees-comitesa.ca/becoming%20a%20historian/chaptersix.shtml>

This week we will examine the process of academic publishing.

Week 20
February 21

No Class

Week 21
February 28

Readings:

Thomas Bender, "A Call for Reflection and Change, Again: The Education of Historians for the Twenty-First Century, Ten Years Later," *Perspectives*
<http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/january-2014/a-call-for-reflection-and-change-again-the-education-of-historians-for-the-twenty-first-century-ten-years-later>

This week we will consider how history is taught at the high school, undergraduate and graduate level and the future of the discipline both inside and outside universities.

Week 22
March 7

Student Historiography Presentations

Week 23
March 14

Student Historiography Presentations

Week 24
March 21

Student Historiography Presentations

Week 25
March 28

Student Historiography Presentations

Week 26
April 4

Student Historiography Presentations