

History 4/581: Understanding History Researching Latin American-U.S. Relations

Fall 2009
MW 1:30-3pm
Room: Michaelsen 204
Email: ervinm@cwu.edu

Instructor: Dr. Michael A. Ervin
Office: L&L 100M
Telephone: 963-1244
Office hour: MW 9-10:30am or by appt

Course Description

This course introduces students to the historian's craft through the development and completion of a research project related to Latin American-U.S. relations. We will begin with a general introduction to the work of history and to Latin American-U.S. relations in the modern period. The course will then focus on the process of selecting and carrying out a serious work of historical scholarship. By the end of the class, all students will have completed their own original research project on a topic of their choice related to Latin American-U.S. relations.

Course Outcomes

This course fulfills an essential requirement for all history majors. As a result, the class promotes a systematic engagement with the historian's craft in its many facets. By the end of the course, you should be able to, among other things:

- (1) Identify the most important events in Latin American-U.S. relations, and analyze their principal causes and consequences
- (2) Analyze and value the histories of Latin America and its peoples
- (3) Embrace the historian's craft of empathy and interpret sources from this perspective
- (4) Locate primary and secondary sources through the use of multiple finding aids
- (5) Distinguish between primary and secondary sources, and utilize them in developing your own critically arrived at original arguments
- (6) Identify the relationship between historical fact and interpretation
- (7) Compare and contrast opposing historical interpretations, and come to your own conclusions through a careful consideration of relevant materials
- (8) Organize, present, and communicate your own opinions in a thoughtful, coherent fashion in both oral and written form
- (9) Learn formal source citations and avoid plagiarism

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

I firmly believe that learning is not a passive process. Students must actively participate in order to foster life skills that go well beyond their knowledge of history. Thus, my teaching method is necessarily interactive. While there will be times for students to "listen and learn" during lectures, this class devotes most of its time to active participation and a dialogue between instructor and students. This will be done through regular class discussions and peer review of student writing. In the end, learning is achieved only through an active engagement with the course materials, the instructor, and fellow students alike.

Required Reading

This course requires two texts, which are available for purchase at the campus bookstore:

Strunk, William and E.B. White. *The Elements of Style*, 4th ed. (New York: Longman, 2000).

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

Grading

Your grade will be determined by attendance, class participation, and assignments related to a final research paper. Following is a breakdown of the grading scale:

Attendance	Pass/Fail
Class Participation	20%
Primary Source Analysis	10%
Annotated Bibliography	10%
Outline	10%
Rough Draft	20%
Final Draft	30%

While **attendance** does not count toward your participation grade, it does matter. The policy is simple: if you have more than five unexcused absences during the quarter, you fail the class.

Class participation is comprised of three elements. First, you will receive a grade for your performance during our class discussions. Again, attendance does not count toward your participation grade. You must ask questions, voice opinions, etc. in order to receive a good grade. Second, you will be assessed on the quality of your performance during peer review sessions, which comprise an important component of the class. You will be expected to provide useful and respectful critiques of your colleagues' work throughout the quarter. Finally, part of your participation grade will come from unannounced pop quizzes on the readings.

Please be aware that I take your participation very seriously. In fact, I may at my own discretion increase the percentage of participation in the final course grade if I feel that a student deserves it (i.e. participation could be worth 25% or even 30% of the final course grade). I will not do this to hurt your grade, only to help it.

The **primary source analysis** will be due Tuesday, October 20 by 5pm, and should be a three-page, typed, and double-spaced analysis of two primary sources that you have uncovered during the course of your research. Your essay should respond to the following question: How do the primary documents that you have chosen help support a broader thesis regarding the subject matter at hand? Your answers should address a number of related issues. Do the sources complement or contradict one another? What are the implications for your broader thesis? Where might you need corroborating evidence? What kinds of sources would provide corroboration? Your answers should include direct citations from the sources, and address the contexts (who, what, when, where, why) of each document.

