

HIST 590 B Prospectus Course
Department of History University of Washington
Spring 2013

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The main purpose of this credit/no credit course is to help students develop the skills they need to meet the Department of History's prospectus requirement, skills that should be useful for years to come whenever they apply for grants. In addition, the course aims to foster a supportive working relationship among members of the seminar, one that will, it is hoped, be useful during the process of research and writing the dissertation—and perhaps beyond!

Much of the time in class will be devoted to seeing how we can improve each others' drafts. We will do this sitting around the table with our laptops open. (If bringing a laptop poses difficulties, please let me know.) We will all share a Dropbox folder and each week upload what we have written at least 24 hours in advance (giving everyone a chance to read everyone else's work). Working in groups of three or four, we will discuss what the others have uploaded and try our hands at improving it. At the end of the class we will compare our work.

Week 1, April 1. Class does not meet.

On your own read the department statement on the prospectus requirement:
<https://depts.washington.edu/history/studying/graduate/phd/popups/prospectus.php>

In addition, read the advice given on the Harvard website:
http://www.gsas.harvard.edu/images/stories/pdfs/scholarly_pursuits_writing_fellowship_proposals_pre-diss.pdf go down to the section titled: WRITING THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL IN THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Week 2, April 8.

Read a dissertation in your field. As you read it, think about the following questions:

- 1) How does the dissertation differ from books that you have read on similar topics? If the dissertation was turned into a book, how do the two differ?
- 2) What did you learn about writing a dissertation--and about conceiving a dissertation topic--from reading the dissertation in question?

Write a one-page response to these questions that you upload to Dropbox at least a day in advance.

Week 3, April 15:

Read the short “sample dissertation fellowship proposal” in Dropbox and the lengthy dissertation prospectus written by Samuel Brenner, available at <http://www.samuelbrenner.com/Resume%20and%20Professional/Short%20Diss%20Prospectus.pdf>

Write a critique, no longer than two pages, on both the proposal and the prospectus. Distribute them as usual. Read each other's critiques before class.

Week 4, April 22

Write a 200 word abstract of your dissertation plus a short (1000 word) application for a fellowship to work on your dissertation. Distribute as usual. Each person should carefully edit four other students' work, to be assigned.

Week 5, April 29:

Write the literature review section of your prospectus in no more than 1500 words. In it situate your dissertation in relationship to one or two bodies of scholarship relevant to your project. Distribute as usual.

Week 6, May 6:

Write an essay of no more than 1000 words on the major primary sources for your project. Distribute as usual.

Week 7, May 13:

The four students presenting their prospectuses this quarter share their drafts with the other members of the class four days in advance and get feedback in preparation for their open presentations in week 8.

Week 8, May 20:

Attend the prospectus presentations

Week 9, May 27

Those who did not present in week 8 should distribute drafts of their prospectuses four days in advance and the rest of the class come ready to discuss them. Each person works particularly on four other ones.

Week 10, June 3:

Prepare a five-page (double-spaced) version of your prospectus intended for a fellowship application. Include a 200 word abstract and a one page bibliography (single-spaced) of primary sources. Bring to class written comments on four of your classmates' prospectuses and abstracts.