UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND AMERICAN STUDIES
AMST 485: AMERICAN STUDIES
Spring 2012

I. COURSE GOALS

It is the intention of the faculty of the Department of History and American Studies that the senior thesis allow its students to employ all the skills they have acquired during the course of their studies at the University of Mary Washington, especially the ability to:

- Conduct a self-directed study
- Explore American culture and society through a broad, diverse knowledge base.
- Read and assess primary and secondary sources from a variety of genres and media.
- Develop their analytical, speaking, and writing skills.

In addition to fulfilling the senior thesis requirement for the American Studies major, AMST 485 also counts for the Experiential Learning General Education Requirement and the Writing Intensive Requirement. As such, the following are also the experiential learning goals for this course:

- Students will be able to apply what was learned in coursework to new scenarios outside standard university courses
- Students will be able to identify their personal values and learning goals and direct themselves by creating personalized learning experiences that may include alternative means of learning
- Students will be able to clarify and refine their understanding of their strengths and weaknesses in content of relevant disciplines and in skills such as time management, organization, professionalism, and so forth
- Students will be able to recognize their knowledge and lack of knowledge
- Students will be able to connect their undergraduate experiences and their post-graduation lives

For writing intensive, they are the following:

- Demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of the varying strategies to convey arguments, main ideas and support/ evidence.
- Demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of the varying patterns of composition organization and development.
- Demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of the audience, the role of the writer, and rhetorical strategies.
- Demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of writing conventions and correctness.

II. COURSE FORMAT

Individual mentors, chosen by the student, direct each student paper, but the requirements for this course are the same for all students. The faculty of the Department has adopted a common syllabus for the course, including deadlines. Therefore, only the chairperson can grant a change in deadline for any of the assignments, and then only for the most extenuating of reasons.

Each mentor, however, establishes individual requirements for several aspects of the senior thesis process. ***It is the responsibility of each student to consult with his or her mentor to determine his or her expectations for the following:***

- Frequency of meetings and their scheduling.
- How the first submission of each assignment is graded.
- Penalties for inadequate first versions of papers.
- Whether electronic versions of completed assignments are allowed.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students must attend an introductory meeting with the chair on Tuesday, January 17 at 5 p.m. in Monroe 346. Students must also attend departmental workshops on their presentations in the last couple weeks of the semester (date and time TBA).

Over the course of the semester, the department requires each student to complete three papers.

The first assignment is a two-to-three page ***Proposal*** (appended to which is a comprehensive bibliography for the topic) due on Friday, January 27. The edited proposal will be returned to the student by Tuesday, January 31 and the final ***Proposal*** is due on Friday, February 3.

The second paper is an eight-to-ten page ***Literature Review*** due on Monday, February 20. The edited review will be returned to students by the following Monday, February 27; the final revised ***Review*** will be due on Friday, March 2.

The final assignment is the ***Senior Thesis*** itself. It must be ***thirty-to-forty pages long plus notes and bibliography.*** The finished research paper is due on Monday, April 2 (the title of the research paper and abstract are also to be sent

electronically on this date to history@umw.edu) and will be returned in edited form to students on Monday, April 9. The revised ***Research Paper*** is due on Monday, April 23.

NOTE: [An additional electronic copy of the final revised paper must be sent to history@umw.edu by the day of the Symposium.]

N.B.: The Senior Thesis must comport to the department's Style Guidelines (discussed below) and must contain an Abstract, a 100-150-word summary of the research paper. The Abstract is to be the second page, after the title page, of the final paper.

Rewrites. To encourage and facilitate further development of your writing skills, the department requires a rewrite of each assignment. **The first version of each assignment must be complete and polished, i.e. the first submission is not a rough draft.** Faculty mentors will then provide guidance and suggestions toward improving that version. It is within an individual instructor's prerogative to refuse to review an incomplete or late first submission. Again, each mentor will determine how he or she will use the first submission in determining the final grade for each assignment.

Bibliographic Format. All written work must conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*, the authoritative source for the form of bibliographic citation the department has adopted. This is the format required in HIST 299; no other format (e.g. MLA or APA) is acceptable. Students may consult Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, or an equivalent abridgement of the *Chicago Manual of Style*. [Note the most recent versions of the *Chicago Manual of Style* (16th) and Turabian (7th) include updated information for electronic citations. Be sure to use the newest editions.]

Deadlines. The deadline for all assignments is 12:00 noon of the due date.
Only the chair of the department can grant deadline extensions for any paper and only then under the most extenuating of circumstances. If a paper is late, its grade will be reduced ten points for each twenty-four hour period, or portion thereof, beyond the stated deadline. **Unless an electronic version is previously agreed upon by faculty mentor and student, paper copies of the completed assignments are due at noon on the dates noted in the syllabus.**

Computer Crashes. Hard drive crashes and other computer woes will not be accepted as excuses for late submission. Students should, given the complexity of the research task they will pursue, be sure that they maintain adequate backup copies of all aspects of their work.

Grading. Each paper will have the following value toward determination of the final grade for the course:

Proposal	10%
Literature Review	25%
Historical Research Paper	65%

The grading scale for each assignment will be as follows:

A	Unusual Excellence	(93 or higher = A; 90-92 = A-)
B	Work Distinctly Above Average	(87-89 = B+; 83-86 = B; 80-82 = B-)
C	Work of Average Quality	(77-79 = C+; 73-76 = C; 70-72 = C-)
D	Work of Below Average Quality	(67-69 = D+; 60-66 = D)
F	Failure, No Credit	(0-59 = F)

Symposium: All AMST 485 students are required to participate in the Department's semi-annual Symposium. This important opportunity for students to share results of their research is held on the last day of the spring term, Friday, April 27. Student presentations at the Symposium are organized into three-to-four paper panels moderated by a member of the History or American Studies faculty and are expected to be succinct, polished 8-10-minute summaries. Participation in the Symposium is a requirement of AMST 485 and an important aspect of the program of Outcomes Assessment that the Department is required to conduct annually by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

IV. COURSE WEB SITE

The Department has developed a web site that contains information pertinent to each of the required assignments.
http://cas.umw.edu/historyamericanstudies/history-department-resources/

V. AMERICAN STUDIES HONORS

Students wishing to be considered for Honors in American Studies at graduation must satisfy two rigorous requirements. They must, first, have a GPA in the major of not less than 3.5 and, second, must, on the recommendation of their AMST 485 faculty mentor, submit their Senior Thesis to a faculty honors committee to be comprised of the student's mentor and at least two additional members of the American Studies affiliated faculty. Students whose final paper is judged by this faculty panel to be truly exceptional in breadth and depth of research, analysis, and writing and who successfully "defend" their project before their faculty honors committee are awarded the distinction of graduating with honors in American Studies.

VI. STYLE GUIDE FOR FINAL PAPER

A. TEXT LENGTH: minimum – 30 pages; maximum – 40 pages (i.e., the paper exclusive of footnotes or endnotes, title page, abstract, bibliography, etc.)

B. MARGINS: 1 ½" at left; 1" all other sides
C. FONT: 12 pt. Times Roman
D. DOCUMENTATION: footnotes or endnotes
E. BIBLIOGRAPHY: may be subdivided, e.g., "primary" and "secondary"
F. PAGE NUMBERING: consecutively through all materials, excluding title page and abstract
G. TITLE PAGE: must include paper title and author's name, in caps and centered, course number, instructor, and date
H. ABSTRACT: 100-150 word summary of final paper's argument/contents. Must be the second page, after the title page, of the final paper.