

UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND AMERICAN STUDIES
HIST 485: HISTORICAL RESEARCH
SPRING 2026

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:

- Define a project of investigative study and write a project proposal, annotated bibliography, and research paper.
- Conduct research in multiple sites.
- Conduct self-directed study.
- Read critically primary sources and modern authorities.
- Make discipline-specific oral presentations to groups.

In addition to fulfilling the senior thesis requirement for the History major, HIST 485 also counts for the Experiential Learning and Writing Intensive General Education Requirements. As such, the following are also 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.
- Students will demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of the varying strategies to convey arguments, main ideas and support/ evidence.
- Students will demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of the varying patterns of composition organization and development.
- Students will demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of the audience, the role of the writer, and rhetorical strategies.
- Students will 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 or required.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Students must also attend a departmental workshop in preparation for their symposium presentations at 5:00 on Monday, April 20 (Monr 210).
- 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* (with a comprehensive bibliography) due Friday, January 23 (noon). The edited proposal will be returned to the student by Monday, January 26, and the final *Proposal* is due Monday, January 30 (noon).

The second paper is an *Annotated Bibliography* of secondary sources due on Friday, February 13 (noon). The assignment must:

- 1) include at least twelve secondary sources.
- 2) include at least one sentence on each secondary source on:
 - a) the author's argument,
 - b) the supporting evidence for the argument, and
 - c) how the work contributes to, influences, or informs the student's project.
- 3) provide a concluding paragraph that reflects on how the project will contribute to the scholarly conversation.

Note: There is no rewrite for this assignment. The original submission will be graded.

The final assignment is the *Historical Research Paper* itself. It must be *thirty-to-forty pages of text plus foot/endnotes and bibliography*. It is submitted in three required steps:

- 1) The first ten pages are due Friday, February 27 (noon).

Note: Incomplete or inadequate submissions will be penalized on the final paper as determined by the instructor.

- 2) The finished research paper is due on Monday, March 30 (noon) and will be returned in edited form to students on Monday, April 6.
- 3) The revised *Research Paper* is due on Monday, April 20 (noon).

***** AN ELECTRONIC COPY OF THE FINAL REVISED PAPER MUST BE SENT TO history@umw.edu BY THE DAY OF THE SPRING SYMPOSIUM (Friday, April 24).**

REWRITES. To encourage and facilitate further development of writing skills, the department requires a rewrite of the proposal and final paper. 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 for improving that version.

Note: It is within an individual instructor's prerogative to refuse to review an incomplete or late first submission.

Note: Each mentor will determine how he or she will use the first submission in determining the final grade for each assignment.

Failure to complete ANY assignment = failure to meet course requirements = failure of the course.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC FORMAT. All written work must conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*, the authoritative source for the form of bibliographic citation that the department has adopted. This is the format required in HIST 297/298 and 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* (18th) and Turabian (9th) include updated information for electronic citations. (Be sure to use the newest editions.)

The library's "Citing Sources" guides for non-print and non-print sources provide quick, up-to-date instructions and samples.

DEADLINES. The deadline for all assignments is 12:00 noon of the due date.

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.

** Only the chair of the department can grant deadline extensions for any paper and then only under the most extenuating of circumstances.

⇒ 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 are pursuing, be sure that they maintain adequate backup copies of all aspects of their work.

GRADING. Papers have the following value toward determination of the final grade for the course:

Proposal	10%
Annotated Bibliography	20%
Historical Research Paper	70%

The grading scale for each assignment:

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)

DEPARTMENTAL SYMPOSIUM. All 485 students are *required* to participate in the department's semi-annual Symposium. This opportunity for students to share results of their research is held on the last day of the fall term, Friday, April 24. Student presentations at the Symposium are organized into panels of two or three papers moderated by a member of the history faculty and are expected to be succinct, polished 8-10-minute summaries. Participation is a *requirement* of HIST 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 WEBSITE. The department provides a historical research website that contains information pertinent to each of the required assignments: <http://cas.umw.edu/historyamericanstudies/history-department->

V. HISTORY HONORS

Students wishing to be considered for Honors in History 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 HIST 485 faculty mentor, submit their Historical Research Paper to a faculty honors committee to be comprised of the student's mentor and two additional members of the history 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 History.

VI. HONOR PLEDGE

The Pledge must appear on all assignments, first papers and rewrites.

Hard copies must have a *hand-written* signature.

For more information on the Honor Code at UMW, click [here](#).

*** ChapGPT and other AI programs have not been approved by the department for use in HIST 485.

VII. 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" on all 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 (i.e., essay begins on page 1).
- G. TITLE PAGE: must include paper title and author's name (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.
- I. HONOR PLEDGE.

VIII. RESOURCES

OFFICE OF DISABILITY RESOURCES has been designated by the University of Mary Washington as the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you receive services through that office and require accommodations for this class, please make an appointment with your 485 instructor as soon as possible to discuss your approved accommodations. He/she will hold any information you share in strictest confidence unless you give permission to do otherwise.

If you have not made contact with the Office of Disability Resources and have reasonable accommodation needs, your 485 instructor will be happy to help you contact them. The office will require appropriate documentation of a disability.

Office of Disability Resources
ods@umw.edu

401 Lee Hall

540-654-1266

Talley Center for Counseling Services

106 Lee Hall

540-654-1053

TITLE IX STATEMENT: University of Mary Washington faculty are committed to supporting students and upholding the University's Policy on Sexual and Gender Based Harassment and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence. Under Title IX and this Policy, discrimination based upon sex or gender is prohibited. If you experience an incident of sex- or gender-based discrimination, UMW encourages you to report it. **While you may talk to your 485 instructor, understand that as a "Responsible Employee" of the University, he/she MUST report to UMW's Title IX Coordinator what you share.** If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, please contact the below confidential resources. Your instructor can connect you with support services and help you explore your options. You may also seek assistance from UMW's Title IX Coordinator. Please visit <http://diversity.umw.edu/title-ix/> to view UMW's Policy on Sexual and Gender Based Harassment and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence and to find further information on support and resources.

Title IX Office
Talley Center for Counseling Services
Student Health Center

Fairfax House
106 Lee Hall
Lee Hall 112

540-654-1166
540-654-1053
540-654-1040