

**UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND AMERICAN STUDIES**  
**AMST 485: SENIOR THESIS**  
***Spring 2025***

**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:

- Demonstrate a broad, diverse knowledge of American culture and society.
- Integrate knowledge from several disciplinary perspectives.
- Read and assess primary and secondary sources from a variety of genres and mediums.
- Synthesize independent research findings in a written format.
- Communicate evidence and analysis orally.

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

- Apply what was learned in coursework to new scenarios outside standard university courses.
- Identify their personal values and learning goals and direct themselves by creating personalized learning experiences that may include alternative means of learning.
- 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.
- Recognize their knowledge and lack of knowledge.
- 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 their mentors to determine their 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 Monday, January 13, at 5:30 pm. Students must also attend a departmental workshop on their presentations at 5 pm on Monday, April 21, at 5 pm.

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 24 at noon. The edited proposal will be returned to the student by Monday, January 27 and the final ***Proposal*** is due on Friday, January 31 at noon.

The second paper is an ***Annotated Bibliography*** due on Friday, February 14 at noon. The assignment must include at least twelve secondary sources. For each source, annotations must include 1) the author's argument, 2) the supporting evidence for the argument, and 3) how the work contributes to, influences, or informs the student's project. The bibliography should conclude with a paragraph that reflects on how the student's project will contribute to the larger scholarly conversation.

The final assignment is the ***Senior Thesis*** itself. It must be ***thirty-to-forty pages long plus notes and bibliography***. The first ten pages are due Friday, February 28 at noon. The finished research paper is due on Monday, March 31 at noon (**the title of the research paper and abstract are also to be sent electronically on this date to [history@umw.edu](mailto:history@umw.edu)**) and will be returned in edited form to students on Monday, April 7. The revised ***Senior Thesis*** is due on Monday, April 21 at noon. **NOTE: An additional electronic copy of the final revised paper must be sent to [history@umw.edu](mailto:history@umw.edu) by the day of the Symposium.**

**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 they will use the first submission in determining the final grade for each assignment.

**NOTE: Failure to complete an assignment (drafts and rewrites) = failure to meet course requirements = failure of the course.**

**Use of AI.** The use of AI technology (i.e. Chat GPT, Claude, Dall E, Google's Bard, Microsoft Copilot, etc.) is NOT permitted as any part of an assignment or deliverable in this course, including generating ideas, organizing outlines, writing text, or revising your own work. In this writing intensive course, students are actively cultivating the skills needed to become strong writers and develop original academic scholarship. Consequently, all assignments should be prepared solely by the student. Use of AI on any submitted work will be considered a violation of course policy and as such, the student may be referred to the UMW Honor Council for a violation of academic integrity.

**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 AMST 201; 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* (17<sup>th</sup>) and Turabian (8<sup>th</sup>) 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	20%
Senior Thesis	70%

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)

**Departmental 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, April 25. Student presentations at the Symposium are organized into two-to-three paper panels moderated by a member of the 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 research website 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" margins 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
- 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, of the final paper.

- VII. **HONOR PLEDGE:** The Pledge must appear on all assignments, first papers and rewrites. Hard copies, if required, must have a hand-written signature.

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. They 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 <a href="mailto:ods@umw.edu">ods@umw.edu</a>	005 Seacobeck	540-654-1266
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Talley Center for Counseling Services	106 Lee Hall	540-654-1053
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**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, they 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. They 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	401 Lee Hall	540-654-5656
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Talley Center for Counseling Services	106 Lee Hall	540-654-1053
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Student Health Center	112 Lee Hall	540-654-1040
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