

**History 300:
Seminar in Historical Analysis**

Dr. Barbara Loomis

Fall 2006

Office: Science 272, ext. 87537

Home: 510-658-9271

E-mail: barbaral@sfsu.edu

Office hours: Monday, 2-4, 5-6:30, Wednesday, 2-4, and by appointment.

Course overview:

This course is a practical workshop seminar, designed to assist students in perfecting the tasks of the historian's profession. As a group, we will briefly evaluate some of the various approaches to presenting historical arguments, and then students will engage in research of their own, on some aspect of American history between 1800 and 1900. The course will aid students in their research by covering the various steps of creating a successful historical essay: selecting a subject, locating sources, gathering useful notes and data, organizing an argument, compiling footnotes and a bibliography. There will be several short essays and exercises and the final historical project, a paper of about 7-10 pages, based on research in primary sources.

Readings:

Brundage, Anthony. *Going to the Sources: A Guide to Historical Research and Writing*. 3rd ed. Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1989.

Johnson, Walter. *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999. [This book has been ordered for purchase and placed on reserve; it may also be viewed as an e-book: see the citation in the Leonard Library catalog for the URL and link to the website.]

Northup, Solomon. *Twelve Years a Slave*. [You may purchase your own copy of this work, use it on reserve in the library, or use the online version, at <http://docsouth.unc.edu/northup>].

Requirements:

1. A series of short, preliminary essays and exercises -- worth, cumulatively, 30% of the total grade. Points will be deducted for late assignments. All written projects must be turned in.

2. A longer rough draft and finished project, worth 50% of the total grade. (Note: In order to pass the course, all students must turn in a rough draft and a revised final copy of the essay, with title page, footnotes, and bibliography.)

3. Because the course depends upon mutual assistance and the exchange of ideas, attendance is mandatory. Class participation accounts for the final 20% of the grade.

Calendar of Events and Assignments:

(** highlights written work to be turned in)

Aug. 30:

Introductions
What is History?

Sept. 6: The Art and Science of Interpretation

Reading: Brundage, preface, 1-15, 87-89.

**First writing assignment due, based on articles on A. Lincoln,
Exchange and edit papers (bring **two copies** of your essay to class)
Discussion: A. Lincoln essays

Sept. 13: Getting Started on Research

Reading: Brundage, 16- 27.

**Assignment on brainstorming about possible topics due—see hand-out for details.
We'll spend the second half of class making an initial foray into the Leonard Library.

Sept. 20: Further Explorations in the Leonard Library Resources

Reading: Brundage, 28-47.

**Library exercise due, including list of three likely research topics.
We will meet in Rm. 426A, one of the computer classrooms in the Library. (Take the outer bank of elevators to find the room.) Please be there promptly! Kendra Van Cleave, the history librarian, will provide tips for making the most of the library's collections and connections, including some recently acquired data bases.

Sept. 27: Analyzing a Primary Source: *Twelve Years a Slave* and other primary sources.

Reading: Northup, chaps. 1-10 (through pp. 145 in web version). Be ready to discuss this initial reading assignment.

**Due at the beginning of class: library exercise tracking a possible topic.
In-class exercise on using primary sources.
Lecture: Note-taking techniques. (Hand out essay assignment on Northup.)

Oct. 4: Putting Primary Sources into Historical Context

Reading: Northup, chaps. 11 to end (through pp. 336 in web version). Be ready to discuss this classic slave narrative.

Reading: Brundage, 48-67.

Lecture: The Historiography of Slavery

Oct. 11: Moving between Primary and Secondary Sources

**Due: Essay on Northup and research exercise on Northup due (bibliography of secondary sources).

Wrap-up discussion of Northup as a primary source.

Reading: Brundage, 91-100 (review before coming to class).

In-class exercise on creating bibliographies and footnotes.

Lecture and in-class exercise: using newspapers as primary sources.

During this week and the following week, individual meetings will be scheduled with students to help you get started on your own research and interpretations.

Oct. 18: Thinking historically about historians and their work.

** Assignment due: Worksheet about *Soul by Soul*.

Reading: Johnson, 1-18, 214-20; 275-76; read at least one chapter worth of footnotes

Lecture: Reading History.

*** **PRELIMINARY RESEARCH PROPOSALS DUE TODAY.** (A one-paragraph description of a topic or question that interests you. Include the names of any primary sources that you have found to help you pursue this topic. Are there any important secondary sources (either books or articles) that explore this topic?)

Oct. 25: Analyzing an Author's Point of View

Reading: Johnson, 19-134, or further.

Second discussion: *Soul by Soul*

Lecture: Verifying an author's point of view; writing a book review.

Also to think about:

How did Johnson use Solomon Northup's autobiography?

What do you think about Johnson's work?

Nov. 1: Getting Deeper into the Research Process

Reading: Brundage, 68-86.

**Primary source project due today: 2-page essay, based upon a source for your own research project.

**Also due: a list of the major secondary sources on your topic.

Extra meetings scheduled throughout the week to discuss research ideas

Nov. 8:

***Extended, formal research proposal due today. The proposal should include a discussion of at least three major secondary works (either books or articles) that touch on your subject, with a one-paragraph description of what each one argues. In other words, this part of the proposal is a brief, abbreviated historiographical essay, as described in Brundage. Then, the proposal should go on to explain what your own research will accomplish – an angle that has not been covered already in

the secondary literature. Finally, the proposal should include a bibliography of the primary sources that the research will explore. The bibliography should be in proper form, as laid out in the guidelines in Brundage, 65-66, 98-100. We will meet briefly to discuss the proposals; most of the class session will be spent on individual research.

Nov.15:

Come to class with at least 30 notecards from primary sources. If you have created a thesis statement, bring it to class also. If not, we will work at constructing one, based on the evidence that you have gathered, during class. Lecture: Organizing your Evidence.

Nov. 22: THANKSGIVING WEEK holiday--extra time to be thinking and writing!

Nov. 29:

***ROUGH DRAFTS DUE TODAY. Please bring two copies of your draft to class.

Rough drafts should include title page, footnotes or endnotes, and a bibliography.

Dec. 4-8:

Individual meetings scheduled during our regular class period, along with additional hours throughout the week, to return rough drafts.

Dec. 13: No class meeting--at work on polishing drafts. I will be in my office during our class time to meet with anyone who needs assistance.

Dec. 20: ***FINAL DRAFTS due! Brief, oral reports on research discoveries today.