

SYLLABUS

HIST 1000 – Writing Seminar

University of Pittsburgh
Prof. Rebecca Shumway

Spring 2009
Mondays, 11:00 AM to 1:25 PM
Cathedral of Learning, Room 2318



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Office hours: Wednesdays 4:30 to 5:30 and Thursdays 3:00 to 4:00

...and by appointment!

Course Description:

This course seeks to acquaint History majors with the proper techniques of historical research and writing. We will read and analyze studies related to West Africa during the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade (c. 1500-1850), and students will write long essays on that topic. Instruction will emphasize the importance of revision in the writing process.

Goals:

The two main goals of the course are to familiarize students with the history of West Africa during the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and to improve students' writing skills. The course prepares students to identify and correct errors in their own and others' writing and to formulate persuasive analyses of historical scholarship. Students will also learn to describe the main temporal and geographic features of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and to explain **how** and **why** millions of African people were enslaved and transported to the western hemisphere between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Course Requirements:

- 1) Students are expected to do the assigned reading before coming to class and to participate in all in-class activities, including discussions of assigned readings and evaluations of peers' writing. Approximate time spent outside of class doing the reading and preparing for class each week: four to five hours. (20% of grade)
- 2) There will be three writing assignments, each of which will be revised. Each paper and each revision is worth 10% of the overall grade for the class. (60% of grade)
- 3) A final presentation at the end of the semester will be worth 15% of the final grade.

- 4) One short paper (3 pages) assessing the quality of a historical presentation will be worth **5%** of the final grade. This paper is due **Tuesday, March 24**.

Late Work: Essays will not be accepted late. If you are unable to turn in your essay on the due date, you must turn it in prior to the due date.

Attendance Policy: Regular and prompt attendance is required. Since this class meets only once a week, more than one absence will result in the reduction of your final grade.

Policy on "Late Withdrawals": In accordance with university policy, Appeals for Late Withdrawal will be approved ONLY in cases of medical emergency and similar crises. Please be mindful of the deadline for withdrawal and make a careful decision about whether or not you are able to proceed with this course **before** that deadline. (Spring 2009 deadline for Monitored Withdrawal is March 6.)

Academic Integrity: Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity, noted below, will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score for the quiz, exam or paper will be imposed. Students should familiarize themselves with the published policies accessible at <http://www.fcas.pitt.edu/academicintegrity.html>.

Note on Disabilities: If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Resources and Services, 216 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890/(412) 383-7355 (TTY), as early as possible in the term. Disability Resources and Services will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

CourseWeb: CourseWeb (a.k.a. Blackboard™) is an online software tool that facilitates interaction and communication among all members of the class. We will use it in this course for online discussions (Discussion Board), announcements and grade posting. Please familiarize yourself with CourseWeb as soon as possible by visiting the following portal: <http://courseweb.pitt.edu>. Help with CourseWeb is available 24 hours a day from the technology help desk. Call them at 412-624-4357, or visit them online at http://technology.pitt.edu/tech_help.html.

Office Hours: My office hours are a time when students can meet with me to discuss any matter related to the class. In addition to my office hours, I will be available by appointment to speak to students. If you notice any problem or difficulty in the class, please see me during office hours as soon as possible.

Required Texts:

1. Curtin, Philip D. *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History*. 2nd ed. New York: Cambridge, 1998.
2. Manning, Patrick. *Slavery and African Life*. New York: Cambridge, 1990.
3. Diouf, Sylviane A. *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies, Western African Studies*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press: Oxford, England, 2003.
4. Hacker, Diana. *A Pocket Style Manual*. 4th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004.

Other Readings: Required readings that are not in the texts listed above will be made available by the professor and/or be posted on E-Reserve.

NOTE: The E-Reserve password for this course is “majors09”.

- COURSE OUTLINE -

Week 1 (Jan 6) -

In Class: Introduction to the course; Film, “The African Trade.”

Week 2 (Jan 13) -

Read before class: Curtin, The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex

In Class: Discussion & lecture on Africa and the Slave Trade

Week 3 (Jan 20) -

Read before class: Excerpt from Writing African History [E-Reserve]

NOTE: The E-Reserve password for this course is “seminar08”.

Due in class: Paper #1

Week 4 (Jan 27) -

Individual meetings, by appointment, to discuss **Paper #1**.

Week 5 (Feb 3) -

Read before class: Manning, Slavery and African Life, pp. 1-85

Week 6 (Feb 10) -

Read before class: Manning, Slavery and African Life, pp. 86-176

Due in class: Revised Paper #1

Week 7 (Feb 17) –

Read before class: Manning, Slavery and African Life, pp. 86-176

Week 8 (Feb 24) -

Read before class: 1) Diouf, Fighting the Slave Trade, pp. ix-78

Due in class: Paper #2

Week 9 (Mar 3) -

Individual meetings, by appointment, to discuss **Paper #2**.

Week 10 – SPRING BREAK

Week 11 (Mar 17) -

Read before class: Diouf, pp. 81-151

Week 12 (Mar 24) -

Read before class: Sample book reviews (available on CourseWeb)

Due in class: Historical Presentation Paper

Week 13 (Mar 31) -

Due in class: Paper #3

Presentations

Week 14 (Apr 7) -

Presentations

(Paper #3 will be returned.)

Week 15 (Apr 14) -

Presentations

Week 16 (Apr 21) -

Paper #3 due by 5:00 pm

Paper #1 Assignment

Due Date: Tuesday, January 20

Revision Due Date: Tuesday, February 10

Assignment: The causes of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, in general, and the reasons for the enslavement of Africans, in particular, are far-ranging and difficult to explain. Nevertheless, it is imperative that students of history grapple with the question, “Why were 12 million Africans enslaved?” Using the information presented in Philip Curtin’s book, The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex, write an essay that explains **the principal cause** of the enslavement of Africans for use as laborers in the western hemisphere over the period c.1500-1850.

Be sure you have a thesis that does the following:

- 1) Answers the question, “Why were 12 million Africans enslaved?”
- 2) Expresses a particular view on this issue. (You must give **one** cause, not a list of causes.)
- 3) Argues that this view is worth taking seriously. (You should explain why yours is a better explanation than other common explanations.)

Style and Grammar: Use the style and grammar recommended in Diana Hacker, A Pocket Style Manual. Style and grammar will be evaluated as part of your grade!

Format and length: Your paper should be approximately **1800 words** in length (6 pages). Please double-space and ‘left justify’ your text. Please include page numbers on each page (except the first one) and **note the word count at the end of the paper**. Please staple the pages together.

*REMINDER: Please retain all drafts and notes that you make in the process of writing your paper, in case issues of plagiarism arise. If you have questions about plagiarism, please refer to the following: <http://www.english.pitt.edu/resources/plagiarism.html>, or speak with me.

Grading: Your paper will be graded according to the following three criteria.

- 1) Organization. *Is the paper’s structure apparent and easy to follow?*
- 2) Development. *Does the paper adequately introduce the topic, present convincing evidence to support the writer’s position, summarize findings, and offer a reasonable conclusion?*
- 3) Mechanics. *Is the paper generally free of spelling, typographical, grammatical, and formatting errors?*

Due Date: Papers are due in class Tuesday, January 20. (Revised papers are due in class Tuesday, February 10.) **When turning in a revised paper, the original paper must be attached.** Late papers will not be accepted.

Paper #2 Assignment

Due Date: Tuesday, February 24

Revision Due Date: Tuesday, March 24

Assignment: You have been hired as a historical consultant to a major Hollywood movie studio. Your boss is making a film about the famous Asante king, Opoku Ware, and the expansion of the Asante Empire under his rule during the 1700s. As she begins working on her film, your boss is shocked to discover that there were slaves in the Asante kingdom—she never knew that slavery was practiced in pre-colonial Africa. Wanting to be as historically accurate as possible in her film, but lacking the time to do her own reading (busy Hollywood producer that she is), she has asked you to find out everything you can about the history of slavery in Africa and to submit a report to her. Using Patrick Manning’s book, Slavery and African Life, write an essay that explains the most important features of slavery in Africa (c. 1000-1800 AD). Be sure to pay attention to the following:

- 1) variation by region
- 2) variation over time (1500-1860)
- 3) the effects of trans-Atlantic trade on the practice of slavery in Africa

Style and Grammar: Use the style and grammar recommended in Diana Hacker, A Pocket Style Manual. Style and grammar will be evaluated as part of your grade!

Format and length: Your paper should be approximately **1800 words** in length (6 pages). Please double-space and ‘left justify’ your text. Please include page numbers on each page (except the first one) and **note the word count at the end of the paper**. Please staple the pages together.

*REMINDER: Please retain all drafts and notes that you make in the process of writing your paper, in case issues of plagiarism arise. If you have questions about plagiarism, please refer to the following: <http://www.english.pitt.edu/resources/plagiarism.html>, or speak to me.

Grading: Your paper will be graded according to the following three criteria.

- 4) Organization. *Is the paper’s structure apparent and easy to follow?*
- 5) Development. *Does the paper adequately introduce the topic, present convincing evidence to support the writer’s position, summarize findings, and offer a reasonable conclusion?*
- 6) Mechanics. *Is the paper generally free of spelling, typographical, grammatical, and formatting errors?*

Due Date: Papers are due in class Tuesday, February 24. (Revised papers are due in class Tuesday, March 24.) **When turning in a revised paper, the original paper must be attached.** Late papers will not be accepted.

Paper #3 Assignment

Due Date: Tuesday, March 31

Revision Due Date: Tuesday, April 21

Assignment: The editors of a prestigious and internationally-recognized history journal have asked you to write a review of Sylviane Diouf's edited book, Fighting the Slave Trade. Write a professional-style review of this book (see examples to be distributed in class). Be sure to address the following questions in your review:

- 4) What does this book *do*? What does it *accomplish*?
- 5) What are the strengths of the book (explain three or four)?
- 6) What do you think should have been done differently in this book? What are its *weaknesses*?
- 7) Which articles are the most effective or most important?

Style and Grammar: Use the style and grammar recommended in Diana Hacker, A Pocket Style Manual. Style and grammar will be evaluated as part of your grade!

Format and length: Your paper should be approximately **1800 words** in length (6 pages). Please double-space and 'left justify' your text. Please include page numbers on each page (except the first one) and **note the word count at the end of the paper**. Please staple the pages together.

*REMINDER: Please retain all drafts and notes that you make in the process of writing your paper, in case issues of plagiarism arise. If you have questions about plagiarism, please refer to the following: <http://www.english.pitt.edu/resources/plagiarism.html>, or speak to me.

Grading: Your paper will be graded according to the following three criteria.

- 7) Organization. *Is the paper's structure apparent and easy to follow?*
- 8) Development. *Does the paper adequately introduce the topic, present convincing evidence to support the writer's position, summarize findings, and offer a reasonable conclusion?*
- 9) Mechanics. *Is the paper generally free of spelling, typographical, grammatical, and formatting errors?*

Due Date: Papers are due in class Tuesday, March 31. (Revised papers are due Tuesday, April 21.) **When turning in a revised paper, the original paper must be attached.** Late papers will not be accepted.

HISTORICAL PRESENTATION ASSIGNMENT

HIST 1000, Writing Seminar for Majors

Due Date: Tuesday, March 24

This assignment is designed to help you prepare for your own presentation, which you will give at the end of the semester. As you make notes on the qualities of the presentation you observe, keep in mind that you will be evaluated on these same qualities when you give your presentation. You may even want to score the presentation in each category, on a scale from one to twenty, to get an idea of how you will be scored.

Instructions:

- **Attend a public presentation by a historian on campus.** (Prof. Shumway will announce suitable events throughout the semester) Make notes on the following qualities of the presentation:
 - Clarity of introduction and conclusion (Is it easy to quickly grasp the main argument or question he/she is addressing and remember it at the end of the presentation?)
 - Communication of main points (Does he/she support the argument with evidence?)
 - Pace of speech (Is he/she speaking too quickly or too slowly?)
 - Length of presentation (Did he/she prepare the presentation to fit in the amount of time allotted for it?)
 - Answers to questions (Does he/she answer the questions in an appropriate manner?)

- **Write a short paper (2-3 pages) describing the quality of the presentation.** In your paper, synthesize your overall impression of the presentation as a public speaking event and as a learning opportunity for the audience. Be sure to mention the following:
 - What the speaker did MOST effectively and LEAST effectively
 - What you would recommend he or she do differently in future presentations
 - What qualities of this presentation you would hope to emulate or avoid in your own presentation

ORAL PRESENTATION ASSIGNMENT

HIST 1000, Writing Seminar for Majors

Instructions: Prepare an oral presentation of one of the three papers you have written for this course. Your presentation should last **fifteen minutes**. Following your presentation, there will be a five minute question and answer period (your audience will ask you questions and you will answer.)

Preparation:

- 1) You will need to modify your paper to make sure it can be easily understood when read aloud. (Long sentences are difficult to comprehend aurally!) Prepare and print out a version to read from on the day of your oral presentation.
- 2) Practice reading your text, using a stopwatch, to make sure your presentation will be the appropriate length of time. As a rule of thumb, it takes two minutes to read one page of double-spaced text if you are reading/speaking at an appropriate pace for oral presentation.

Qualities of Successful History Paper Presentations

- The speaker first introduces his/her paper briefly, explaining why the subject is important
- Before getting into the content of the paper, he/she summarizes the main conclusions of the paper (usually two to four main points)
- The speaker reads from a detailed set of notes or an abbreviated version of the paper, while making frequent eye contact with the audience and stopping where necessary to explain complicated points
- The most important conclusions of the paper are repeated at the conclusion of the paper
- THE SPEAKER STAYS WITHIN THE TIME LIMITS!

Evaluation:

Your presentation will be graded according to the following criteria:

- Clarity of introduction and conclusion (20 pts)
- Communication of main points of the paper (20 pts)
- Pace of speech (not too fast, not too slow) (20 pts)
- Appropriate length of presentation (20 pts)
- Answers to questions (20 pts)