

History 8000: Seminar in Early American History, Spring 2013  
Friday 8-10:55, Dreese 264  
Prof. Newell, 265 Dulles Hall, [newell.20@osu.edu](mailto:newell.20@osu.edu)  
Office Hours: Weds. 2-3:30 and by appointment

**Themes and Outcomes:** The goal of this seminar is to provide experience in the research and writing of scholarly papers based on primary sources on a subject in American History through 1877. Ideally, each student will produce a 25-30 pp. research paper (or MA thesis/dissertation chapter) of publishable quality. During the first weeks, participants will define their topics, identify relevant sources and create a research plan, shape a preliminary argument, and place that argument within a historiographical framework. In class, we will spend these first weeks of the course discussing issues of historical inquiry, method, interpretation, and expression. In addition, we will study the tools of historical research and explore available manuscript, online and print sources, bibliographies, and finding aids. As part of this process, each student will be responsible for leading a discussion on his/her planned project. This will include selecting some relevant readings for the class and presenting a prospectus for criticism by week 5.

During weeks 7-10, seminar members will focus on researching and writing their papers. In week 10, each student will submit a rough draft for consideration by the seminar and the chief critic and present their projects over the succeeding two weeks. Final drafts will be due Friday April 19.

**Assignments:** Each student will be responsible for the following written assignments: a bibliography of primary and secondary sources; a 4-8 pp. project proposal that could serve a dissertation prospectus or grant proposal; a first draft of the final paper and a revised final draft. In addition to his or her own paper, each student will be responsible for a careful reading and written critique of the work of fellow seminar members. Assume that you are a referee reviewing the paper for publication in a journal; note its strengths and weaknesses, and provide detailed suggestions for improvement.

**Evaluation:** 60% of the grade assigned in this course will be based upon the first and final drafts of your paper. 15% will consist of your bibliography and prospectus; and 25% will consist of your presentations, the quality of your participation in seminar discussions, and the care and intelligence with which you evaluate fellow students' work.

**Academic Misconduct:** Any instances of academic misconduct, including plagiarism and dishonest practices in examinations, will be reported to the Committee on Academic misconduct. It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-

5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct ([http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info\\_for\\_students/csc.asp](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp)).

**Students With Disabilities:** Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform Prof. Newell as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

**Readings:**

William Germano, From Dissertation to Book (Chicago, 2005), available at SBX  
All other readings will be available on JSTOR, Carmen, or via handout.

**Schedule:**

**Week 1, January 11: The Challenge of Getting it Right.**

Read the Denmark Vescey forum from the William and Mary Quarterly 58 (2001)

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/2674506>

and the follow-up "Power and Confession" by James Spady, William and Mary Quarterly 68 (2011), on Carmen or via WMQ online at library or at JSTOR

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5309/willmaryquar.68.2.0287>

You can also look at Randy Roth's critique of Michael Bellesiles in the Jan. 2002

William and Mary Quarterly:

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3491655>

**Week 2, January 18: Historical Writing: Defining and Conceptualizing a Project.**

If you already have a project, come prepared to talk about the process through which you selected, refined, and conceptualized your project; if you're in process, come prepared to discuss your current ideas and some of the dilemmas you face.

Some questions to consider: Why do historians choose the approaches that they do? Which do you think are most effective? A list that includes both resurgent older modes and newer approaches might include microhistory, narrative history, a focus on physical and built environment, "big data" quantitative approaches that utilize surveying and data-crunching techniques of sociology and economics, "applied" history that speaks to climate, health, agriculture/food, evolutionary biology, or more science-oriented fields, "big picture," approaches at "interpreting the other" that include speculation, fictionalization and/or insertion of self into the narrative. What constitutes "innovative history" in 2013?

Read the roundtable on History writing from Historically Speaking 11 (Jan. 2010) [Pine, Kammen, Lepore, Demos]

<http://journals.ohiolink.edu.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/ejc/issue.cgi?issn=19446438&issue=v11i0001>

and Lynn Hunt, "How Writing Leads to Thinking (and not the other way around)," *AHA Perspectives*, February 2010, available at <http://www.historians.org/Perspectives/issues/2010/1002/1002art1.cfm>

And, read at least two of the following Pelzer prizewinning articles (written by graduate students like yourselves!) on Early American/Atlantic subjects, evaluating them for originality of approach, quality of execution and overall conceptualization. Do any of them hint at important books?

Christine M. DeLucia, "The Memory Frontier: Uncommon Pursuits of Past and Place in the Northeast after King Philip's War (1675–78)" *Journal of American History* 98 (March 2012)

Wendy Anne Warren, "'The Cause of Her Grief': The Rape of a Slave in Early New England," *Journal of American History*, 93 (March 2007), pp. 1031–1049,

Nora Doyle, "The Highest Pleasure of Which Woman's Nature is Capable': Breastfeeding and the Sentimental Maternal Ideal in America 1750–1860" *Journal of American History* 97 (March 2011)

Sarah Keyes, "'Like a roaring lion': The Overland Trail as a Sonic Conquest" *Journal of American History* 96 (June 2009)

Kevin Dawson, University of South Carolina, "Enslaved Swimmers and Divers in the Atlantic World" *Journal of American History* 92 (March 2006)

Elizabeth Anne Fenn, "Biological Warfare in Eighteenth-Century North America: Beyond Jeffrey Amherst" *Journal of American History* (March 2000)

**Week 3, January 26: Writing a Successful Grant Proposal/Prospectus and Finding Sources** (materials on Carmen)

Discussion of student-assigned readings and proposals, part 1. Come prepared to discuss the readings assigned by four of your classmates (on Carmen or handouts), and to lead the discussion on the one you assigned. Each presenter should come prepared to briefly (5-10 mins.) review the historiography relevant to his/her chosen topic, emphasizing significant questions they are answering and deficiencies in the literature and explaining what questions his/her paper will help answer.

**\*\*\*Working bibliography (1-2 pp.) due\*\*\***

Abby Schreiber workshop

**Week 4, February 1: Historical Research**

(Big data/data mining, mapping workshop—readings on Carmen)

Phil Brown workshop

**Week 5, February 8: Writing a dissertation, writing a book.**

**Discuss Germano, From the Dissertation to the Book**

**\*\*\*\*4-6pp. prospectus/research proposal/grant proposal due to Prof. Newell and your critic\*\*\*\***

**Brooke workshop**

**Week 6, February 15: Remainder of student-assigned readings and student-led presentation and discussions.**

**Week 7, Feb. 22: no meeting; work on research and writing; meet with me as needed**

**Week 8, March 1: no meeting; work on research and writing; meet with me as needed**

**Week 9, March 8: no meeting; work on research and writing; meet with me as needed**

**Spring recess, March 11-16**

**Week 10, March 22: rough drafts due to me and to your critic**

**Week 11, March 29: presentation and critique of rough drafts**

**Week 12, April 5: presentation and critique of rough drafts (as needed)**

**Week 13, April 12: meet individually with me as needed**

**Week 14, April 19: Final drafts due  
April 27—meet for final critique?**