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**Introduction to Historical Methodology**

History 204, Fall 2015, Wednesdays, 1:30-4:30pm  
112 Denny / Archives Classroom, Waidner-Spahr Library

**Historical Methods Essay, Due October 21**

Over the past several weeks, we have read a novel about “historical detection,” one historian’s take on writing history, short essays in the workbook on the nature of historical research and writing, and an example of historical writing (Gross’ *Neighbors*). All give us ample material to think about the nature of history and the difficulties and pleasures of being an historian, and what remains is to come to our own understanding of what doing history means for each of us.

What do you think history is, and how to practice it? Which arguments found in these readings resonated with you the most? How might you take those arguments and put them together in such a way that would make for a coherent argument about the nature of history? For example, how would an historian who espoused your version of history respond to each of the following (out‑of‑context) quotations from Tey’s novel?:

“A history book? . . . What would I be doing with a history book[?]” (p. 34)

“Quoting? It wasn’t quoting anything. It was just giving facts.” (p. 42)

“Yes. That’s very interesting; very. History as it is made.” (p. 105)

“Only historians tell you what they thought. Research workers stick to what they did.” (p. 106)

So, after our discussions of these readings, and after thinking about responses to these statements, you need to answer this question for your essay. This is a broad and difficult question, so you will *need* to write several drafts to produce a polished essay.

Based on your reading of Tey, Gaddis, Gross, and the workbook, and your own ideas on the nature of History, write a 1200‑word (4‑6 page) essay on “What it means to *do* history.”

A Note on Grading

Both substance and the presentation count when I evaluate (grade) an essay. The substance consists of the ideas and examples you include in the essay and the accuracy of your understanding of that material. The presentation is the writing. More specifically, I look for a number of things:

1. Clarity of presentation: statement of thesis in introduction, orderly development of thesis in the body of the paper, illustration of main ideas with examples

2. Inclusion of a variety of sources

3. Accuracy in conveying historians’ ideas

4. Clear organization, correct composition of paragraphs, careful editing, and proofreading

An ‘A’ paper shows original thought and high achievement in each of the criteria.

A ‘B’ paper lacks originality but is strong in each of the criteria

A ‘C’ paper is satisfactory but contains notable deficiencies in one or more of the criteria.

Be sure that you write in stages, by breaking a project down into manageable tasks.

You write the first draft for yourself, to develop your ideas, to see what you can substantiate.

You revise with an eye to a reader, so you must give your essay sharpness and clarity.