

Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania

# History 204



This is an entry level course for the history major at Dickinson College and explores the theory and practice of the discipline in the manner of a practicum.

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## History 204

## Course Information

*"Any fool can make history, only a great man can write it" - Oscar Wilde*

This course should be like no other you have taken during your academic career. Through use of readings, discussion, exploration of archives, the object is no less than to explore the nature and the excitement and the challenge of this ancient discipline. One goal is to learn how "historical knowledge" is acquired, presented, and used - sometimes less than scrupulously - in the classroom, on the library shelf, at the computer, and in our culture as a whole.

As well as being a class in "historical appreciation," History 204 also seeks to introduce students to the craft of the historian and then help them become better and more critical practitioners of these skills. In short, we mean to help your study of history at the College to a well grounded start. This will be accomplished, especially, through a series of projects designed to offer *practical* experience of what is being taught.

Our discipline may stretch back twenty-five centuries to Herodotus but we will depend on the historian for the health of the human experience far into the future, as well. Methods and opportunities of evidence and analysis undergo constant change and development. Accordingly, this term, along with more traditional examination of method, the class will explore deeply into the possibilities and the hazards for the historian of the electronic information revolution.

The effort in this course is a substantial undertaking and, as with any craft, the term "discipline" has broad connotations. This is a seminar, so class attendance and discussion is required of all students. Absence will harm both your individual advance and the progress of the class towards its collective goals, so penalties will be assessed ruthlessly. All due dates are final and binding, while any permission to hand in work late *in no way* suggests escape from the usual substantial penalties. The definitions of plagiarism to be used throughout is that found in the *Proscriptions on Conduct*.

Within this structure, the size and fashion of the course will make possible a certain dynamism in the class schedule and help enable "Historical Method" to function at its very best, in the favor of all. We will not always be meeting as a class, perhaps, especially during the heavier research phases of the course.

The final course evaluation will take into account performance in the individual projects, the section of the completed class project for which the student is responsible, several reading quizzes usually given at the opening of a discussion class, and the general level of participation throughout the term. There are no formal examinations, either at the midpoint or in the final days of the term.

Due to the swift moving and unique nature of this course, it is even more vital than usual that you maintain your schedule. Historical research requires time. The places where you need to be, such as the May Morris Room, have limited hours. There is not a moment to be lost.

More generally, if there are problems of any kind which emerge during the term, make sure that you discuss them with me, *as soon as possible*. Please do not allow shyness, sloth, or difficulties with communications permit an escalation that threatens to burn down you whole semester.  
My office is Denny 215, my telephone extension is 1230 and my e-mail address is osborne

Office hours will be announced.

Good luck to us all.



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# Historical Method

Spring 2010

## Chronology

What follows is the bare bones of what we are going to do in this class. During the first half of the term, when we are following a more clearly delineated schedule of readings and projects, the dates are firm. In the latter stages, when we are beginning to put together the main project, there will probably need to be more flexibility.

### Book List

M.J. Galgana, J.C. Arndt and R.M. Hyser, DOING HISTORY : RESEARCH AND WRITING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Josephine Tey, A DAUGHTER OF TIME

Herbert Butterfield, THE WHIG INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

Week of January 25

### INTRODUCTION, EVIDENCE, AND THE HISTORIAN AS DETECTIVE

Introduction to project structure, secondary sources  
Answer the question "What is history" (200 words)  
Short bibliographical exercise - John A.J. Cresswell

Week of February 1

### THE HISTORIAN AS CRAFTSMAN

Discussion of Butterfield and Tey  
Tey/Butterfield - "What is History?" (800 words)

Week of February 8

### THE SOURCES

Primary Sources and the Work of Others  
LIBRARY INSTRUCTION

	Assignment of Editing and Bibliographical Topics
Week of February 15	<p><b>THE ARCHIVES</b>  <b>ARCHIVES INTRODUCTION (Part One)</b>            Assignment of Archives Exercise</p>
Week of February 22	<p><b>ARCHIVES INTRODUCTION (Part Two)</b>  <b>THE EVIDENCE</b>            Editing exercise due</p>
Week of March 1	<p><b>PRESENTING HISTORY</b>            Bibliographical exercise due</p>
Week of March 8	<p><b>HISTORY PAST AND FUTURE</b>            Present &amp; discuss project results            Introduction to the Main Project</p>
	<p><b>SPRING BREAK</b></p>
Week of March 22	<p><b>A MIND OF ONE'S OWN - PRACTICING HISTORY</b></p>
Week of March 29	<p><b>THE HISTORIAN AT WORK</b>            Main Project            Presentation of Biographical findings            Presentation of Project Proposals</p>
Week of March 30	<p><b>MAJOR PROJECT</b>            Publication discussion and final layout</p>
Weeks of April 5 & 12 & 19	<p>Learning the Lessons of Doing            Editing, Revision, and Rewrites</p>
Week of April 26	<p>Learning the Lessons of Being Accepted for Publication            Editing and Revision</p>

Week of May 7

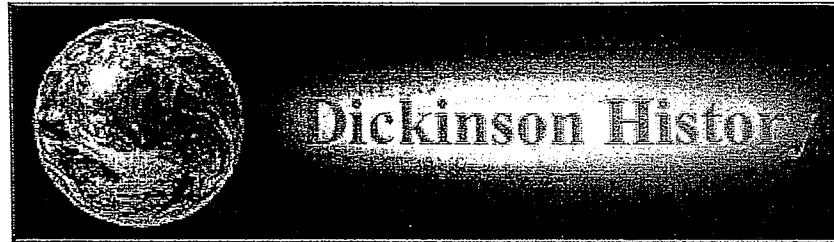
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CONCLUSIONS AND CONCLUSION

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Main



## Project Assignments

### Historical Editing Exercise

Welcome to the world of the working historian. In this project you will be faced with many of the problems and opportunities historians encounter as they work towards an interpretation of the past. In the end, you will produce your own unique contribution to the Dickinson archival collection. You will be working to transcribe and edit nineteenth century documents from Dickinson's history. Some of you will have letters and some will be working with student orations. Once upon a time, all Dickinson students were required to complete an oration to be delivered as a part of their graduation requirements.

Specifically, you will complete the following steps:

1. Prepare a precise and accurate typed transcript of the document, reproducing all you see before your eyes, including mistakes, line-throughs, and misspellings.
2. Read through the letter or oration and identify any person, group, event, place, or obscure reference about which information is needed to make the meaning of the piece more clear to the average informed reader. Number each one of these.
3. From the above prepare a set of "endnotes," outlining an explanation of each, with a full citation in Chicago style.
4. Finally, top off the oration with a contextual "headnote" explaining what the reader is about to see, including your judgement on the oration, noting glaring errors or confusions.

A sample of a well completed exercise is [here](#)

### Bibliographical Exercise

With your historical editing exercise, you have been assigned a document from the Dickinson Archives. On a topic drawn directly from this document, you will now prepare a bibliography stressing the secondary materials available on that subject. The resources you will be using here include books and scholarly articles ranging widely among historians who have written on this subject. (A simple definition of a "scholarly article" is a piece of writing authored by a professional scholar and published in a professional scholarly journal for the use of the professional scholar, rather than the general public.)

A minimum (you are encouraged to go further) with which to work would be thirty books and scholarly articles total. Five books and five scholarly articles must be annotated briefly. (Annotation simply means, in this case, a description of the work and its particular usefulness to the topic at hand. In addition, the annotation of two books from this group will include the citation of a book review of this particular work.) All bibliographical citations will be pinpoint accurate and in the Chicago style. Each entry will be followed by a notation in square brackets [ ] saying where and how you found this particular item. Keep a careful "log" of where you go. (For more on your "log," see below)

Then, a short self evaluation of your completed bibliography and the methods you used to complete this project, drawn from your log. ALL of these segments are important and will weigh in your evaluation on this project.

A sample of a recent well completed bibliographical exercise is [here](#).

### Library Exercise

### Archival Exercise

The staff of Archives and Special Collections will be in charge of this one. It will be interesting.

### The Biographical Project

You will be assigned a student from a Dickinson College class during the Civil War era. Your task here is to write as much of a biography as possible. Your detective work should include her life, work, and family. As you have already probably found out, time has largely left behind your person and you are going to speak for her and bring her back to life. The full biography including footnotes and short bibliography will be posted on your blog. You will also hand in a "hard copy."

Should you wish your work to be considered for publication in the *Encyclopedia Dickinsonia* and/or in the *House Divided Project*, you may also present your work in that style. Length will of course vary but you may shoot for 180-220 words. Presentation in ED or HD style means a photograph or portrait if possible, plus three sections, usually of one paragraph each, outlining early life and education, then career, and finally, personal life and end.

### The Main Project

Details will follow as student interests emerge but this will involve the period leading up to and including the American Civil War.

### THE ELECTRONIC HISTORIAN

To facilitate your efforts in the most up-to-date way, each student will "blog" their way through the semester, completing two short entries each week in their personal "blog." This will chart your efforts through the course and provide you with one of the most important lessons of historical research, namely "know where you have been in your research so that you know where you are going with your results." You may express progress, setbacks, elation, frustration and/or use the task as a place-keeper for ideas, thoughts on history, and notes on specific aspects of your projects, even drafts of your work in progress.

Good luck and good hunting.



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