

# Introduction to Historical Methods

HSTR 200-02 | Fall 2020  
Class meets Mondays, 1:00-1:50PM  
Room: Forestry Building 106

**Professor Claire Arcenas | [claire.arcenas@umontana.edu](mailto:claire.arcenas@umontana.edu) | office: LA 261**  
**office hours: via Zoom on Wednesdays 1-2PM, Fridays 11AM-Noon, and by appointment.**

“The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.”  
- L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (1953)

“Life, too, is like that. You live it forward, but understand it backward.”  
-Abraham Verghese, *Cutting for Stone* (2009)

## Course Overview:

This one-credit course will introduce you to the craft of studying and writing history. Students will learn how to devise and pursue a research question related to their own area of interest. Through discussions and readings, students will become familiar with the differences between primary and secondary sources, learn how to construct a bibliography and properly cite their sources, and grapple with how to ask and answer compelling questions about the past in writing. By working with librarians and the professor, students will learn how to conduct research in the Mansfield Library and online, using the many digital sources available to the historian today.

## Learning Outcomes:

By successfully completing this class, you will:

- learn the basics of conducting research in the Mansfield Library and online;
- gain an understanding of the craft of historical inquiry and argument;
- acquire foundational skills of close reading, diligent research, and historical writing.

## Required Texts:

- 1.) Arlette Farge, *The Allure of the Archives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015). ISBN-13: 978-0300198935. An electronic version of this book is available for free through the Mansfield Library and is linked on Moodle. If you would prefer a hardcopy version, you may find affordable copies available for purchase through several online booksellers.
- 2.) All other readings will be available on MOODLE or online through the Mansfield Library catalog.

## Description of Course Requirements, Assignments, and Grading:

### 1. Course Attendance, Participation and Short Reading Responses/In-Class Assignments (25%)

- ❖ Your attendance for this course is required. If you must miss a class due to illness, a family or personal emergency, or for a university sponsored activity, please email or speak with me as soon as you can to discuss any make-up work you will need to complete so we can assure you won't fall behind.
- ❖ Simply attending class, however, is not sufficient. Rather, active, thoughtful, and engaged participation is the key to your success in this class. When evaluating your participation, I place more value on the quality rather than the quantity of your contributions. I will also take into account improvement in your participation over the duration of the semester. When thinking about your participation in class, it might be helpful to imagine yourself as a co-discussion-facilitator;

participation means both constructively contributing to discussion and actively engaging with your peers. For example, asking a question counts as participation! Your contributions to discussion should be based closely on the readings you complete for each class.

- ❖ In preparation for some classes, you will also complete a short reading check-in assignment. You will get full credit for completing these and turning them in on time.

2. Assignment #1: Secondary Source Exploration (10%) \*\*Due 9/21\*\*
3. Assignment #2: Primary Source Exploration: Online Newspapers (10%) \*\*Due 10/5\*\*
4. Assignment #3: Government Documents Research Questions (10%) \*\*Due 10/19\*\*
5. Assignment #4: Archival Primary Source Exhibit Description (15%) \*\*Due 11/9\*\*
6. Assignment #5 Presentation on your Archival Discovery (10%) \*\*Presentations in class on 11/9\*\*
7. Assignment #6 Topic Discovery Paper and Research Reflection (20%) \*\*Due 11/16\*\*

**Grading Rubric:** This course will follow this grading rubric:

A: 93-100	C: 73-76
A-: 90-92	C-: 70-72
B+: 87-89	D+: 67-69
B: 83-86	D: 63-66
B-: 80-82	D-: 60-62
C+: 77-79	F: 59 and below

**Rationale:** For this class, you will notice that there are more frequent, shorter writing assignments rather than one or two longer assignments. Like so many things in life, articulating your ideas and arguments orally and in writing gets easier with practice. The more often you write, the easier it will be. So, don't panic: there may be more assignments than you are used to, especially for a 1-credit course, but they are short and, in the end, will make you better, more confident historians!

**COVID-19-Related Policies:** In accordance with University policy, for all our in-person classes, you are ***required to wear a face mask covering your nose and mouth*** at all times while inside the classroom. Your mask should not have a front valve on it, which does not protect those around you. You can find more details and up-to-date information from the University of Montana at <https://www.umt.edu/coronavirus> and <https://www.umt.edu/coronavirus/fall2020.php>. We will be following all the protocols outlined in UM's Healthy Fall 2020 Plan and adapt as necessary. In addition to the mandatory mask requirement, please make note of the following policies:

- You have been provided with a cleaning kit. You are expected to clean your personal work space when you arrive for class, and before you leave the classroom.
- I will be taking attendance and we will use a fixed seating arrangement in our classroom.
- You are discouraged from eating or drinking while inside our classroom (because both require you to remove your mask!).
- Stay home if you feel sick and/or if you are exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms. We will work together to ensure you don't fall behind in class.
- If you are sick and/or displaying COVID-19 symptoms, please contact the Curry Health Center at (406)243-4330 ASAP.
- Thank you for your vigilance! We are all in this together.

**Flexibility and Adaptability:** This semester, we will all need to be flexible as we navigate the uncertainties wrought by COVID-19. I will do my best to communicate any changes related to our class as quickly and clearly as I can. I will also do my best to accommodate any special circumstances that may arise and ask that you do the same.

**A Note on Office Hours:** I look forward to getting to know each of you! My office hours will be held virtually via Zoom this semester. If you can't make it during one of the times I set aside, please just email me to make an appointment. You can find the link for my Zoom office hours on our Moodle class site. You don't need to have a particular question or reason for dropping in. Feel free just to say hello and introduce yourself! During the week, I can be reached by email and will do my best to respond within 24 hours.

**Academic Honesty:** Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with UM's Student Conduct Code and conducting themselves accordingly. Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism and cheating, will result in appropriate disciplinary action and likely a failing grade. An easy rule to follow is that all work you produce for this class should be yours. Please speak with me if you have any questions.

**Students with Disabilities:** If you are a student with documented disabilities, appropriate accommodations will be made. To ensure that the proper steps can be taken, please speak with me as early in the semester as possible. It is your responsibility to speak with me and to provide the proper documentation from Disability Services for Students (DSS). You can visit [www.umt.edu/dss](http://www.umt.edu/dss) for additional details and information.

### Planned Schedule of Class Meetings, Readings, and Assignments:

**Week 1 (8/24):** Welcome and Introductions

- Please be prepared to share a bit about your general areas of interest. What draws you to studying history?
- After class today, please take a moment to introduce yourself on our Moodle class page. Please also reply to at least two of your classmates' introductions before our class meeting next week.

**Week 2 (8/31):** What is it that historians do?

**To do for today** (that is, before you come to class! Remember to look ahead in your syllabus!):

- Read selections from William Cronon, "Getting Ready to Do History," *Carnegie Essays on the Doctorate* (Carnegie Foundation, Palo Alto, 2004), 3-6. This is on MOODLE.
- As you read, take notes by writing down **three** things you learned, **two** things you have questions about, and **one** thing that struck you as being particularly interesting or surprising.
- Come to class prepared for a discussion about Cronon.

**Week 3 (9/7):** LABOR DAY – NO CLASS

- Have fun & stay safe this weekend!

**Week 4 (9/14):** Introduction to Library Resources (Secondary) with Mansfield Librarian Ben Chiewphasa **via Zoom.**

**To do for today:**

- Stay tuned for more details.

**Week 5 (9/21):** Why Are Citations Important for Arguments?

**To do for today:**

- Using *JSTOR*, find, download, **and read** this article:  
Anthony Grafton, "The Death of the Footnote," *Wilson Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 72-77.
- Watch the citation videos that are linked on MOODLE and take the short completion quiz.
- Please also be prepared to share some of your take-aways from Assignment #1, which is due today.

**Assignment #1 Due by 1:00PM**

**Week 6 (9/28):** Introduction to Online Library Resources (Primary) with Librarian Ben Chiewphasa **via Zoom.**

**To do for today:**

- Stay tuned for more details.

**Week 7 (10/5):** Class Discussion of Primary Sources: What Makes a Good Research Question?

**To do for today:**

-Be prepared to participate in a class discussion based around Assignment #2, which is due today.

**Assignment #2 Due by 1:00PM**

**Week 8 (10/12):** What Do Your Professors Research? A Virtual Roundtable **via Zoom.**

**To do for today:**

-Come to class prepared to ask questions of your history professors!

**Week 9 (10/19):** Introduction to the Virtual Archives at UM (& Beyond) with Prof. Donna McCrae **via Zoom.**

**To do for today:**

-Stay tuned for more details.

**Assignment #3 Due by 1:00PM**

**Week 10 (10/26):** Class Discussion of Researching in Archives and More

**To do for today:**

- Read Arlette Farge, *The Allure of the Archives*, pages 1-17; 23-46; 53-113; and 121-124.

-As you read, imagine materials (evidence!) from your life (now and/or in the past) has been placed in an archive. Brainstorm a list of things a historian would find (or not find!) in it fifty or a hundred years from now. Ask yourselves: what would the archive of \_\_\_\_ reveal about you? What would it hide? If you knew this archive was being created, would you destroy anything? Bring this with you to class.

**Week 11 (11/2):** Independent research day

THERE IS NO FORMAL CLASS MEETING THIS WEEK. I will be available during our regular class time to talk about your work on Assignments #4, #5, and #6.

**To do this week, on your own time:**

-Work on completing assignments #4 and #5.

-Begin work on assignment #6. (If you have chosen to use digitally-available manuscript material for assignment # 6, you will spend more time “in” the virtual archives. If you have chosen to use a government documents collection for assignment # 6, you still need to spend time “in” the archives to complete assignments #4 and #5, but you may wish to allocate the remainder of your time to other sources. We will talk more about this in class.)

**Week 12 (11/9):** In-Class Presentations

**Assignment #4 Due by 1:00PM & In-Class Presentations (Assignment #5)**

**Week 13 (11/16):** Conclusions and Reflections

**Assignment #6 Due by 1:00PM**

**More Information and Details Regarding Assignments #1 – 6 (all of this information, and more, is also provided on separate assignment sheets on Moodle!):**

**Assignment #1: Secondary Source Exploration \*\*Due via MOODLE before class on 9/21\*\***

- ❖ For this assignment, you should find one electronically available, scholarly book or article (a secondary source) on your general topic or area of interest using the Mansfield Library online catalog. In class we will

talk about what things to look for when finding a book or article to use. In your introduction to the library, you will learn how to find books and articles on your topic using the Mansfield Library online catalog. You should choose a book or article that was published in the last c. thirty years (i.e. after 1990).

- ❖ Once you have decided on a secondary source that you're interested in examining, complete these tasks and answer the following questions. You should be able to do so in a typed page or two. You may leave your responses in list form as they are here.

FOR BOOKS :

1. Once you have accessed your e-book via the Mansfield Library Catalog, take a look at your book's title page and publication information. Using the *Chicago Manual of Style* citation guidelines available on MOODLE and through the Mansfield library, properly cite your book first as you would for a footnote.
2. Next, cite your book as you would for a bibliographical entry.
3. Take a look at the book's table of contents and page through the book to get a sense of its scope. In a couple of sentences, write down what general topic(s) and historical time period(s) the book covers.
4. Now, read the introduction (or preface or first chapter, if there is no introduction) to your book. In two or three sentences, summarize the main argument the author is making or basic point of the book. You can note if the argument was difficult for you to find or if you still are not sure you found what the main argument is, but you should still put into your own words what the author seems to be doing in the book.
5. Next, record what types of citations you see the author using. Does s/he use footnotes, endnotes, a bibliographical essay, or a bibliography, for example? Are there many citations? Very few?
6. Finally, why were you drawn to this book? What seemed interesting to you about it? After spending the time you have with it, would you be interested in reading the whole thing?

FOR ARTICLES:

1. Once you have accessed your article via the Mansfield Library catalog, take a look at your article's publication information. Using the *Chicago Manual of Style* citation guidelines available on Moodle and through the Mansfield Library, properly cite your article as you would for a footnote.
2. Next, cite your article as you would for a bibliographical entry.
3. Reflect a bit on what journal your article is from. Is the journal geographically or chronologically focused, for example?
4. Take a look at the article's abstract to get a sense of its scope. In a couple of sentences, write down what general topic(s) and historical time period(s) the article covers.
5. Now, read the article. In two or three sentences, summarize the main argument the author is making or basic point of the article. You can note if the argument was difficult for you to find or if you still are not sure you found what the main argument is, but you should still put into your own words what the author seems to be doing in the article.
6. Next, record what types of citations you see the author using. Does s/he use footnotes, endnotes, a bibliographical essay, or a bibliography, for example? Are there many citations? Very few?
7. Finally, reflect on why you were drawn to this article. What seemed interesting to you about it? After spending the time you have with it, would you be interested in reading more articles by the author or other articles in the journal from which it came?

**Assignment #2: Primary Source Exploration: Online Newspapers \*\*Due via MOODLE by 1:00PM on 10/5\*\***

- ❖ Following the instructions given to you by Mansfield Librarian Ben Chiewphasa in his overview of the online newspaper databases available to you through Mansfield Library, find **two** newspaper articles related to your general topic or area of interest. The two articles should be **at least** twenty years apart (if possible). Using the citation guidelines on MOODLE, **cite the two articles** as you would for either a footnote or a bibliography and write three to five paragraphs (about two to three pages) addressing these questions. You do not need to

address these in order. Please follow the paper formatting guidelines available on MOODLE. In your three to five paragraphs, please address these questions:

1. What type of articles are they? (E.g. opinion? news? an obituary?)
  2. What is the **historical context** for each article? What prompted the authors to write each article?
  3. Compare and contrast your two articles. In a couple of sentences, describe what you notice about them. In what ways are they similar? How are they different? Do you notice any differences in language or content or style? How might the **historical context** you noted account for these differences?
  4. As a historian, what things might you need to keep in mind if you were using these as sources for a research paper? Consider, for instance, questions of bias, perspective, and purpose.
  5. What types of research topics or questions would these two articles help you answer? Include at least **two** in your write-up.
- ❖ Please stay tuned for instructions on downloading and sharing your articles with the class.

**Assignment #3: Government Documents Research Questions \*\*Due via MOODLE by 1:00PM on 10/19\*\***

- ❖ Following the instructions given to you by Librarian Ben Chiewphasa in his overview of the government documents collection at the Mansfield Library, find one government document that you could imagine using for research on your general area or topic of interest. Using the citation guidelines available on MOODLE and through the library, **cite the document** you found at the top of the page and answer these questions. You may leave them in list form, but please write in complete sentences.
1. Who created, authored, or produced the document?
  2. What is the date of the document? What is the historical context for the government document you've found? What events (big, small, international, local) are pertinent to the primary source?
  3. What are **three** historical questions you could imagine answering by using this document? In other words, what are three questions this source would help you answer?
  4. In about a paragraph, reflect on what other type of information you would need to know to be able to use the source you found for a paper or research project. For example, would you need to know more about the background, agenda, or perspective of the institution or author who produced it? What might you need to know about the event(s) surrounding its creation?

- ❖ Please stay tuned for instructions on downloading and sharing your document with the class.

**Assignment #4: Archival Primary Source Exhibit Description \*\*Due via MOODLE by 1:00PM on 11/9\*\***

- ❖ Imagine you are developing a public exhibit on your general topic or area of interest. You are in charge of finding a primary source (for example, a letter, photograph, or map) from one of the archives we will be discussing in class on 10/19 and 10/26 and writing the exhibit introduction to the source. You can think of your assignment as providing an overview description of the kind that usually accompanies an item being displayed in a public building, library, or museum.
- ❖ In about four to five paragraphs (c. 3 pages), include the necessary information you think someone would need to know about the source to be able to make sense of it. You should also reflect on what makes the source interesting to you.
- ❖ An additional handout for this assignment will be distributed later in the semester, and we will go over it in more detail.

**Assignment #5 Presentation on your Archival Discovery \*\*Presentations in class on 11/9\*\***

- ❖ In about three minutes, you will present your archival discovery (what you wrote about for Assignment #4) to the class. Please be prepared to **share an image** of your archival find and speak about what you found and what is interesting about it to you. Stay tuned for more details!

**Assignment #6 Topic Discovery Paper and Research Reflection \*\*Due via MOODLE by 1:00PM on 11/16\*\***

- ❖ A description of this assignment will be posted on Moodle later in the semester.