HISTORY 490--SENIOR SEMINAR ON AMERICAN SLAVERY
Summer Term, 2010

General Information:

This senior seminar in historical research and writing is designed as the culmination of your undergraduate history career. It combines a short historiographical seminar on an important historical topic--American slavery--with your own research for and writing of a thesis-based paper on some aspect of that topic. Further, you will present your seminar paper orally and prepare written and oral critiques of the seminar papers of your colleagues in the class.

In researching and writing your senior paper and critiquing those of other students, you will put into practice everything you have learned (and much that you can learn only through experience.) Your paper should be your best effort and reflect the finest thinking and writing of which you are capable. It is vitally important that you attend all designated class sessions. Please do not schedule events that would necessitate your missing days of class or that would interfere with the time needed for research and writing. I will take attendance; excused absences are given for medical and family emergencies only.

You must also allocate sufficient time to do well on your paper. Producing superior work requires devoting many hours to research and writing. You cannot "throw together" a paper of this magnitude. The abbreviated schedule of summer term (only seven weeks) further demands that you do such superior work very quickly. Because of these time constraints, we will meet as a class relatively few times. You are expected, however, to meet with me individually throughout the term during office hours or during our class hours on those days on which we do not meet. (To effectively schedule the time, please sign up on the sheet outside my door for consultations.) Each Friday, except July 23, you will also turn in a research log detailing hours spent on reading or research for this class, sources examined, and writing done.

N.B.: Prior to taking History 490, you must have taken History 200 along with several 300-level courses so that you understand historical method and have had experience with critical examination of primary and secondary sources and of historical monographs. Those who have not yet taken History 200 or who are doing so this term must drop the class.
Course Procedure:

Historiographical seminar: During the first week of the semester we will read and discuss one synthetic work on American slavery. The following is available for purchase in the bookstore:


Proposal: During the first days of the term, you will also prepare a proposal for your paper. The proposal, approximately five pages in length, should state your topic and its parameters—i.e., the paper’s specific geographical and chronological foci. Second, it should also summarize the secondary literature on the topic and describe just where your paper will fit within the historiographical discussion. Thus, your paper may not just re-do another historian’s work; your paper must make a significant contribution to historical knowledge by breaking new ground in some fashion.

Third, you should indicate a tentative thesis and the methodology you plan to use—what sources will you consult, and what questions will you ask of your data? Fourth, you should include a preliminary bibliography, divided into primary and secondary sources. This should include all sources that appear to be relevant, even though you may not have had time to read each yet. The proposal is due on Wednesday, June 30, at the beginning of class. I then will critique your proposals and return them to you on Friday, July 2.

Seminar Paper: During the next few weeks of the term, you will research and write your paper. Your seminar paper should be a thesis-based paper and make a scholarly contribution to American history. It should be article-length, approximately 20 pages of text, and based largely on primary sources. Any topic having some relation to American slavery is permissible. Be sure that you have ready access to sufficient primary sources to make your study feasible. You should, of course, understand the secondary literature on the topic so that you can place your work within that historical discussion.

The paper should be well-organized with complete documentation of all sources, quotations, and ideas. If you paraphrase, you must put ideas into your own words; if you alter the source only slightly, you are plagiarizing, even if you use a footnote. Further, remember, that to fail to credit others not only for their words but for their ideas is to steal their work. Plagiarism is an honor code violation and will be dealt with as such. (For more information on what constitutes plagiarism, please see the relevant section in the current BYU undergraduate catalogue.)

Correct, grammatical English is the minimum acceptable standard for a senior seminar paper; gracefully written prose is the objective.
Please use Turabian, sixth edition, for footnotes (or endnotes) and bibliographic form. Please note that I will not accept work with parenthetical references.

A note about research on the internet and in electronic databases: Primary sources available in electronic form can be very helpful, but the quality of information on the internet and even on CD-ROM varies tremendously—all the way from reliable web sites designed by government or university archivists following strict scholarly standards to sites thrown together by persons with some ax to grind and little regard for accuracy.

Unfortunately, there is far more variability with electronic sources than with printed primary sources, most of which have some kind of editorial control and the best of which have been prepared by experts who adhere to high standards of documentary editing. Further, historians should be able to handle manuscript and print sources as well as electronic data.

Thus, your paper may not rely solely on electronic databases, and you must include a short annotation in your bibliography for any you do use. Please indicate what entity designed and maintains the site and why you believe information contained therein is reliable.

PAPER DUE DATE: The first draft of the paper is due on Monday, July 26, and will constitute 15 percent of your final grade; the final draft is due on Monday, August 9, and will compose 50 percent of your total grade.

Oral Report: You will also present an oral summary of your paper for approximately 20 minutes in a forum based on the model of a professional historical meeting. One of your fellow students will then orally critique your paper for approximately five minutes. There will be two presentations and critiques per class hour, or four per day. Please see the calendar of this syllabus for scheduled dates. We will draw straws to determine the order of oral presentations.

Written Critiques of Colleagues’ Work: In addition to writing your paper and presenting it orally, you will write critiques of the work of two of your colleagues. A good critique is a helpful evaluation of a person’s work. A perceptive commentator not only points out problems but also praises what the writer has done well. Thus, one does not come to a colleague’s work with knives drawn, ready to slash the work to ribbons, but one applies the golden rule: if this were my paper, what would I want to have someone point out so that I could turn it into an article that I would be proud to have my grandchildren read? The commentator evaluates the strength of the thesis, relevance and sufficiency of the evidence,
the logical development of the argument, and clarity and power of
the prose.

Each critique should be approximately 5 pages and will be due on
July 30. (Please bring two copies of each critique--one for the
instructor and one for the person whose work you are assessing.)
You will also orally critique one of those papers on an assigned
date during the period August 2-August 6, or until all oral
presentations have been given.

PLEASE NOTE: All work must be finished by the beginning of class
on the day of the assigned deadline (with the exception of the
final paper, which is due in my office by 5 p.m. on August 9.)
Late work will not be accepted, except for cases of serious illness
or death in the family. Further, no "incomplete" grades will be
given for this class.

Grades will be weighted as follows:

- First drafts: 15%
- Final paper: 50%
- Written critiques: 15%
- Oral presentation and class discussion: 10%
- Class attendance: 5%
- Research logs: 5%

The following books are required for this course and are available
for purchase in the bookstore:


Turabian, Kate L. A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses,
and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers.
Revised by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M.
Williams, and the University of Chicago Press Editorial Staff.

Schedule of Class Meetings and Assignments:

June 21--Introduction; The Historical Process and The Nature of
History

**READINGS:** Kolchin, American Slavery; Turabian, A Manual for
Writers, pp. 5-23. Begin defining subject for paper
June 23--Defining a Subject and Writing the Proposal for the Paper; Fundamentals of Research
READEINGS: Kolchin, American Slavery

June 25--Discussion of Kolchin
READEINGS: Turabian, pp. 24-97, 129-130.

BEGINNING TODAY RESEARCH LOGS ARE DUE EACH FRIDAY, EXCEPT JULY 23RD. ON FRIDAYS ON WHICH WE DO NOT MEET AS A CLASS, LOGS ARE DUE IN MY OFFICE BY THE BEGINNING OF THE NORMAL CLASS PERIOD (2:00 P.M.).

During this first week the students will, in addition to attending the class meetings, also consult individually with the instructor in defining and narrowing a viable paper topic.

June 28--Fundamentals of Research and Argumentation; Fundamentals of Writing

June 30--Fundamentals of Writing, and Footnote and Bibliographic Form
Proposals due at the beginning of class; they will be returned on Friday.

July 2--One-hour class to return and discuss proposals; for remainder of class time, individual consultations by appointment. For those without such appointments, work on research.

July 5--Holiday

July 7-16--No class; work on research; individual consultations by appointment. Research logs due on Friday, July 9 and July 16, at 2:00 p.m. in my office.

July 19--Meet to discuss progress on papers; no additional class meetings until July 26. No research logs due on July 23.

July 26--First draft of paper due at beginning of class. Please bring original plus two xeroxed copies of paper for those critiquing your work. (Be sure to keep a copy for your records.) We will draw straws to determine the order of the oral presentations.

July 28--No class; work on critiques

July 30--All critiques due at the beginning of class; first drafts
of papers will be returned to students presenting on August 2; all others will be returned on August 2. Short class to exchange critiques. Research logs due.

Begin oral presentations on August 2:
20-minute presentation by writer
5-minute comment

August 2—Oral presentations (four per day)
August 4—Oral presentations
August 6—Oral presentations; research logs due
August 9—Final version of seminar paper due in my office by 5 p.m. (NO EXCEPTIONS!)