A Guide to Writing Your . . .

History
Senior Thesis

a.k.a. HIST 0700
Senior Independent Study

Academic Year
2018-2019
March 15, 2018

Dear Seniors,

If you have elected to write a thesis, this guidebook aims to help you succeed in that important endeavor. Included here are several documents that you should find useful. Please read these materials carefully, paying particular attention to deadlines and departmental policies about the thesis-writing process.

Best of luck on your journey as a historian.
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The Thesis Process: From Beginning to End

History Majors, neither double nor joint, please skip ahead to number 1 below.

Double majors. If your second major does not require a thesis, and thus you will write only a history thesis, please skip ahead to number 1 below.

Joint majors: The thesis requirements and procedures for joint majors depend on the specific majors. Your joint- non-history department may not include a thesis program of any sort. In that case, you may proceed under these history guidelines, with a thesis adviser from the history department. Start with number 1 below.

If your joint- non-history department has an optional honors thesis, and you choose to leave that second department out and simply complete a history thesis, proceed to number 1 below.

If your joint non-history department requires a thesis, or has an optional honors thesis, and you choose to complete one joint thesis to meet the requirements of both, or has a required one-semester senior essay or project that you will combine with your history thesis, you will need to find advisers and readers in both departments FROM THE START. Please speak to both department chairs about specific requirements for advising, readers, workshop attendance, and requirements for honors. This process can be complex and requires careful attention. Find out all the details before you settle on a topic and adviser in history.

1. How do I choose a thesis topic?

Getting Started: In the semester before you are registered for HIST 0700 – typically the previous Spring – select a topic that interests you. Remember that you are going to have to live with your topic for the better part of your senior year.

Keep in mind that you will need to narrow your topic sufficiently so that you can complete the research project in five months. This process involves crafting your inquiry in the form of a question that is neither too broad nor too narrow. For example, you may have started with a general curiosity about the Russo-Japanese war (The Russo-Japanese War: What’s Up with That?). But you will end up with something much more specific (Why did the American press back the Japanese until the war ended, then switch sides afterwards?). Your specific research question may hinge on which primary source materials are available in a language you can read.

The mandatory Senior Thesis Workshop next fall and winter term will provide you with some guidance, and perhaps more importantly, it will give you some intermediate deadlines. Please note that your first deadline comes well before next fall. You will need to be thinking about your thesis topic and exploring what might make it viable so that you will be able to submit a preliminary prospectus to the History Department by April 11, 2018.
Beginning Research: Your ability to access and understand your sources is essential to a successful research project. Determining what primary and secondary sources you can get your hands on is an important early step in the research process. It comes before you have even solidified your topic, but the search for sources will continue into your summer and into your first semester of HIST 0700 as well. Search library holdings here at Middlebury and beyond to identify the most important secondary sources (books and journal articles) related to your area of interest and take full advantage of Interlibrary Loan (ILL) services to request materials from distant places. In addition, do not hesitate to consult with your adviser, or during this early stage, with anyone else in the department. We also recommend that you consult Brenda Ellis (bellis@middlebury.edu), history’s reference librarian and our department’s liaison to the library.

First Deadline!: To articulate your interest in a senior thesis topic, you will create a preliminary prospectus and bibliography to submit to the Department by or before April 11, 2018. **This is the semester before your thesis technically begins.**

This two-page document will serve as a declaration of your desire to pursue a particular line of historical inquiry and will give the department faculty a good indication of how grounded you have become in that topical area. On page one of this prospectus, please indicate:
1) Your name
2) The semesters in which you hope to write your thesis
3) A working idea for your thesis
4) A one-paragraph description of your proposed project
5) An indication of faculty members you think might be appropriate as a thesis adviser.

On page two please include a working bibliography, divided into sections for primary and secondary sources.

The department chair will notify you before the end of the semester who your thesis adviser will be. We encourage you to continue to read and think about your thesis over the summer months.

2. How do I proceed once my first 0700 semester begins?

The mandatory Senior Thesis Workshop will meet several times during the fall semester and provide you with some guidance to meet the four fall deadlines listed below. You will hear from the faculty who are facilitating the Thesis Workshop soon after you return to campus in September. Though this independent 0700 project does not operate the same way as most of your other courses, please remember that working on your senior thesis is one whole course within your fall suite of courses, and it demands that much of your time and attention.

When you return from summer break, your thinking about your research topic may have evolved since you submitted your preliminary prospectus in April. Once you are back at school, we expect you to consult your thesis adviser about the development of your project idea. We also expect that you will revise your preliminary prospectus into a more fully developed case for your project. You should know why and how you aim to proceed with your research question.
**Second Deadline!: You will be required to submit a revised prospectus to your assigned adviser no later than Thursday, September 27th at 4:30 PM.** (This deadline applies to Fall/Winter and Fall/Spring thesis students.). Failure to meet this deadline will result in an official Course Warning.

A successful prospectus at this stage will range from 3 to 5 pages, plus a bibliography of sources divided into primary and secondary materials. Your revised prospectus should:

1. Define the **topic** as specifically as possible, including the span of time involved.

2. Define and ask one or more **key historical questions.** What question will you ask and answer in your research and writing? What drives your curiosity? For help on formulating questions see the Bowdoin history guide, section 3c. [http://www.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/](http://www.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/)

   AND: this handy guide to historical questions: [http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/questions.htm](http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/questions.htm)

3. Place both topic and questions in the context of the most relevant and recent scholarly work. Hone in on the secondary works that address topics and questions similar to yours.

4. Explain the significance of the topic and query: This is what we call the “so what” question. If, upon hearing you briefly describe your thesis project, your friend says, “So what? Why is that a worthwhile inquiry?,” you should have an answer to the “so what” question. Be able to explain what compels you to ask your big research question and devote yourself to seeking answers.

5. Describe the key primary and secondary sources and a plan for the first phase of research. The purpose of this requirement is to assure yourself and your adviser that there is indeed enough material (both primary and secondary) available to ensure a successful investigation of the topic chosen.

Compiling this prospectus as well as the preliminary one in the spring requires that you delve into the secondary works in your area. You must gain familiarity (in the spring and fall) with the main lines of the story related to your topic and the interpretations that other historians have offered. Don’t let September slip away from you without setting the important groundwork for your thesis research. Read, read, read. Search for evidentiary sources. Formulate your plan. Meet with your adviser. And then do it all some more.

**3. How do I move from prospectus to paper?**

The six or seven weeks between early October and Thanksgiving Break can be an exciting time to develop your ideas. Commit yourself to spending several hours each week poring over historical documents that might be relevant to your project query, taking notes on them, raising questions about them, and making sense of them as they relate to your now solid understanding of the secondary literature on your topic.
You will consult with your thesis adviser and create a writing schedule for these middle weeks that makes sense for your project. The faculty leaders of your thesis workshop will also work with you on particular assignments that will help you make progress on your research and gain command of the relevant secondary and primary sources. You will complete three assignments in these middle weeks of the fall semester. We suspect that you will find it easy to complete them in the order laid out below. If you have good reason to complete them following a different order, then the 700 faculty with the approval of your adviser will allow you to do that as long as you hand in all three assignments.

**Third Deadline!:** Having benefited from the revision process for your prospectus and the feedback received from your adviser about it in early October, it makes sense to expand your treatment of the secondary literature into a historiographical summary of the research on your topic. This document (approximately five pages in length, but seek guidance from your adviser) should focus on the historians who have charted this research territory before you, their research questions, methodology, and conclusions, as well as where you see yourself and your project design in relation to their projects. Here you can expose the limitations of the existing literature and stake out a niche for yourself. This **historiographical summary is due to your adviser and your workshop faculty on or before Thursday, October 18th at 4:30 PM.***

**Fourth Deadline!:** Building a strong understanding of the historical background will be necessary for you to write a thesis. **By Thursday November 1st at 4:30 PM, please submit to your adviser, your workshop faculty and your assigned peer reviewers,** 10-15 pages of writing that includes historical background, explanation of terms and additional writing that establishes the narrative in which you’ll be testing your research question. **Please include a one-page outline for your thesis (using brief bulletin points) and indicate where you estimate that this writing sample fits into your work.**

**Fifth Deadline!** We ask that you **submit to your thesis adviser and your workshop faculty a package of the refined written work you have accomplished so far (totaling 20-25 pages) by Monday, November 19th at 4:30 PM.** This writing submission should show signs of careful work and polish. It must include legible and clear footnotes and bibliography, **even if these may be added to or altered in later drafts.**

After the Thanksgiving break you will be able to consult with your adviser, further analyze primary sources, and revise your work. You may be able to submit an additional 8-10 pages of writing to your adviser before you leave for the December break. **Your timely completion of all of this work and your consistent, robust participation in the thesis workshop throughout the fall will provide the basis upon which you get a Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory grade for HIST 0700 in the fall semester.** (The fall semester grade will be changed to duplicate the winter or spring semester grade once your thesis has been submitted and department faculty have evaluated it.)

In your second semester of thesis work, you will negotiate with your adviser a schedule for the submission and discussion of more sections of your thesis writing. The thesis workshop faculty will also hold mandatory meetings (in January) with all thesis students. Dates and schedule to be determined. Please remember that the research and the writing of the thesis should reflect your
own independent work. We expect that your adviser, peer writers and workshop faculty will help provide you with constructive feedback.

4. How do I wrap this project up?

Your project should explore an engaging, well-conceived question, and it should answer that question using sound methodology and engaging in a careful examination of the most relevant primary sources. By the end of your second semester of thesis work, you should be able to advance an argument that reflects a preponderance of evidence and that you can situate in the larger context of the accumulated scholarly wisdom on the subject. We believe that 55-70 pages allow you to make a meaningful argument with rich and varied materials. If you go beyond 70 pages, you should cut some material.

The final copy of your thesis will include several components that must go together in a logical order. Once you have completed your annotated bibliography and polished the thesis itself, you will need to create a title page, an abstract, and, if you wish, a table of contents. Your abstract should state the thesis title, the year and month of completion, your adviser's name, a brief one-paragraph abstract, and a short bibliography of your main sources. Examples of a title page and abstract are included in this booklet. Assemble the various parts of your thesis in the order below before taking it to the Reprographics Office on campus or the UPS Store in town to be bound with an acetate cover. You should allow at least one business day for Reprographics to bind your thesis before it is submitted. The History Department will cover the cost of binding 2 copies of your thesis at Reprographics. Simply ask the staff person to charge the History Department.

Title Page
Abstract
Table of Contents
Thesis Body w/ Footnotes or Endnotes
Annotated Bibliography

For final submission, deliver two bound copies of your thesis to the History Department Coordinator, Claire Wilkinson. A pdf version of your thesis should also be submitted electronically to Ms. Wilkinson (cwilkinson@middlebury.edu) by the thesis deadline. If your thesis is awarded honors, we keep one copy and the Library keeps one.

5. How long should my thesis be?

55-70 pages are the acceptable range. This does not include your bibliography or any additional materials you may wish to put in an appendix. It does, however, include your footnotes. Your thesis should have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and should encompass the full arc of a story in 55-70 pages. It should capture and hold your reader’s attention with crisp, clear prose, and it should convey the wonder that you have felt while pursuing this historical investigation.
6. What style should I follow?

Please consult Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, Eighth Edition. Please use the Notes & Bibliography system, NOT the Author-Date system. This style is referred to as CMS for Chicago Manual of Style. Theses should be typed, double-spaced with notes at the bottom of the page. The bibliography should have two sections, one for primary sources and one for secondary sources, with the most important primary and secondary sources annotated using 2-3 sentences. For examples, see page 18.

7. How flexible is the thesis deadline?

Not at all, if you want to be considered for honors. There is, however, a two-week "grace period" after the deadline. There is no grade penalty for submissions during this period, but you lose any chance for departmental honors if you utilize the grace period. Any thesis submitted after the two-week grace period is subject to a grade penalty, which may not permit graduation on schedule. Please see 2018-2019 deadlines on page 13.

8. Once I submit my thesis, how will it be evaluated?

The following elements are essential for a successful history thesis. You have encountered many of these before in other department coursework, but the senior thesis gives you the longest time and the greatest opportunity to address them all on your own. Two faculty readers will evaluate each thesis on an individual basis, but they will consider all of these components when determining a final thesis grade.

a. Bibliography: This should be extensive, making use of all available and appropriate secondary and primary sources, including inter-library loan materials. You must annotate your bibliography.

b. Historiography: You should demonstrate familiarity with the most influential secondary literature written about your subject, especially any debates or disagreements among historians. Show an informed comprehension of the issues that have been raised by previous writers, and articulate how your research relates to what others have already written.

c. Primary sources: Primary sources are the foundation of historical research. Your thesis should show that you based your conclusions on the primary sources, not that you looked for primary sources to support a pre-conceived idea.

d. Argument: To make the thesis your own, you must advance an argument clearly in one or two sentences in your introduction. Your argument should inform your entire thesis, from start to finish. The coherence and originality of your argument, as well as its relationship to existing secondary literature, are important.

e. Methodology: You should exercise historical sensitivity and insight in constructing your argument. Weigh evidence carefully and bring a critical analysis to bear on it. If you find alternate approaches to the same evidence, take them into account. Consider both the
strengths and weaknesses of your argument and evidence.

f. **Writing:** Clear writing is inseparable from clear thinking. You should eradicate all typographical errors, grammatical mistakes, and misspellings, but you should also look deeper and more critically at what you are trying to say. Incoherence and lack of organization in your writing are serious impediments that will render even the best thesis research incomprehensible. Give yourself enough time to write, revise, and consult with your adviser. However, do not look to your adviser to be your copy editor. YOU are responsible for the clarity, precision, and presentation of your own writing.

  g. **Interpretation:** You should try to derive broad conclusions from your research. This requires critical thinking, asking the right questions, testing the evidence, and considering its implications. It also requires the ability to generalize, to perceive universals in specific historical problems.

In addition to the criteria listed above, the history faculty will consider the inherent difficulty of the topic and the nature and limits of available sources when considering your grade. There are no automatic percentages awarded to any of these categories.

Your thesis readers will read your thesis closely, assess it collaboratively, and send you an evaluation letter. Given the time needed for both readers to finish the thesis, meet to discuss it, and compose your letter, it may be a number of weeks before you receive a grade. Fall/Winter theses will not normally be graded until the spring semester, unless the student is graduating in March 2019.

**9. Will I defend my senior thesis?**

If your thesis is handed in on time (by the first deadline), AND your adviser feels it has a chance of earning B+ or better and you already have a minimum GPA in **History of 3.4**, you will be given an oral examination on your thesis. Both your adviser and second reader will discuss your thesis with you at the defense. This is a friendly, professional conversation that usually lasts 30 to 60 minutes. Your oral defense may leave your thesis grade unchanged, or it may raise the grade slightly, but it cannot reduce it. We may ask you to clarify certain points and to indicate how your work relates to a larger historical picture. If you qualify for an oral defense, feel free to ask your adviser about how best to prepare for it. Your faculty readers will write your evaluative letter after the thesis defense.

**10. How does my thesis grade influence possible honors distinction at graduation?**

For **HONORS**: Students must have a 3.4 History course average at Middlebury (without HIST 0700 grade) and a thesis grade of “B+” or better.

For **HIGH HONORS**: Students must have a 3.5 History course average at Middlebury (without HIST 0700 grade) and a thesis grade of “A-” or better.

For **HIGHEST HONORS**: Students must have a 3.67 History course average at
Middlebury (without HIST 0700 grade) and a thesis grade of “A.”

The chair of the History Department calculates a major’s GPA by averaging grades according to the following priority: 1) All Middlebury College HIST courses; 2) Only those Middlebury College cross-listed courses needed to meet major requirements as stated in the catalog; 3) Accepted Off-campus or study-abroad courses as stated in the catalog.

Will the department, in calculating my major GPA, round the number up, i.e. from 3.667 to 3.7 or 3.448 to 3.5? No. The history department policy does not mathematically round the number up to meet the major GPA levels required for honors: 3.4 (honors), 3.5 (high honors), or 3.67 (highest honors).

Grading Guide

We realize that students would like to understand how their readers have determined the final grade. We have attempted to give you a sense of our grading scale, but please discuss specifics with your adviser. Faculty readers also take into consideration unquantifiable aspects such as the overall difficulty of the topic and assessment and availability of sources and the quality of the defense.

An A thesis is an excellent thesis that shows the student’s dedication and skill. The student has met all deadlines, has attended the senior thesis workshop, and has produced a clearly written and well-organized work with an excellent historiographical analysis and a strong annotated bibliography. The writer has conducted a close and critical reading of primary and secondary sources and has a clearly defined argument supported by evidence that takes into consideration historical context. Furthermore, this thesis follows all the guidelines laid out in this guide and correctly uses Kate Turabian to properly document all sources. The writer has also engaged in a stellar defense of his/her/their work.

An A- thesis is also an excellent thesis. Overall, the student has produced a clearly written and well-organized work. It also demonstrates that the writer has conducted a close and critical reading of primary and secondary sources and has a clearly defined argument supported by evidence and takes into consideration historical context. The thesis follows all the guidelines laid out in this guide, and also correctly uses Kate Turabian to properly document all sources. The writer has also engaged in a very good defense of his/her/their work. The A- is different from the A thesis if there are a few typos, missing sources, or a few sections of the thesis that do not meet the "A" standard above.

A B+ is very good and is the threshold for honors. B+ indicates that the student has dedicated significant effort to the completion of the work and has followed many of the aspects of an A-thesis. The student has also produced a well-organized work that demonstrates a critical reading of primary and secondary sources, for example. The student has a reasonably defined argument supported by evidence and makes a clear attempt to consider historical context. The writer has also engaged in a very good defense of his/her/their work and has met all of the department’s deadlines. The B+ thesis may have sections that need more clarity or sources.
A B thesis is a good thesis. It demonstrates many aspects of B+ level work, and the writer’s hard work is evident. However, this thesis falls short in either the organization and clarity of writing, the formulation and presentation of its argument, or the quality of research. Often the readers would like to see improvements and consistency in the analysis of sources and a clearer and more coherent argument throughout the work. Some “B” theses may demonstrate interesting insights into the topic under investigation. Others show evidence of independent thought, but the argument is not presented convincingly.

A B- thesis has elements that make it a good thesis. The student has demonstrated a command of the theme or issue under research or a reasonable command of the research material and the historical context. The B- thesis may include a good bibliography, but the author has failed to sustain a convincing argument. This thesis may also have a number of other weakness, including writing, argument, organization, or use of evidence, or not following all of the guidelines.

A C+, C, or C- thesis reads more like a summary of ideas and information. And does not adequately demonstrate historical context. It suffers from factual errors, unclear writing, or poor organization. Typically, a C-range thesis also lacks primary research. Many have not followed all of the stipulated guidelines.

A D-F thesis demonstrates a number of serious deficiencies or severe flaws in the student's command of the thesis. It also indicates a student’s lack or neglect of responsibilities. A student who has received an “F” may not graduate on time with a major in history. Severe lateness in submission of a thesis may also result in the final grade of D or F as a consequence of the penalty for lateness.

A Note on Faculty advisers

Please note thesis advisers are assigned by the department to ensure a more even distribution of advisees. In the meantime, do not hesitate to talk to any faculty member who can help you with a topic you are considering. There is no need to wait for an adviser to be assigned before doing preliminary reading and exploring ideas and resources. Please consult the history department website for information about the teaching and scholarship and leave schedules of the history department faculty: http://www.middlebury.edu/academics/hist/faculty
## Major Thesis Deadlines

**2018-2019**

**Due at 4:30 pm ET**

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<th>Prelim Prospectus &amp; Bib Due to Dept.</th>
<th>Revised Prospectus &amp; Bib Due to Adviser</th>
<th>First Section Due to Adviser</th>
<th>Final Copy Due to Dept. Coordinator</th>
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No alterations will be made to the deadline schedule except in extraordinary circumstances. Permission to alter this schedule must be both requested and secured in writing from your adviser and the Department Chair. Unless otherwise noted, **all deadlines fall due at 4:30 p.m.** on the stated day. **You may NOT** turn in your thesis to Security or to leave it outside the History office door after hours. You will have to turn it in the next day, and it will be considered late. Be aware that there is great demand for the use of college printers as deadlines draw near across campus. Don't wait until the last day to print and be sure to save your work externally. A late thesis will be reduced by one third of a letter grade for every two days late. Late theses will be penalized by a departmental committee. Regardless of grade, late theses will not be eligible for honors.
Date Reminder List:

A. PRELIMINARY PROSPECTUS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY: **Due Wednesday April 11, 2018**

B. FULL PROSPECTUS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY: **Due Thursday, September 27, 2018**. Failure to meet this deadline will result in the student being placed on warning.

D. FIRST SUBSTANTIAL SECTION: Both Fall/Winter and Fall/Spring thesis writers must submit their first 20-25 page section by **Monday, November 19, 2018**. Failure to submit this compilation of polished, thoroughly reviewed, expanded pages will result in a grade of "U" for the first semester.

E. SUBMISSION OF FINAL COPIES:

1) FALL '18/WINTER '19: **Due Friday, February 1, 2019**. Mid-year graduates should submit their theses by **Monday, January 28, 2019**. Those mid-year graduates who wish to forfeit honors must submit their theses no later than **Friday, February 1, 2019**.

2) FALL ‘18/SPRING ‘19: **Due Friday, March 22, 2019**. The Department will permit a Fall/Spring thesis only under special circumstances and with permission of the Department Chair. A Fall/Spring thesis submitted after Friday, April 26, 2019 will receive an "I" or "F" (as appropriate). Any thesis submitted after Friday, May 10, 2019 will not be read in time to permit a student to graduate on schedule.

3) WINTER ‘19/SPRING ‘19: **Due Monday, April 22, 2019**. The Department will permit a Winter/Spring thesis only under special circumstances and with permission of the Department Chair. Students who were abroad their junior year and who are enrolled in HIST 0600 in the fall may write a winter/spring thesis.

4) SPRING ‘19/FALL ‘19: **Due Monday, November 25, 2019**. This option is permitted only under exceptional circumstances, with permission of the Department Chair.

F. GRACE PERIOD: For all theses, except theses submitted by mid-year graduates, there is a 14-day grace period following the final submission dates. Theses submitted during the grace period will not be eligible for Departmental honors or an oral defense. However, there will be no grade penalty.
Writing a History Senior Thesis: A Student’s Perspective

By Jiya Pandya ’17

• *Pick A Topic That Is Yours*

You and your thesis are in it together for the long haul, so find an area of research that will hold your interest. In other words, you need to care about what you’re studying. For some of you, this might mean burrowing into something you already know a lot about, for others, it might mean diving into something unfamiliar. Whichever it is for you, make sure you’re excited about it!

Part of having a topic that feels meaningful to you is knowing that your work adds, in however small a way, to the broader discipline. Start broad – think of themes, methodologies, questions, time-periods, demographics, geographies, and issues that you have enjoyed learning about before. Keep in mind which combinations or intersections most strike you, and begin to organize your ideas into wide categories like “Caste and the Partition of India” or “Women and the Civil War.” Once you have these, do some preliminary research into work already done by historians in this realm. It is important to know what has been said before so that you can gauge the feasibility of finding sources on your topic, and so that you aren’t reinventing the wheel for your field.

When you have skimmed some of the literature, begin to narrow further, asking what angle you can take that does not rehash previous work. It is difficult to find a specific, unique argument, especially when you start and don’t have a clear grasp on your subject – take baby steps. Refine your categories to reflect a more specific geography, demographic, or phenomenon; try “the Indian National Congress’s Rhetoric on Caste in 1947” or “Widows in Antebellum South Carolina Planter Culture.” Get creative with how you zoom in. You may find a new source that has been overlooked, a new perspective on a previously-used source, a new link between concepts, or a new methodological approach to your topic. Remember that you have your own distinctive skills and experiences going into this thesis – languages you speak, connections to sources or archives, or experiences that drive your interest in your work. Build on these, and you’ll be on your way to a solid project.

• *Make the Most of Resources Around You*

Take advantage of the wealth of archival, academic, monetary, and networking resources available to you. Whether or not you are studying U.S. history, the College’s Library and Special Collections offer physical and online access to a vast array of primary sources like newspapers, letters, pictures, and memoirs. Talk to one of the research librarians early on in the process – they are treasure-troves of information and will be able to guide you to a variety of different collections and subscriptions. Look beyond Middlebury College too. If you are interested in a local topic, visit the Sheldon Museum, Rokeby Museum, or the University of Vermont – there might be documents there previously untouched by historians, allowing you to do original research. Apply for senior work funding from the CTLR if you identify a large collection of materials in a library or museum...
somewhere else, and take the opportunity to travel like a professional historian! Lastly, don’t be shy in asking your advisors for suggestions on archives or experts within their network with whom they can connect you, and reach out to them. You can make your thesis a lot more dynamic by reaching out and asking for guidance.

Remember also to seek support from your professors and peers. The thesis can be an isolating, overwhelming process, so ask for help as often as you need it! Your relationship with your advisor does not have to consist only of deadlines and grading – it can also be a space in which you can brainstorm ideas, ask a diverse array of questions, and seek advice on the research and writing process. Similarly, if not more importantly, lean on each other. Take time during the thesis workshops and other classes to connect with your cohort of fellow writers – consider setting up study-groups, accountability mechanisms, or coffee/beer dates where you talk about parts of your thesis you’re struggling with, questions you are excited about, or sources you may want to share. Having a community who understands what you are dealing with can be both intellectually and personally nourishing.

- **Outline and Write, Early and Often**

It’s easy to think that churning out 50-70 coherent pages of writing is the most difficult task in writing a thesis, but trust me, your month of intensive this-thesis-takes-up-all-my-time writing will be made so much easier if you organize your paper as you go.

Spend the first few weeks reading everything you can. As you read, take copious, organized notes. Notes can include direct quotes from the texts, paraphrased summaries of the source, and questions and observations you have about what you’re reading. If you’re chugging through a series of secondary sources, divide them by theme or chronology early so that you can use them for your historiography. If you’re tackling data or primary sources, keep track of the ones that compliment or contradict one another. Outline your thesis statement when you begin sorting through sources, however vague your argument, and change it as you receive more information. Jot down page numbers and create citations early. Having comprehensive, organized information will make sure that you aren’t scrambling last minute and will add structure, meaning, and rigor to your work.

As you outline, write, and as you write, edit. You will hear the phrase “write early, write often” many times over the course of your thesis project, and while it can be daunting to write when you aren’t entirely sure of what you’re saying, it is essential to put words to paper. Turn your notes into polished paragraphs, focusing on small, manageable sections at a time. You and your advisor will be able to come back and consolidate these sections towards the end of your thesis process – in fact, your project and paper will *most definitely* change, and you should be open and ready for repeated cycles of feedback. Nevertheless, writing early in small chunks will help you practice articulating what you want to say. Attention to detail in the first few stages will make editing a lot easier towards the end too.

- **Pace Yourself**
This is, ultimately, your thesis, and you know yourself best. Identify how and when you study best, know your capacity, and trust your own schedule. Whether you are the kind of person who plugs away for hours at a stretch on the weekend or prefers to write in 45 minute bursts every day, communicate with your advisor about how you work most productively and come up with your own, individual plan. Do not compare yourself to your peers – there is no “right” way to structure your time.

Finally, remember to take breaks. As cheesy as this sounds, the thesis is a marathon, not a sprint. It can be easy to go full throttle and then quickly burn out, so make sure you’re pausing to have fun, both with this project and outside it!
"And What is a Woman, Pray?"
Amelia Bloomer and the Ideal of True Womanhood

By Sarah Henry Pollnow

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in the Department of History: Middlebury College

January 31, 2014

I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment.
"'And What is a Woman, Pray?' Amelia Bloomer and the Ideal of True Womanhood"

My thesis analyzes how Amelia Bloomer (1818-1894) interacted with the antebellum ideal of True Womanhood, which identified "piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity" as women’s cardinal virtues. In 1849 her temperance principles led her to become one of the first female newspaper editors. Her newspaper, the Lily, had a conservative character and reflected the ideal of True Womanhood throughout most of its first year, despite some uneasiness about the desirability of submissiveness. The tone of the paper shifted dramatically from 1850-1854 when Bloomer became convinced of the need for female suffrage, became involved in dress reform, and began lecturing publicly. Her dress reform activities garnered particular attention because the "Bloomer costume," as the attire soon became known, seemed manly because it involved pantaloons. As Bloomer negotiated her new celebrity, she articulated a new ideal of womanhood. She still insisted that women were pious, pure, and had important domestic responsibilities, but she called for women to apply those virtues to all of society. In effect, she wanted to emancipate the True Woman from societal constraints so that women, their domestic households, and all of society would benefit. Amelia and her husband moved to Ohio in 1854 and then to western Iowa in 1855. Soon afterwards she slipped into a period of semi-retirement. She continued to give speeches during the remaining decades of her life, and these speeches demonstrate that she articulated a third and final ideal of womanhood. She transcended the True Womanhood framework as she de-emphasized women's domesticity and identified self-interest as a valid reason for women to enter the workforce; she also insisted upon male domestic responsibilities. The result was that she effectively called for a de-sexing of gender roles, though she remained somewhat ambivalent about the extent of male and female differences and similarities.

Sources Include:

Lily (Seneca Falls, NY; Mount Vernon, OH, Richmond, IN), 1849-1856
Samples of Annotated Bibliography Entries

Primary Sources


Barquet’s comprehensive anthology of poetry published by *Ediciones El Puente* is the only one to be published. His critical essay challenges the taboo that has surrounded the study of *Ediciones El Puente* in Cuba. His analysis aims to give a comprehensive look at the group by including all their published work which makes it possible for other historians to work on this lesser studied group.


This is a speech that Nitze gave right after Reagan announced the Strategic Defense Initiative in 1983. I used this speech for the same purpose of demonstrating how Nitze intended for SDI to be strictly a research initiative that did not go beyond its purpose of getting the Soviets to participate in negotiations on arms control.

Juan Mauricio Rugendas Letters (MS 271). Special Collections and University Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

This is a collection of almost 200 letters that Rugendas received from friends Oro, Espinosa, and Godoy between 1835 and 1845. It served as the most important set of primary source evidence for this study.

Secondary Sources:


This book is the definitive work on Japanese Internment. Daniels argued that internment was due in large part to racial prejudice and discrimination. This book contained a significant amount of information that influenced my thinking on both detainment and reparations.


I used this source to analyze the affects tax reform, or the lack thereof, had on Boston’s age of urban renewal, and how the new governing coalition used it to spark the commercial construction boom.


This is another integral source to research on the importance of cultural production in shaping a Revolutionary mentality. Medin studies the impact of culture on this process and his analysis show what was at stake in the early years of the Revolution. This work not only gives a detailed analysis, but also gives credence to the position of understanding Cuba through its cultural policies.