

## **History 536: Sources and Methods**

Fall 2021: Online

Professor: Dr. Audra Jennings

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Office Hours: By appointment. Please use my Calendly link to schedule an appointment: <https://calendly.com/audra-jennings/30min>. Please reach out to me by email if you have difficulty finding a time that works for you.

**Course Description:** This course introduces a range of methods for scholarship in the field of history, including how to develop research questions, identify and access archives, and utilize primary sources. The course examines methodological conflicts that have shaped the historical profession.

### **Students will:**

- Analyze the work of historians and consider what professional historians do and how historians, both in the past and present, have approached historical research.
- Develop a clear understanding of how historians in numerous subfields frame and answer historical questions.
- Develop and hone skills critical to historical research, including locating, analyzing, interpreting, contextualizing, and managing primary sources.
- Identify and assess various types of sources and research methods as well as the limitations of various sources/methods.
- Hone the ability to build and communicate effective historical arguments drawing on different types of sources.
- Evaluate various types of historical writing/production.
- Develop a strong understanding of the relationship between evidence and argument.
- Develop a clear sense of how historians' experiences and ideas shape historical work and how historians understand this relationship.
- Develop a nuanced understanding of how historians share historical research, including through traditional forms such as the peer-reviewed article, academic conference, and scholarly monograph, but also through public history forms and other public-facing methods.

**Student expectations and requirements:** Students will be expected to find and analyze a variety of primary sources, analyze an oral history interview, summarize and analyze scholarly arguments, particularly assessing historians' use of sources, and construct an annotated primary-source bibliography.

### **Course Themes:**

- What is History?
- The Sources Historians Use
- Drawing Evidence from Sources
- The Archive and Its Problems
- Histories, Big and Small
- Place and the Historian
- Hidden Subjects

- Tools: Databases, Indexes, Apps, and More
- Historians and Data
- Oral History
- The Historian in the History
- Storytelling and History
- Structuring Arguments
- Public History

## Required Materials

Sharon Block, *Rape & Sexual Power in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

Julio Capó Jr., *Welcome to Fairyland: Queer Miami Before 1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives, Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

Andy Horowitz, *Katrina: A History, 1915-2015* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020).

Jessica Marie Johnson, *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

*Paris is Burning* (film)—Available to stream through the WKU Library (Kanopy).

Kiran Klaus Patel, *The New Deal: A Global History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

Emily Skidmore, *True Sex: The Lives of Trans Men at the Turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2017).

Additional articles and book chapters assigned will be available on Blackboard.

## OVERVIEW OF ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

### Grade Breakdown

40% Discussion Participation  
10% Primary Source Analysis  
10% Oral History Analysis  
20% Annotated Primary Source Bibliography  
20% Overview Analysis of Sources

**Paper Guidelines and Notes on Grading:** The grade you earn on your written work in this course will be based on your ideas and how you have conveyed those ideas in writing. Beyond presenting your ideas, you will also be graded on your ability to analyze and synthesize material from various sources. As I read your papers and review your projects, I will have several standards in mind: clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth/complexity, and significance.

All assignments must be typed in a standard, 12-point font format. Papers should be double-spaced with one-inch margins (please note that this requirement for double spacing does not apply to the annotated bibliography). Citations must conform to *The Chicago Manual of Style*'s guidelines for the "Notes and Bibliography" system (not the author-date system). Style and grammar matter, so plan to carefully proofread all of your papers. Finally, all assignments must be submitted via Blackboard.

Discussion Participation: Beyond the reading, film viewing, and research you will do independently, this course centers discussion and engagement. As a result, discussion participation constitutes a significant part of your grade (40 percent). Each week you will be expected to participate in the course discussion board on Blackboard. The readings for this course highlight a range of methodologies, approaches, and source types. Some raise questions about what historians do, how they do their work, and who/what they study. To earn full participation credit, you will need to respond meaningfully to the reading and engage in discussion with your peers on the course Blackboard Discussion board each week. I will post some questions to start the conversation. You are not expected to answer all of the questions each week. Your responses should demonstrate your engagement and understanding of the assigned readings. My questions will also push you to think critically about the methods the various scholars we read use. The discussion will be open Monday-Sunday each week.

**Please note:** Throughout the semester there will be several short conversations with historians centered on methods. My goal is to schedule these brief conversations so that you might join if you choose/are available but that recordings will be available in all cases. Participation in live conversations is entirely optional, but I consider the videos (or live conversations if that works with your schedule) part of the course content for which you are responsible. Conversation times will be posted as Announcements in Blackboard, and the videos will be available in the Content section.

Primary Source Analysis: Throughout the course, we will be exploring a range of methods and source types in our readings while also building toward a bibliography (and analysis of those sources). For this assignment, you will identify one primary source and write an approximately

five-eight-page paper analyzing that source. Your essay should describe the source and its immediate context. What kind of source is it? Who produced it? When and where was it produced? Your essay should also describe the content of the source. Essentially, you should discuss the main points of the source you select. Your description of the source, its immediate context, and its content should be relatively brief. The majority of your paper should focus on your analysis. Here, it is important to think about why the source was produced, how it was produced, and its overall historical context. **This assignment should be submitted via Blackboard by midnight on September 13.**

Oral History Analysis: For this assignment, you will select an oral history interview from one of the collections listed below. In an approximately five-eight-page paper, please analyze the interview. Your paper might consider some or all of the following questions: Drawing on our readings and discussions about the methods and ethics of oral history, are there issues that might make the subject's account unreliable? Are there issues with the questions and methods of the interviewer? What factors shape what historians can learn from this account? What limits might a historian face when encountering this interview? **This assignment should be submitted via Blackboard by Midnight on October 25.**

- **Southwest Virginia LGBTQ+ History Project:** <https://lgbthistory.pages.roanoke.edu/oral-histories/>
- **Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project:** <https://www.loc.gov/collections/slave-narratives-from-the-federal-writers-project-1936-to-1938/about-this-collection/>
- **Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, University of Kentucky Libraries:** <https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/>

You may request permission to use another collection as long as you reach out to me at least two weeks before the deadline. **Please note: the length of the interviews varies significantly. If you choose a shorter interview, you may want to select more than one for your paper.**

Annotated Primary Source Bibliography: Please construct an annotated primary source bibliography for a topic of your choosing. Your bibliography, including annotations, should be at least ten pages in length. The annotations should be single spaced and range from a sentence or two to a paragraph or two. The annotations should discuss the value of the source and the potential problems it might present. **This assignment should be submitted via Blackboard by Midnight on November 15.**

Overview Analysis of Sources: For this assignment, please write an approximately 10-page paper analyzing the sources included in your bibliography as a whole. **You should not write a traditional research essay.** Instead, this paper should consider how your sources might fit together. What could you learn based on those sources? What gaps might exist? What would be the methodological challenges you would confront? **This assignment should be submitted via Blackboard by Midnight on December 6.**

## COURSE & UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Questions and Emails: Please feel free to email me or make appointments to talk in person or via Zoom (follow the link posted in Blackboard to schedule an appointment; email me if none of those times work for you). If you need to email me, please put “HIST 536” in the subject line.

Class Etiquette: For this class to be successful, we must all be prepared to discuss the assigned materials. Please be kind. These are hard times, but I hope that we can create sense of community, focused on learning and supporting each other. Be respectful in our discussions. Give your peers the benefit of the doubt. So often virtual spaces lead us to behave in ways we would never dream of if we were sitting in a room with an individual. Remember, we are a community embarking on a shared project of learning.

Late Assignments: Late assignments will be penalized one letter grade per day past the due date. If you need an extension on the paper, you must contact me within 24 hours of the due date. In cases of personal or medical emergency, please contact me as soon as possible. Unless you have made arrangements with me in advance or have a documented medical or personal emergency, papers more than a week late will not be accepted. You will be expected to provide appropriate documentation in these situations. Please contact me to make alternate arrangements if health or personal emergency prevents your participation in class discussion.

Academic Misconduct: Cheating or representing other people’s writing or ideas as your own will NOT be tolerated. Engaging in any form of academic dishonesty will result in severe grade penalties. Students who commit any act of academic dishonesty may receive a failing grade in that portion of the course work in which the act is detected or a failing grade in the course without possibility of withdrawal. Please note that student work may be checked using plagiarism detection software. Further, students who engage in cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. Please review information provided by the Office of Student Conduct: <https://www.wku.edu/studentconduct/process-for-academic-dishonesty.php>.

Disability Policy: In compliance with university policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center located in Downing Student Union, room 1074 of the Student Success Center. The phone number is 270.745.5004. or email at [sarc.connect@wku.edu](mailto:sarc.connect@wku.edu). Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from The Student Accessibility Resource Center. Once you have a letter of accommodation, you should contact me to arrange an appointment as soon as possible. At the appointment we can discuss the course format and work to implement accommodations.

Title IX, Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct Policy: WKU is committed to supporting faculty, staff and students by upholding WKU’s Title IX Sexual Misconduct/Assault Policy (#0.2070) at <https://wku.edu/eoo/documents/titleix/wkutitleixpolicyandgrievanceprocedure.pdf> and Discrimination and Harassment Policy (#0.2040) at [https://wku.edu/policies/hr\\_policies/2040\\_discrimination\\_harassment\\_policy.pdf](https://wku.edu/policies/hr_policies/2040_discrimination_harassment_policy.pdf).

Under these policies, discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct based on sex/gender are prohibited. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator, Andrea Anderson, 270-745-5398 or Title IX Investigators, Michael Crowe, 270-745-5429 or Joshua Hayes, 270-745-5121.

Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a faculty member, WKU faculty are “Responsible Employees” of the University and **MUST** report what you share to WKU’s Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator. If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU’s Counseling and Testing Center at 270-745-3159.

**COVID-19 Policy:** All students are strongly encouraged to [get the COVID-19 vaccine](#). Out of respect for the health and safety of the WKU community and in adherence with CDC guidelines and practices of all public universities and colleges in [Kentucky](#), the University requires that a cloth face covering (reusable or disposable) that covers both the nose and mouth must be worn at all times when in public areas within all buildings. Students must properly wear face coverings while in class regardless of the room size or the nature of the classroom activities. Students who fail to wear a face covering as required will be in violation of the WKU Student Code of Conduct and will be asked to comply or will face disciplinary action, including possible dismissal from the University. Accommodations can be requested in special cases through the Student Accessibility and Resource Center ([SARC](#)): [270-745-5004](#) (voice), [270-745-3030](#) (TTY), or [270-288-0597](#) (video).

All students must immediately report a positive Covid-19 test result or close contact with a person who has tested positive to the Covid-19 Assistance Line at 270-745-2019. The assistance line is available to answer questions regarding any Covid-19 related issue. This guidance is subject to change based on requirements set forth by public health agencies or the office of the governor. Please refer to the Healthy on the Hill website for the most current information. [www.wku.edu/healthyonthehill](http://www.wku.edu/healthyonthehill)

### **Week One (August 23-27)—What Is History? Where is the Historian in the History?**

Carl Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian," *American Historical Review* 37 (January 1932), 221-236.

Edward Hallett Carr, *What Is History?* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 3-35

Julia Laite, "Schooners and Schoonermen, My Grandfather and Me," *History Workshop Journal* 87 (Spring 2019), 251-261.

Chad H. Parker, Andy Horowitz, and Liz Skilton, "'Disasters Have Histories': Teaching and Researching American Disasters," *The American Historian* (February 2018), 21-29.

Richard M. Mizelle, Jr., "Making Race Visible in the Disaster Archive," *The American Historian* (February 2018), 8-12.

*Please Note: These readings are available on the course Blackboard site.*

### **Week Two (August 30-September 3)—Histories, Big and Small; Data and Databases**

Julia Laite, "The Emmet's Inch: Small History in a Digital Age," *Journal of Social History* 53, no. 4 (2020), 963-989.

Hannah Boston, "Multiple Lordship in Twelfth-Century England: A Quantitative Study," *Journal of Medieval History* 47, no. 2 (2021), 174-202.

Murray G. Phillips and Gary Osmond, "Australia's Women Surfers: History, Methods, and the Digital Humanities," *Australian Historical Studies* 46 (2015), 285-303.

Abraham Gibson and Cindy Ermus, "The History of Science and the Science of History: Computational Methods, Algorithms, and the Future of the Field," *Isis* 110, no. 3 (2019), 555-566.

*Please Note: These readings are available on the course Blackboard site.*

### **Week Three (September 6-10)—What and Whose Histories?**

*Labor Day (University Closed)—Monday, September 6*

Andy Horowitz, *Katrina: A History, 1915-2015* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020).

#### **Week Four (September 13-17)—Our Tools and the Histories They Make Accessible**

Emily Skidmore: *True Sex: The Lives of Trans Men at the Turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2017).

\*\*\*\*\**Primary Source Analysis due by Midnight on September 13*\*\*\*\*\*

#### **Week Five (September 20-24)—History, Identity, and Sources**

Julio Capó Jr., *Welcome to Fairyland: Queer Miami Before 1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

#### **Week Six (September 27-October 1)—Place and the Historian**

Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

#### **Week Seven (October 4-8)—Big Histories—Transnational and Global History**

Kiran Klaus Patel, *The New Deal: A Global History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

#### **Week Eight (October 11-15)—The Power of Stories; Historians and Historical Actors**

*Fall Break—Thursday, October 14-Friday, October 15*

*Paris is Burning* (film)—Available to stream through the WKU Library (Kanopy).

K. Austin Collins, "Paris Is Burning Is Back—And So Is Its Baggage," *Vanity Fair*, 18 June 2019.

*Please Note: This reading is available on the course Blackboard site.*

#### **Week Nine (October 18-22)—Oral History**

Gregory Samantha Rosenthal, "How to Become a Woman," *Southern Cultures* 26, no. 3 (Fall 2020), 122-137.

Joseph Plaster, "Safe for Whom? And Whose Families? Narrative, Urban Neoliberalism, and Queer Oral History on San Francisco's Polk Street," *The Public Historian* 42, no. 3 (2020), 86-113

Sherry Thomas, "Digging Beneath the Surface: Oral History Techniques," in *Women's Oral History*, eds. Susan H. Armitage, Patricia Hart, and Karen Weathermon, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 51-60.

Kathleen Blee, "Evidence, Empathy and Ethics: Lessons from Oral Histories of the Klan," in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 2000), 333-343.

*Please Note: These readings are available on the course Blackboard site.*

### **Week Ten (October 25-29)—History for the Public**

Lisa Jacobson, "When History Becomes Child's Play," *The Public Historian* 43, no. 1 (2021), 8-17.

Joy M. Giguere, "The (Im)Movable Monument: Identity, Space, and The Louisville Confederate Monument," *The Public Historian* 41, no. 4 (2019), 56-82.

Stephen Vider, "Public Disclosures of Private Realities: HIV/AIDS and the Domestic Archive," *The Public Historian* 41, no. 2 (2019), 163-189.

*Please Note: These readings are available on the course Blackboard site.*

**\*\*\*\*\*Oral History Analysis due by Midnight on October 25\*\*\*\*\***

### **Week Eleven (November 1-5)—Hidden Histories**

Sharon Block, *Rape & Sexual Power in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

### **Week Twelve (November 8-12)—Changing the Read**

Jessica Marie Johnson, *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

### **Week Thirteen (November 15-19)—The Archive and Its Problems**

Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (June 2008), 1-14.

Kellee E. Warren, "We Need These Bodies, But Not Their Knowledge: Black Women in the Archival Science Professions and Their Connection to the Archives of Enslaved Black Women in the French Antilles," *Library Trends* 64 (Spring 2016), 776-794.

\*\*\*\*\**Annotated Primary Source Bibliography due by Midnight on November 15*\*\*\*\*\*

### **Week Fourteen (November 22-26)**

*Thanksgiving Holiday (University Closed)—Wednesday, November 24-Friday, November 26*

No assigned readings for this week. I encourage you to rest and enjoy the break and to be looking ahead toward the final assignment.

### **Week Fifteen (November 29-December 3)— The Archive and Its Problems, Continued**

Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives, Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

### **Final Exam Week (December 6-December 10)**

\*\*\*\*\**Overview Analysis of Sources due by Midnight on December 6*\*\*\*\*\*

*I reserve the right to change this syllabus during the semester.  
All changes will be announced on Blackboard.*