

University of Texas at El Paso
Department of History
Dissertation Preparation
Course Number: HIST 6301

I. Professor's Information

Name: Dr. Michael Vinson Williams

Session: Fall (2022)

Course Location: **Liberal Arts Room 401**

Office hours: Tuesdays/Thursdays 9:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.

Phone number: 915-747-7822

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II. Course Description:

This course is designed to enable students to conceptualize, construct and write a strong and engaging dissertation prospectus. By the end of the course, students should have a sound grasp of the overall process of writing a dissertation prospectus from conceptualization to completion and be prepared to defend it before the prospectus committee. Students will also engage in critical analysis regarding significant historical issues associated with their topic of choice and delve deeper into the historiography and methodology of that topic of interest.

III. Required Readings:

Students will read and discuss materials relevant to their individualized work. The books and articles read for this course will be directly related to the research prospectus. The readings will be provided to the instructor and discussed throughout the semester in preparation for the literature review within the prospectus itself.

Additional Reference Publication:

Michael Amanfi, *Writing the Research Prospectus: A Guidebook for Qualitative Student Researchers* (2019)

Course Requirements: Students are required to attend each scheduled meeting with the professor and read all assignments with a critical eye and complete all written work when given. Students can expect missed scheduled meetings with the advisor to negatively affect their overall grade. If a student **has** to miss a scheduled meeting, she or he must present the professor with an official document of excuse; all excuses will be filed away and reexamined at the end of the semester. For a graduate course, and particularly an independent studies course, it is important that students avoid missing any meetings. The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act

(ADAAA) of 2008. Students with disabilities, **verified through The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS)**, should notify the professor immediately of any required accommodations. See, [Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#)

Course Assignments:

Discussion of Course Topics: Due to the nature and limited number of students permitted in this Dissertation Preparation course, student participation is paramount. As a result, each class meeting is structured to initiate student participation and to provide opportunities to engage in meaningful dialog regarding the specific historiographical works pertinent to the dissertation topic and development of the prospectus. As a means of taking advantage of each meeting students schedule with the professor, I require active participation in all discussions.

Draft Dissertation Prospectus: As a means of helping to formulate the completed dissertation prospectus, students are required to turn in a draft proposal of the dissertation prospectus no later than October 20th. It is imperative that you began the process of writing the prospectus as soon as possible to get ahead of the research process and thus be better prepared to adjust to any problems that may arise over the course of the semester.

Completed Dissertation Prospectus Each student will write a 12-15 page dissertation prospectus (coversheet and bibliography pages not included in the pagination requirement) outlining the research project. Per History Department guidelines, the completed prospectus must include the following components:

1. Introduce the topic
 - a. Clearly describe the research topic
 - b. Present the central questions that drive the dissertation
2. Explain how the dissertation will make a contribution to the field
 - a. Discuss the historiography in the relevant fields or subfields
 - b. In the discussion of how the work will be situated within the extant literature, explain how it will contribute to historical knowledge.
 - c. Cite relevant authors, books, and arguments.
3. Describe research methods and theoretical framework
 - a. What theoretical and/or conceptual approaches will inform the work?
 - b. What is the methodology or methodologies employed?
4. Describe the primary sources
 - a. What major sources will be used?
 - b. Where are the sources and how will those sources be accessed?
5. Outline the dissertation
 - a. Provide a preliminary breakdown of chapters.
 - b. Explain how chapters forward the goals and arguments of the dissertation.

6. Present a timeline for completion of work.
7. End with a bibliography of published sources (references in the prospectus and in the dissertation itself should follow the current Chicago Manual of Style).

Mock Prospectus Defense: This will be an opportunity for students to practice presenting their prospectus to the committee by engaging in a mock presentation with the professor. Here, students will present the prospectus, answer questions involving their proposed arguments, methodology and examination of source materials and utilize the feedback presented in preparation for the official defense before the dissertation committee. Prior to the end of the course, students will schedule a meeting with the professor to solidify a day and time for the mock defense.

Assignment Percentages:

Discussions of historiographical works	10%
Draft Prospectus	30%
Completed Prospectus	50%
Mock Prospectus Defense.	10%
Total Available Percentage	100%

The grading scale used for this course reflects the standard A through F scale: 100-90= A; 89-80= B; 79-70= C; 69-60= D; 59 and below = F. To calculate your final grade I will add the total number of points scored on all assignments and divide that number by the total number of points possible. I will not percentage anything as everything is weighted the same. **This course has a Pass/Fail designation and thus students will not receive the standard A-F grade. The percentages above will be used to determine the overall Pass/Fail grade at the end of the term.**

Assignment Makeup Policy:

Although I do not anticipate missed assignments at this academic level, if you miss a scheduled project deadline because of a legitimate excuse (**supported by documentation**) you must contact the professor immediately to schedule a makeup. Students have a one-day window after the day of the missed assignment to make it up, after that he or she will earn a zero unless an extended rescheduling period has been agreed upon. **If a student has a problem with an earned grade on an assignment, she or he must wait 24 hours before contacting the professor to discuss it.**

IV. Class Behavior:

Cheating:

University of Texas at El PASO has an approved Academic Integrity Policy that applies to all students. The policy states: “Any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to

another person without giving sufficient credit, taking an examination for another person, or any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.” Proven violations of the detailed regulations, as printed in the *Handbook of Operating Procedures* (HOP) [[Scholastic Dishonesty](#)], can result in sanctions ranging from disciplinary probation, to failing a grade on the work in question, to a failing grade in the course, to suspension or expulsion, among others.

Under no circumstance will cheating of any kind be tolerated. Cheating on an assignment will result in an automatic **F** and may result in university actions, so refrain from engaging in any unethical behavior as your work will be monitored. For further information regarding UTEP’S Academic Integrity policy. Again, please see [UTEP’s Handbook of Operating Procedures](#). Students please be aware that **ALL** suspected violations of academic integrity will be addressed and may also be reported to the [Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution \(OSCCR\)](#).

Copyright and Fair Use:

Regarding research and written work, students must avoid infringing upon the rights of others by violating the use and presentation of copyrighted materials. Please view the following from Stanford University Libraries regarding issues of Copyright and Fair Use to avoid plagiarism:

[Copyright and Fair Use](#)

COVID-19 Protocols:

Any student who contracts COVID-19, or who must care for someone who has contracted the COVID-19 virus, must let me know immediately so that I can plan with the impacted student regarding the class and coursework. As a means of protecting your privacy, and that of your family, please do not email me any health-related information. Instead, I am asking that students send me an email with a viable phone number and a request that I call you back.

You must **STAY AT HOME** and let your Professor know if you (1) have been diagnosed with COVID- 19, (2) are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or (3) have had recent contact with a person who has received a positive coronavirus test. UTEP also requires that any student who reports a positive COVID-19 test must report this via covidaction@utep.edu. If you are not permitted on campus, you should contact me as soon as possible so we can arrange necessary and appropriate accommodations.

Important Dates:

- Draft Prospectus.....October 10, 2022
- Completed Prospectus.....November 11, 2022
- Mock Prospectus Defense..... November 18, 2022**

V. Class Schedule for Required Readings and Assignments: (Syllabus/Schedule subject to changes.) The following outlines the completion dates for each reading assignment so that students are prepared to participate in class discussions and follow the course of the discussion

Week I: September 7: Course introduction/parameters and an open discussion of the dissertation and dissertation prospectus.

Week III: September 21: **Discussions of sections 1-3 of the prospectus**

Week V: October 5: **Discussions of sections 4-7 of the prospectus**

Week VII: October 20: **Discussions of Relevant Historiographies**

Week IX: November 3: **Continued Reading of Relevant Historiographies**

Week XI: November 11 and 18: **Completed Prospectus and Mock Prospectus Defense due respectively**

Week XIII: November 29: **Continued Reading of Relevant Historiographies**

Week XV: December 1: **Final Class Meeting and course wrap-up**

Completed Dissertation Prospectus: Due November 11, 2022

Each student will write a 12-15 page dissertation prospectus (coversheet and bibliography pages not included in the pagination requirement) outlining the research project leading to the dissertation. The prospectus must be typed double-spaced, clearly written, and use **12 point font and Times New Roman Script**. Grammatical errors, misspelled words, awkward sentence and paragraph structure, and cluttered prose will hurt your overall grade. Be sure to look over your work and correct any mistakes before turning in the completed draft. Also, be cognizant of the component requirements that must be included.

Plagiarism and Citation: In this dissertation preparation course, you will be required to cite sources for any material you quote or paraphrase in any written work or assignment. Please use the Chicago style manual for citations. **Again, this course operates under an established and enforced Honor Code system.** Please feel free to contact the professor if you have any questions.