SCHOOL OF DIVINITY, HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

ACADEMIC SESSION 2015-2016

HI 4516: UNDERGRADUATE DISSERTATION IN HISTORY

30 credits-12 weeks

PLEASE NOTE CAREFULLY:
The full set of school regulations and procedures is contained in the Undergraduate Student Handbook which is available online at your MyAberdeen Organisation page. Students are expected to familiarise themselves not only with the contents of this leaflet but also with the contents of the Handbook. Therefore, ignorance of the contents of the Handbook will not excuse the breach of any School regulation or procedure. You must familiarise yourself with this important information at the earliest opportunity.

COURSE CO-ORDINATOR/COURSE TEAM
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TIMETABLE
For time and place of classes, please see MyAberdeen

Students can also view their university timetable at
http://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/timetables-550.php

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Two hour preliminary lecture to introduce students to the task, arranged in
the first semester before students start work on the project.
Students will undertake their independent research under the supervision of a
member of History staff. Most of the work of the dissertation will be done
independently, as students focus on their individual projects.
First attempt: dissertation 10,000-12,000 words (100%).

INTENDED AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES
1. Frame an original and significant research question and to address it.
2. Identify relevant primary and secondary research materials and to make
   appropriate use of them.
3. Criticise and evaluate such primary and secondary materials.
4. Identify and present key issues raised by your research.
5. Offer a clear argument with coherent organisation and presentation of
   relevant facts with development of ideas.

LECTURE/SEMINAR PROGRAMME
Two hour preliminary lecture to introduce students to the task:

Week 4: Wednesday (7 October), 2pm – 4pm, in Fraser Noble, FN3
GENERAL TEXTS ON WRITING A DISSERTATION


Carrie Winstanley, *Writing a Dissertation for Dummies* (Chichester, 2009).
(Despite the book’s title it is the most helpful and comprehensive of the three texts).

IMPORTANT NOTE ON RESEARCH ETHICS

There are well established rules and guidelines within the university which students must abide by when conducting research for a dissertation. In certain situations you will need to gain ethical approval from the *College Research Ethics Committee*. This is particularly important in the following circumstances:

1. Involves human subjects/interviewees (or human remains).
2. Involve: potential conflicts of interest; the use of artefacts; environmental impact; financial inducements for subjects/interviewees or dealing with highly sensitive material (e.g. Northern Ireland Troubles).
3. Any research activity that might involve the sharing of data or confidential information beyond the period of consent granted by the subjects.

If you are in any doubt as to whether this policy will apply to your research please consult the course co-ordinator and your supervisor in the first instance. You will be advised to fill in an ethical approval form. Please remember to contact me and fill in the form in good time before you conduct any research that falls under the guidelines. You cannot begin the research until you gain approval from the College Ethics Committee.

WHAT IS A DISSERTATION?

A dissertation is not just a long essay but it is a focused piece of primary research which addresses and seeks to offer fresh and potentially original insights on a historical subject. These insights should be placed within the broader context of historiographical debate and scholarship.
THE ROLE OF THE SUPERVISOR

1. To offer meetings to discuss topic.
2. To help you choose and refine a title.
4. To discuss research methods.
5. To discuss your draft introduction
6. To discuss your developing arguments.
7. Help you create your timetable and encourage you to keep it.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Identify a suitable supervisor and set up the initial appointment.
2. Meet regularly and/or keep in contact with your supervisor.
3. Fill in the various forms and hand them in on time to the designated person.
4. Hand in a bibliography and draft introduction.
5. Listen to the feedback given by your supervisor.
6. Ensure your university e-mail account is functional at all times.
7. Plan your work to allow submission before the final deadline.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD DISSERTATION TOPIC?

- To address a broader historical issue or debate, usually with an original approach.
- Be confined enough to be treated in a thorough manner in 10,000 to 12,000 words.
- Draw to a significant extent on primary sources. A consideration of primary source materials available should be one consideration when choosing a topic and should be discussed with your supervisor at the earliest opportunity.
- Dissertations can be (although not exclusively) a case study shedding light on a broader question.

PREPARING YOUR DISSERTATION

Your dissertation topic should be chosen after consultation with a potential supervisor. If you require additional information please contact the co-ordinator Dr Kirsteen MacKenzie. It is important to choose topics that are viable within the word limits given below, can be completed by the due date, can be supported by the resources available and where there is adequate supervision. While it normal for topics to evolve during the research and
writing processes, no substantial change in topic is permitted without the knowledge and agreement of the supervisor(s).

Please note that it is not permitted to replicate a summative essay you have submitted in another course.

Supervisors may give specific guidance relating to sources and general argument. However, as the dissertation is an original piece of work, supervisors cannot be expected to engage in detailed analysis and criticism of specific aspects of the dissertation prior to its submission.

Students must attend a preliminary lecture arranged in the First Half Session which usually takes place in early October and subsequently to have regular meetings with their supervisor(s).

Students will submit TWO pieces of work related to the preparation of their dissertations. They will receive formative feedback on these pieces of work from their supervisor(s). The work will not be marked but will serve as the basis for supervisory guidance and discussion of the dissertation process and progress. However, if the supervisor(s) decide the work is of an unsatisfactory nature, the student may be required to re-submit a satisfactory version.

Students will be expected to work on their bibliography and their draft introduction over the Christmas Break with the expectation that students will submit BOTH pieces of work by the deadline at the beginning of February.
FORMATTING YOUR DISSERTATION: GENERAL POINTS

- **DO NOT FORGET TO INSERT PAGE NUMBERS.** Pagination should run consecutively from beginning to end and include any appendices and the bibliography. Cross references should also include page numbers.

- **Serious deviation** from departmental formatting style in end/footnotes or bibliography (see below) will have a **negative** impact the mark given to the dissertation.

- **Evidence of inadequate proofreading** (such as repeated typographical errors, incomplete sentences, the use of contractions) will have a **negative** impact on the mark given to the dissertation.

- **End/footnotes** should be used **NOT ONLY** for direct quotations but **ALSO** to show where specific bits of information (not widely known) have originated as well as ideas, analysis and ways of considering an issue unique to a given author (when you are paraphrasing someone else’s thoughts and ideas). Failure to make adequate use of end/footnotes will have a **negative** impact on the mark given to the dissertation.

- The dissertation should also be **CLEARLY TYPED and DOUBLE SPACED** on A4 sized paper.

FORMATTING YOUR DISSERTATION: CONTENTS

It is difficult to be entirely prescriptive about how to present your dissertation, as this will vary according to individual subjects, but it **should** contain the following:

1. The title page (with only title, student ID and number of words).
2. A table of contents
3. A list of any maps, plans, tables and illustrations (if you have used any).
4. A note on abbreviations (if necessary).
5. An introduction
6. The individual chapters
7. A conclusion
8. Any Appendices (if necessary).

The length of the dissertation (sections 5, 6, 7) should be 10,000 to 12,000 words (including footnotes). One mark on the CGS scale will be deducted for every 1,000 words (or part thereof) above or below this range. Each dissertation should be submitted with an accurate word count (including footnotes and appendices but excluding the bibliography) noted on the title page.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**
The table of contents needs to be complete and contain accurate page numbers. If any of the chapters are subdivided the subdivisions need to be listed.

**LIST OF MAPS, ETC.**
Not all dissertations will make use of these, but where they are they should be consecutively numbered and the pages on which they appear should be given.
NOTE ON ABBREVIATIONS

(Standard abbreviations for sources or publications with lengthy titles frequently referred to need to be set out here on a separate sheet if there are a number of them.

If there are just a few cases where abbreviations need to be introduced it can be done in the first footnote where they occur.

INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to be absolutely prescriptive about this, but in the introduction you need to:

• Outline the subject of the dissertation.
• Any previous literature on the subject/A literature review.
• The sources you will be using and the methods you will be adopting
• A brief indication of your conclusions.

A short note on the literature review - a literature review is a short critical analysis of the historiography or secondary literature relevant to your chosen topic. This will be discussed further in the preliminary lecture. If you require any further advice, please do not hesitate to contact your supervisor or the course co-ordinator.

INDIVIDUAL CHAPTERS

Here’s the crucial requirement to strike the right balance. The main part of the dissertation almost always should be divided into manageable chapters which are long enough to present the constituent parts of the dissertation into manageable portions. Individual chapters should never be so lengthy that the reader loses track of the argument, but should not be so short there is insufficient space for a full development. In some cases it may help to sub-divide the chapters, although in others it will be better to have undivided chapters. Each chapter should have a clear descriptive title and start on a separate page. You may want to break down the chapters in subsections to help the reader.
NOTE ON QUOTATIONS
Quotations from prose should run on in the text if they do not exceed two or three lines. Longer quotations should be indented. Inverted commas are not required when the quotation is indented. Quotations should keep the spelling used in original documents and not be modernised.

NOTE ON UNDERLINING AND ITALICS
Underlining or Italics should only be used in the main text under the following circumstances:
1. For the titles of books, plays and periodicals.
2. For technical terms or phrases in language other than English (but not for quotations or complete sentences).

NOTE ON CAPITALS
Capitals should be used as sparingly as possible. They should be used for institutions and corporate bodies when the name is the official title or part of an official title. For the titles pertaining to individuals, only use capitals if followed by the person’s name. E.g Archibald Campbell, Marquis of Argyll ‘the marquis’.

NOTE ON DATES
Dates should be given in the form 30 January 1649 and unless the contrary is indicated it is to be assumed that the date refers to the year beginning on 1 January.

CONCLUSION
The dissertation should end with a section in which your conclusions are given in full and drawing attention to those particular points which you wish to emphasise. The conclusion should relate the body of the text to the problem
in the introduction and show how new insights have emerged from the research undertaken.

APPENDICES
It may be more convenient to place statistical tables, maps, illustrations, cartoons or a document to which repeated references are made in the appendices.

PLAGIARISM
‘Plagiarism is the use, without adequate acknowledgement, of the intellectual work of another person in work submitted for assessment. A student cannot be found to have committed plagiarism where it can be shown that the student has taken all reasonable care to avoid representing the work of others as his/her own’.

Plagiarism is a serious offence everywhere, both within and outwith the academic community. All cases of suspected plagiarism will be reported to the Head of School in the first instance and cannot be discussed with or determined by a Tutor or course Co-ordinator.

Please note that students MUST refer to the School’s Undergraduate Student Handbook for more detailed information on what constitutes plagiarism, how to avoid it, and what the University’s procedure is should plagiarism be suspected.

FORMATTING YOUR DISSERTATION: BIBLIOGRAPHIES AND FOOTNOTES

Improving your Writing has been designed to support your progress in University of Aberdeen courses. Its aim is to help you to become a more skilful and effective writer and to improve the presentation of written work.
You MUST use the departmental referencing guide when writing and formatting your dissertation. You will find the guide on My Aberdeen: This guide MUST be used for all coursework for HI-coded History courses unless you are advised to the contrary by the course coordinator, in which case you are advised to obtain the details of the alternative requirements in writing from her/him.

In the absence of such instructions to the contrary, failure to observe the stipulations below will normally lead to a penalty of up to two grade points in the Common Grading Scale.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCING: SOME FURTHER GENERAL ADVICE

It is important to remember footnotes are only there to allow a reader to see where the evidence has been gathered and, if necessary, allow them to go back over the same ground if they wish to question any part of the dissertation. Therefore, it is vital that footnotes are clear and accurate.

Footnotes should appear at the bottom of the page. The nearer footnotes are to the text to which they refer, the quicker and easier it is for the reader to follow.

It is important to make sure any abbreviations in the footnotes are used correctly and consistently. The first footnote in which the title of a work is cited should contain the full title, but a short form of title may be used in any subsequent ones. Standard abbreviations for sources or publications with lengthy titles frequently referred to need to be set out in either the first footnote where they occur or, if there are a number of them, on a separate sheet just before the introduction.
Certain Latin abbreviations like loc. Cit. (*loco citato*, meaning in the passage already quoted) and Op. Cit. (*Opere Citato*, meaning in the work already quoted) are out of date and should **NEVER** be used.

You can, however, use *ibid.* (*ibidem*, meaning in the same book or chapter) and *idem* (the same author) and *passim* (to be found in many places scattered throughout this book, or other source).

**If you are in any doubt on how to footnote your dissertation, please consult your supervisor.**

**BINDING YOUR DISSERTATION**
It is important to remember that as the dissertation has to be bound, there should be generous margins, especially on the left hand side of the text.

The Print Shop in the Sir Duncan Rice library has a website which helps you prepare your work for binding. Please see link below:

http://www.abdn.ac.uk/uniprint/binding/preparing-your-thesis/

In particular please note the following:

‘To ensure there is no loss of text during the trimming process, please ensure the margins are at least 35mm on the binding edge and 15mm on all other edges.

Please ensure that all pages are correctly placed in their proper order as we do **NOT** check or change your pages once work has commenced. If the customer makes an error, this will result in extra charges being levied’.

Please note that the measurements are in mm and if using Microsoft Word it will ask for margin settings in cm.

If you have any further questions please ask myself, or your supervisor or the print shop.
In addition you do **NOT** have to spend £30 to get your dissertations “book bound” – you can spend less than £5 to get them ring bound.

**UNASSESSED WORK - DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSION**

1. **The first piece of work is a bibliography** which would normally consist of at least 20 sources (including primary material, monographs, journal articles, and essays from edited volumes). The bibliographical entries **must** conform to departmental standards. Each bibliographical entry will be accompanied by a standard foot/endnote entry for the work as an example of how it would be presented in the dissertation (for the first or initial reference of a work in the dissertation), accompanied by a short title entry (which is used to reference a work on subsequent occasions). This exercise is to ensure that the correct format is being used by the student.

   **The bibliography is due on Monday 1 February 2016 at 12 noon** – one hard copy to be put into the drop-off box in Room CB008, 50-52 College Bounds, and one copy handed in electronically through Turnitin on MyAberdeen

2. **The second piece of work will be a draft introduction.** This will be 1000 words long and usually outlines the subject of the dissertation, any previous literature on the subject, the sources you will be using and the methods you will be adopting. It also can give a brief indication of your conclusions. **The draft introduction is due on Monday 1 February 2016 at 12 noon** – one hard copy to be put into the drop-off box in Room CB008, 50-52 College Bounds, and one copy handed in electronically through Turnitin on MyAberdeen
ANY STUDENT FAILING TO SUBMIT SATISFACTORY VERSIONS OF EITHER OF THESE PIECES OF WORK RISKS LOSING THEIR CLASS CERTIFICATE. (SEE SCHOOL’S HANDBOOK ON CLASS CERTIFICATES).

ASSESSMENT DEADLINES: THE DISSERTATION

THE SUBMISSION DATE FOR THE DISSERTATION IS
MONDAY 25 April 2016 AT 12 NOON.

PLEASE NOTE: In order to pass a course on the first attempt, a student must attain a Common Grading Scale (CGS) mark of at least E3 on each element of course assessment. Failure to do so will result in a grade of no greater than CGS E1 for the course as a whole.

SUBMISSION ARRANGEMENTS

The Department requires ONE official electronic copy submitted by the deadline plus ONE paper copy of all assignments with the TurnitinUK receipt, attached as follows:

Electronic Copy: One copy submitted through Turnitin via MyAberdeen.

Hard Copy: One hard copy with the Turnitin receipt attached together with an Assessment cover sheet, typed and double spaced – this copy should have your ID number CLEARLY written on the cover sheet, with NO name and NO signature but EVERYTHING ELSE filled in – and should be delivered to the History Department [Drop-off boxes located in CB008, 50-52 College Bounds].

Please note: Failure to submit both to Turnitin, and also one identical hard copy with the Turnitin receipt attached will result in a deduction of marks. Failure to submit to Turnitin will result in a zero mark.

COURSE CO-ORDINATOR’S ROLE

Any queries about the dissertation process please contact Dr Kirsteen MacKenzie. The course co-ordinator’s role is not simply to teach, but also to
advise and help. Students who are having difficulty with their work for whatever reason, or who require help or information should consult the course co-ordinator without delay. Her contact hours are on the department’s Staff Pages and she maintains Office Hours. Any recommendations, observations or complaints about the running of the course should be addressed to her.