

HI 5594: Research Preparation in Historical Studies

15 Credits: 11 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 Coordinator:

Professor Tony Heywood

Room CA 104

Telephone: 01224-272640

E-mail: t.heywood@abdn.ac.uk

Your dissertation supervisor will meet with you additionally

Discipline Administration:

Mrs Barbara McGillivray

50-52 College Bounds

Room CB001

01224 272199

history-ug@abdn.ac.uk

TIMETABLE

For time and place of classes, please see [MyAberdeen](#)

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

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course consists of a mixture of seminar sessions and one-to-one supervision with the member of staff best equipped to advise you on your dissertation topic. It will involve detailed discussion of your research ideas and planning with the aim of providing the fullest preparation for researching and writing the dissertation in the summer and any research you conduct in the future. Mutual feedback and support within the student group are fundamental to the success of the course.

The course meets throughout the second half-session in a combination of 2-hour group seminars and shorter individual supervisions. You will be expected to do the preparatory work assigned for that week, and the schedule of work also includes some presentations about aspects of your own project.

In the autumn you were invited to identify a suitable supervisor or supervisors for your dissertation. If you have not yet done so, you will need to do that now. Consult the staff webpages to see whose research interests are closest to yours, and contact them to discuss your ideas and secure their agreement. This agreement needs to be formalised by means of a supervisor consent form, which can be found on MyAberdeen and must be counter-signed by your supervisor/s. This form must be submitted, fully completed, to the departmental office by the end of teaching week 2.

If you have any difficulty with this process, please consult with the course coordinator or the coordinator of taught postgraduate courses.

Please consult the timetable on the web for the dates, times and rooms of the six seminars (teaching weeks 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10).

The times of the individual supervisions will be negotiated between you and your supervisor, but please try to ensure that they take place during the specified week. Please note that you are expected to take the initiative to contact your supervisor about agreeing the times for these meetings. Send an email to them as soon as possible after the first meeting of this course.

If you decide, for whatever reason, that you need to change your topic and/or supervisor, please notify the course coordinator by email immediately.

Financial support for your research

Students registered for any one of the MLitt programmes based in the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy are eligible to apply to the School Postgraduate Committee for up to £50 to help cover costs associated with doing dissertation-related research. Eligible costs include travel tickets and accommodation for archive work, but exclude food. Further details and the application form can be found on the postgraduate pages of the School's website. Please note that applications need to be made during the second half-session, prior to the May meeting of the committee at the latest and preferably before the March meeting because funds are very limited and are disbursed on a first-come-first-served basis. Funding is not guaranteed.

Research ethics

Please note that your research project must comply with the University's policy on research ethics and the corresponding School policies. You may be required to complete a form for the approval process. The form can be downloaded from the course website.

INTENDED AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The aims of the course are:

- * to provide you with appropriate general guidance and individual supervision regarding preparations for your dissertation research
- * to help you to locate your topic within an appropriate historical context
- * to help you to familiarise yourself with appropriate historical sources and methodologies
- * to help you to build confidence to contemplate and comment constructively on topics with which you are not necessarily familiar
- * to introduce you to the process of making grant applications

By the end of the course you will be able to:

- * demonstrate a familiarity with specific research and administrative requirements for designing your project
- * understand and apply specific historical methodologies
- * construct a detailed review of the scholarly literature on your chosen research area
- * develop a rounded idea of how your research project will develop
- * engage constructively in discussions about research proposals and planning
- * prepare a grant application for submission to the School Postgraduate Committee

LECTURE/SEMINAR PROGRAMME

Week 1 Seminar 1 (17 January 2019)

- introduction to the course, including assessments and expectations
- proposed dissertation topics and proposed supervisors
- planning and organising your work
- the dissertation: general expectations and pitfalls
- assignment a): reviewing a past dissertation

⇒ **Weeks 1-2 Supervision meeting 1**

Discussion of topic area (issues, questions, sources). Please contact your proposed supervisor to set up this meeting at any mutually convenient time and also the three further meetings that are due before the end of the half-session

Week 2 No class

Please submit your **supervisor consent form** to the departmental office by **the end of this week**.

Week 3 Seminar 2 (31 January)

- research ethics
- assignment b): preparing your initial research proposal
- assignment c): preparing a literature review and a methodological review
- research grant applications

Week 4 No class

Week 5 Seminar 3 (14 February)

Presentations of draft initial topic proposals, small-group discussion.

Please post your texts on the discussion board in MyAberdeen as PDF documents by 5pm on Tuesday 12 February.

Week 6 Seminar 4 (21 February)

- preparing the scholarly 'apparatus'
 - preliminary pages
 - how to present non-text material: illustrations, tables, family trees, etc
 - footnotes / endnotes and bibliography
 - appendices
- sources for your research, and coping with gaps in the available sources
- assignment d): preparing the final outline

Week 7 Supervision meeting 2

Please contact your supervisor to schedule this meeting.

- return and discussion of the marked dissertation review and initial topic proposal
- general plan for the project

Week 8 Seminar 5 (7 March)

Presentation of draft literature and methodological reviews for small-group discussion

Please post your texts on the discussion board in MyAberdeen by 5pm on Tuesday 5 March.

Week 9 Supervision meeting 3

Review of all work to date. Please contact your supervisor to schedule this meeting.

Week 10 Seminar 6 (21 March)

- preparing your chapters and Conclusion
- course guide for the Dissertation
- review of the course; feedback about the course

Week 11 Supervision meeting 4

Please contact your supervisor to schedule this meeting.

- return and discussion of the marked literature and methodological reviews and final outline
- work plan for April-August
- arrangements for maintaining contact during the summer

READING LIST

There is no specified reading list for this course. However, you might find it helpful to consult one or more of the many published guides for research and dissertation writing that are in the public domain, such as:

- *New Hart's Rules: The Handbook of Style for Writers and Editors (Reference)* (OUP, 39th Edition, 2005). This is the style guide used by Oxford University Press, and is an immensely helpful reference book for all those writing scholarly prose in British English.
- *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th Edition (Chicago, 2010). For students from North America, or those writing for US publications. It contains much general advice that is relevant for all scholarly work, but it gives rules for US spelling, punctuation etc.
- Rudestam, K.L., *Surviving your dissertation: a comprehensive guide to content and process* (Los Angeles, 2007).
- E. Trueland, *History. Student guide to historical research, dissertation writing and assessment* (Dundee, 2002).

MORE SPECIFICALLY, YOU ARE REQUIRED TO READ THE DOCUMENTS THAT WILL BE POSTED IN THE DISCUSSION BOARD AREA OF THE COURSE WEBSITE AHEAD OF CERTAIN SEMINARS (SEE ALSO THE SECTION 'EXERCISES' BELOW.)

ASSESSMENT

- a) Dissertation review 15%
- b) Initial topic proposal 15%
- c) Literature review and methodological review 40%
- d) Final outline 30%

*To view the CGS Descriptors please go to **MyAberdeen-Organisations-Divinity, History, & Philosophy Student Information for Taught Postgraduates**.*

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.

If you submit your work on time, you can expect that feedback will **normally be provided within three working weeks** (excluding vacation periods) of the submission deadline.

The syllabus and assessment have been designed to take you step-by-step through the key stages of commencing work on a substantial piece of research. The coursework is linked to follow-up discussions with your supervisor. It is thus very important that you make every effort to meet the submission deadlines and arrange those meetings with your supervisor. Ensure that you consult your supervisor about their expectations, including their requirements concerning the presentation of footnotes and the bibliography.

FOUR items of coursework are required:

a) **Dissertation review** (1000 words; 15 %)

An evaluation of a Masters dissertation from a previous year, to help give you a clear sense of what is wanted. Concentrate on organisational and presentational issues together with the accessibility of the overall argument to an interested non-specialist. You are not expected to comment in detail about the content. You do not need to provide a bibliography.

b) **Initial topic proposal** (1000 words plus bibliography; 15 %)

This exercise is intended to help you begin to sharpen your focus on your topic; it needs to introduce your proposed topic and its importance (ie. why is it academically worthwhile?); briefly summarise the current state of knowledge, preferably identifying a gap; explain how you will proceed – ideally to try to fill this gap; and identify the main sources to be used, together with a brief discussion of any likely problems.

c) **Literature review** (750 words plus bibliography) and **Methodological review** (750 words plus bibliography) (combined 40 %)

The literature review should provide an extended discussion of the secondary literature on your topic, which identifies the main debates, arguments, views, etc and also the weaknesses or needs of this literature, especially in terms of issues that are very contentious or have not yet been covered.

The methodological review should provide an extended discussion of the research methods that you plan to use, including their particular strengths and any pitfalls, your sources, ethical issues, etc.

d) **Final outline** (1500 words plus bibliography of cited items; 30%)

A detailed description of the expected structure and content of your dissertation as it now stands. As with the initial proposal, start by providing an introduction to the topic and a summary of the literature, but now concentrate on giving detailed descriptions and explanations of what each chapter will do. At least one paragraph per proposed chapter is expected here. **Note** that although you should now have a pretty clear idea of how your dissertation will look, we are using 'final' here primarily to distinguish this

work from your earlier proposal. Be aware that your project will continue to evolve over the summer.

At first glance the assignments may appear to overlap to at least some extent. Indeed they do. The point is that this developmental process involves constantly revisiting one's earlier thoughts and work. Your thinking will inevitably continue to evolve throughout the course and indeed throughout the summer, and it is even possible that your topic, approach, etc will change radically, depending on how your research proceeds.

For the same reasons, explicit repetition is a deliberate feature of this course. It reflects the need in research constantly to review and refine your thinking.

That said, we expect to see a process of development in your work. It is not acceptable simply to cut and paste from one assignment to another. To do that would in effect constitute self-plagiarism, which will be penalised in the same way as plagiarism.

Referencing in bibliographies and footnotes/endnotes: a guide is available on the course website, but you are strongly recommended to consult your supervisor about their requirements and follow their instructions. Whichever system you use, use it consistently!

PREPARATION FOR EXERCISES

As a result of student feedback in previous years several of the seminars will rely on prior posting of draft documents as PDF files on the discussion board on the course website. Please ensure that you post your document by 5pm on the Tuesday before the class, and acquaint yourself with the other documents posted. **Please save and post your documents as PDF files only, because Mac users may have trouble downloading MS-Word files.**

ASSESSMENT DEADLINES

- a) Dissertation review: **3pm on Thursday 31 January 2019**
- b) Initial topic proposal: **3pm on Thursday 21 February**
- c) Literature review and methodological review: **3pm on Thursday 14 March**
- d) Final outline: **3pm on Thursday 21 March.**

SUBMISSION ARRANGEMENTS

Submit **one paper copy** with a completed essay cover sheet to the **drop boxes in CB008 in 50-52 College Bounds** and **one official electronic copy** to **TurnitinUK via MyAberdeen**. Both copies to be submitted by 3.00pm on the due date.

Paper Copy: One paper copy, typed and double spaced, together with an **Assessment cover sheet** – this should have your ID number **clearly** written on the cover sheet, with **NO** name or signature but **EVERYTHING ELSE** completed, including tutor's name – and should be delivered to the drop boxes in CB008, 50-52 College Bounds.

Electronic Copy: One copy submitted through Turnitin via [MyAberdeen](#). (for instructions please see <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/eLearning/turnitinuk/students/>) Students are asked to retain the Turnitin receipt so they are able to provide proof of submission at a later date if required.

In advance of uploading, please save the assignment with your student ID number listed in the filename, i.e. 59999999 HI5594 Essay 1. When asked to enter a title for the assignment, please enter a title identical to the name of your saved assignment, i.e. HI5594 Essay 1.

Both copies to be submitted by 3.00pm on the due date.

Please note: Failure to submit both an electronic copy to TurnitinUK, and an identical paper copy, will result in a deduction of marks.
Failure to submit to TurnitinUK will result in a zero mark.