

HIST 2950:
Professionalization Seminar
SYLLABUS

Prof. Jonathan P. Conant
Sharpe 120 (79 Brown St.)
Brown University
W 3:00–5:30 p.m.
Spring 2020

This course is designed to prepare you for a career as a historian. We will focus primarily on setting career goals and developing the practical skills necessary to meet them, and we will introduce the process of deploying those skills in multiple professional arenas, both in and beyond the academy. In addition, we will discuss many of the unwritten cultural and social rules of academia to prepare you to navigate your career at Brown and in the various institutional contexts that follow completion of the PhD.

COURSE GOALS:

- To assess your professional goals and develop a strategy for reaching them
- To develop practical skills crucial to any career as a professional historian: research and writing, speaking, grant/fellowship applications, teaching, attending conferences, and publishing
- To examine the cultures and structures of academia in general, and academic history in particular
- To become familiar with the range of resources available, both at and beyond Brown, to support historians employed in a variety of academic and non-academic institutions, settings, and occupations

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING: Students will complete a series of nine substantive written assignments and oral presentations, marked on the syllabus with an arrow (➤), including but not limited to a course syllabus, a grant proposal, an Informational Report on an interview with a professional historian, and a short collaborative conference-style presentation or podcast. Each of these assignments is weighted equally, they will be graded on a Satisfactory/No Credit (S/NC) basis—the Brown equivalent of Pass/Fail—and collectively they account for 50% of a student’s final grade in the class. In addition, students should plan to attend as many What History Looks Like workshops, Pedagogy Reading Group meetings, and department talks as possible over the course of the semester. Attendance at all class meetings is required, and students are expected to participate actively in our discussions; regular, punctual attendance and active participation account for the other 50% of a student’s final grade in the class. *Please note that while this course is designated S/NC, attendance is required and a high standard for student written material and class participation will be maintained.*

GETTING IN TOUCH:

E-mail: jonathan_conant@brown.edu Office: Sharpe 315 (79 Brown St)
Phone: x3-5121 Office Hours: Wed. 1–3 p.m. and by appointment

CREDIT HOUR EXPECTATIONS: The total of in-class hours and out-of-class work for all full credit courses at Brown is approximately 180 hours over the length of a semester. In this class, students seeking to maximize their learning can expect to spend 32.5 hours in class (2.5 hours per week for 13 weeks); 97.5 hours reading for class (approx. 7.5 hours per week for 13 weeks); 22 total hours on weekly response papers and short written assignments; 5 hours each writing the course syllabus and grant proposal; 6 hours interviewing a professional historian and writing the Informational Interview Report; and 12 hours researching, writing, and practicing the conference-style presentation. Actual times will vary for each student; final grades are not determined by the amount of time a student spends on the course.

REQUIRED TEXTS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE:

The following text will be available for purchase at the Brown Bookstore:

Karen Kelsky, *The Professor is In: The Essential Guide to Turning Your PhD into a Job* (New York, 2015). ISBN: 978-0553419429. \$16.00 new

*All other readings will be freely-accessible online or available through Canvas

SEMINAR SCHEDULE¹

*** Please come to class prepared to discuss the readings on the day indicated ***

- Week 1**
(Jan. 22) **Introduction: Being a Professional Historian in the 21st Century**
Reading: Emily Swafford and Dylan Ruediger, [“Every Historian Counts: A New AHA Database Analyzes Careers for PhDs.”](#) *Perspectives on History*, July 9, 2018
[“Where Historians Work: An Interactive Database of History PhD Career Outcomes”](#) (explore the database)
Kelsky, *Professor is In*, Part I
- Week 2**
(Jan. 29) **Skills, Interests, and Values: Shaping Your Own Career**
Work/life balance – CareerLAB – introduction of Informational Interview Report assignment (due week 9) – professional etiquette
Guest speaker: Bev Ehrich (CareerLAB)
Reading: Kelsky, *Professor is In*, chapters 14 and 24
Barbara Weinstein, [“Historians and the Mobility Question.”](#) *Perspectives on History*, Feb. 1, 2007
- Skills, Interests, and Values check-in assignments due:
 - Create or revise a CV listing your accomplishments to date
 - Complete an [ImaginePhD](#) self-assessment and come to class prepared to discuss the results
- Week 3**
(Feb. 5) **Identifying and Applying for a Major Grant**
Guest speaker: Tara Nummedal
Reading: Kelsky, *Professor is In*, chapters 17 and 51–52
[“Funding Opportunities for Graduate Students in History,”](#) *Tropics of Meta*
Adam Przeworski and Frank Salomon, [“The Art of Writing Proposals: Some Candid Suggestions for Applications to Social Science Research Council Competitions”](#) (Brooklyn, N.Y., 1995) **Over →**

¹ This syllabus draws heavily on those of past instructors of the Professionalization Seminar, including Profs. Jennifer Johnson, Jenny Lambe, Amy Remensnyder, and Robert Self, whose substantial contributions to the course readings, assignments, and overall design I acknowledge with gratitude.

History Department Google Docs Grant Database

- Grant-writing assignments due (over, next page):
 - Prepare a list of at least three grants or fellowships in your field for which you are eligible, preferably a mix of pre-dissertation, short-term, and long-term, including relevant specialized grants in your sub-field (e.g. paleography or language training)
 - Choose one grant/fellowship and write a draft research proposal

Week 4
(Feb. 12)

Setting Goals, Time Management, and Preparing for Prelims

“Read” like an academic – five-year plans – weekly plans

Guest speakers: Third-year PhD cohort (joint session with Prospectus Seminar)

Reading: Cameron Blevins, “[Surviving Qualls, Part I: Laying the Groundwork](#)”

(Jan. 11, 2012) and “[Surviving Qualls, Part II: The Grind](#)” (Jan. 23, 2012)

Tanya Golash-Boza, “[Start the Semester off Right: Make a Weekly Template](#),”
Get a Life, PhD (blog), Aug. 18, 2013

Gaia Vasiliver-Shamis, “[Five Time Management Tips](#),” *Inside Higher Ed*, July 25, 2016

Larry Cebula, “[How to Read a Book in One Hour](#),” *Northwest History*, April 26, 2010

American Historical Association Committee for Graduate Students, “Preparation Tips for Comprehensive Exams” (Canvas)

Kelsky’s blog, [theprofessorisin.com](#), [first post](#) and [second](#) post

Recommended reading: Kelsky, *Professor is In*, Part IX; “[How to Get the Mentoring You Want: A Guide for Graduate Students](#)” (Rackham Graduate School, U. of Michigan, 2014)

- Planning and prelims assignments due:
 - Draft a five-year plan, making note of major milestones as well as the department’s and Brown’s structures. What do you want to accomplish? Or, put differently, what do you want your CV to look like by the time you go on the job market? Please append your written reflections on these questions to the five-year plan. **Please bring two hard copies to class** (one for me and one for taking notes)
 - Draft a schedule for the next week of your working and non-working life. This should include not only formal meetings and commitments, but also your individual work plans
 - Read one or more of the texts assigned for this week in your core/thematic graduate seminar as if you were reading for prelims; implement one of the note-taking strategies discussed in the readings

Week 5
(Feb. 19)

The 47%: What Do Tenure-Track History Professors Do?

Structures of the university – race, class, and gender

Guest speaker: Sam Caldis (Graduate School)

Reading: Kelsky, *Professor is In*, Part II

Eve Dunbar, “[Who Really Burns: Quitting a Dean’s Job in the Age of Mike Brown](#),” *Jezebel*, Dec. 2, 2014

Kevin R. Johnson, “[How and Why We Built a Majority-Minority Faculty](#),”
Chronicle of Higher Education, July 24, 2016

- Kiense Laymon, "[My Vassar College Faculty ID Makes Everything OK](#)," *Gawker*, Dec. 1, 2014
- David J. Leonard, "[Imposter Syndrome: Academic Identity Under Siege?](#)" *Chronicle of Higher Ed* (blog), Feb. 5, 2014
- Robert B. Townsend, "[Gender and Success in Academia: More from the Historians' Career Paths Survey](#)," *Perspectives on History*, Jan. 1, 2013

Week 6

(Feb. 26)

Site Visit: John Brown House

History careers beyond the tenure track – writing for wider audiences – RIHS internship program

Reading: Kelsky, *Professor is In*, Part X

Susan Ferber, "[Turning 'Plan B' Into a 'Plan A' Life](#)," *Chronicle of Higher Ed*, July 23, 2012

Sylvia Gale, "Arcs, Checklists, and Charts: The Trajectory of a Public Scholar?" in *Collaborative Futures: Critical Reflections on Publicly Active Graduate Education*, ed. Amanda Gilvin, Georgia M. Roberts, and Craig Martin (Syracuse, N.Y., 2012), pp. 315–327 (Canvas)

Elizabeth Segrans, "[What Can You Do with a Humanities Ph.D. Anyway?](#)" *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 31, 2014

Rebecca Tuhus-Dubrow, "[The Repurposed Ph.D.: Finding Life After Academia and Not Feeling Bad About It](#)," *New York Times*, Nov. 1, 2013

Week 7

(March 4)

Research Skills: Think Like a Librarian

Finding information – data management – introduction of Conference Talk/Podcast assignment (due week 12)

Guest speaker: Bill Munroe (Brown University Library)

Reading: Thomas Mann, *The Oxford Guide to Library Research* (complete)

- Assignment due: Interview one professor and one dissertating grad student about the system he or she uses to manage research and writing. Write a 1-page summary of what you find

Week 8

(March 11)

The (Middle-Term) Goal: Writing a Dissertation

Guest speaker: Diego Luis

Reading (all on Canvas): Gregory M. Colón Semenza. *Graduate Study for the Twenty-First Century: How to Build an Academic Career in the Humanities* (New York, 2010), pp. 167–187

Samuel Redman, *Historical Research in Archives: A Practical Guide* (Washington, D.C., 2013), pp. 1–13

Eric Hayot, *The Elements of Academic Style: Writing for the Humanities* (New York, 2014), pp. 41–56

- Dissertating assignments due:
 - Identify at least **two** recent dissertations relevant to your future research using *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global* in the database section of the Brown Libraries web site. (It is best to select dissertations for which there is an available pdf.) Decipher the relevant source information, historiographical arguments, and architecture of the dissertation. Write a 2-3 pg. summary of what you find. Another useful source to consult is dissertationreviews.org

- Locate and list at least three archives/sites that you expect will be relevant to your future research (check out dissertationreviews.org, “Fresh from the Archives” for some ideas). Write a 1-page summary of what you find
- Conference talk/podcast proposal due: form a group of three students (or four, if the number of students in the class is not an even multiple of three) and submit a short (250-500 word) proposal for a conference panel or collaborative podcast

Week 9 Reaching Your Audience: Academic Publishing and Podcasts

(March 18)

Guest speaker: James Green

Reading: Kelsy, *Professor is In*, chapter 16

Explore Wendy Belcher’s [website](#), particularly “How to Write a Journal Article” and “How to Write a Book Review”

Brian Martin, “[Writing a Helpful Referee’s Report](#)” & “[Surviving Referee’s Reports](#),” *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* (April 2008)

Stephen K. Donovan, “The Importance of Resubmitting Rejected Papers,” *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* (April 2007) (Canvas)

- Publishing and podcast assignments due:
 - Identify three prominent journals in your field. Within the latest issue of one of those journals, locate an outstanding article and write a synopsis and brief analysis of the piece in light of the Belcher reading (2-3 pgs.)
 - Write a cover letter to one of those journals for a submission based on the research paper you completed last semester
 - Check out Brazil Unfiltered (<https://soundcloud.com/brazilunfiltered>) and the Ottoman History Podcast (<http://www.ottomanhistoricalpodcast.com/>) and listen to an episode (ideally by a graduate student) to begin thinking about how and where you could share your research

(March 25) *No class: Spring Break*

Week 10 Networking: Building Connections, from Conferences to Cold Calling

(April 1)

Reading: Kelsky, *Professor Is In*, chapters 19–20

Linda Kerber, “Conference Rules,” [Parts Two](#) and [Three](#), *Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 21, 2008 and May 2, 2008.

Katherine McDonough, “[Online Presence for Your Early Career](#),” *Dissertation Reviews*, November 14, 2014

- Informational Interview Reports due

Week 11 Teaching

(April 8)

Inclusive pedagogy – discussion-leading – public speaking

Guest speakers: Jessica Metzler (Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning) and Charles Carroll (The Writing Center)

Reading: Kelsy, *Professor is In*, chapters 15 and 25–26

AHA Perspectives, “[The Mechanics of Class Participation](#)”

Brown Department of History, “Bibliography: Engaging Oppression in the Classroom” (Canvas)
 Paul Edwards, [“How to Give an Academic Talk: Changing the Culture of Public Speaking in the Humanities”](#) (1998)
 Craig Lambert, [“Twilight of the Lecture.”](#) *Harvard Magazine* (March-April 2012)
 U. of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT), “Inclusive Teaching Strategies: Reflecting on Your Practice” (Canvas)
 Kristin H. Robinson and Anne Meyer, “Doing History the Universal Design for Learning Way,” in *Universal Design for Learning in the Classroom: Practical Applications*, ed. Tracey E. Hall, Anne Meyer, and David H. Rose (New York, 2012), pp. 90–105 (Canvas)

- Teaching assignments due:
 - Develop a syllabus skeleton for an advanced undergraduate seminar in the History Department. This skeleton should include a course description, a calendar of weekly topics and meetings (assume the course meets once a week), and a preliminary set of possible readings and assignments. It should be at least 2 pgs.
 - Peruse the AHA’s Tuning Project web site and consider how you might use its resources in your proposed course

Week 12 **Presenting Your Work: Conference Talks and Podcasts**
 (April 15) ➤ Present conference panels and podcasts

Week 13 **Asking Questions and Providing Feedback**
 (April 22) Guest speakers: Third-year PhD cohort (joint session with Prospectus Seminar)
 Reading: TBD



The Fine Print:

By taking this class, you are agreeing to the following terms:

1. **Attendance and participation:** Regular, punctual attendance and informed participation is expected of all students. If you are going to miss class for any reason, please call or e-mail me *ahead of* the scheduled class meeting time to let me know (see “Getting in Touch,” above). Students may take one excused absence without affecting their participation grade; further excused absences may negatively affect a student’s grade. Any unexcused absences will result in a No Credit participation grade for the day missed (= loss of 8% of the student’s overall participation grade per class session missed).
2. **Inclusion and Accommodations.** Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform me if you have any condition that might require accommodations or modification of any of these course procedures. You may speak with me after class or during office hours. For more information, contact Student and Employee Accessibility Services at 401-863-9588 or SEAS@brown.edu.
3. **Academic integrity:** Participation and evaluation in this course is subject to the Brown University Academic Code: http://www.brown.edu/academics/college/degree/policies/academic_code.
4. **Changes to this syllabus:** This syllabus is provisional; the instructor reserves the right to make changes to it as necessary throughout the course of the semester.

