History 200: Introduction to History and Historical Methods

Fall 2026
Section 1

Canvas site: https://myballstate.bsu.edu/dashboard

Description

This course is a hands-on, workshop format that will introduce students to the different fields of history, significant concepts in historical analysis, research methods and sources, and trends in historical interpretation. The featured skills will include the cultivation of the following skills: identifying and comprehending historical arguments, interpreting primary and secondary sources, posing historical questions, engaging in historical research, and appropriately citing primary and secondary sources. To demonstrate those skills, students will submit informal, short papers and lengthier, formal essays as well as presentations within groups and to the class. While those skills will consume the bulk of our time, the semester will be framed by an awareness of why history matters and, to conclude, what students can do next to apply their skills as historians to their futures after Ball State. With completion of this course, students will possess the requisite foundation to succeed in upper-division History courses. This course serves as a High Impact Practices (HIPs) course at Ball State with a specific focus on research (focusing on relevant research issues in the field of History and then applying those skills).

Prerequisite: Required of and open only to History majors (Classics, General, Public History, and Religious Studies) and Social Studies Teaching majors. Students must register for History 200 before completing 15 credit hours in the major and receive the permission of the department's academic advisor.

Course Materials

- Carl Smith, *Urban Disorder and the Shape of Disbelief: The Great Chicago Fire, the Haymarket Bomb, and the Model Town of Pullman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, second ed.), 2007. ISBN: 978-0-226-76424-5.
  -In paperback and available through the Ball State bookstore; used copies are also available online (about $15-20).
  -A copy will also be put on reserve at the main library (just ask at the circulation desk).
- Additional readings will be posted to Canvas.

Course Assignments and Assessments

Workshop Reflections (250-350 words) 9 offered (lowest dropped): 8 x 10 points=80
Short Papers (roughly 3 pages, double spaced) 3 x 35 points =105 points (no drops)
Medium Papers (roughly 5 pages, double spaced) 5 x 50 points =250 points (no drops)

Participation= 80 points
Research Paper 1 (Turner, roughly 6 pages) =100 points
Final Paper Research Paper (Chicago, 8 pages & presentation) = 225 points
Total Points Possible: **840 points**

Below is a list of due dates to help plan your semester. Additional assignment details, including instructions, relevant readings, due dates, and grading criteria/rubrics will be posted and updated on Canvas. Please check Canvas regularly to stay informed and on track.

Assignments of Letter Grades:
Each student's letter grade will be determined by percentage of points possible they received at the end of the term:

Letter Grade	Range
A	100% - 94%
A-	<94% - 90%
B+	<90% - 87%
B	<87% - 84%
B-	<84% - 80%
C+	<80% - 77%
C	<77% - 74%
C-	<74% - 70%
D+	<70% - 67%
D	<67% - 64%
D-	<64% - 61%
F	<61% - 0%

Students should obtain regular updates on their course grade through Canvas.

Weekly Schedule:

Interpreting the Schedule:
Unless otherwise noted in class, the assigned reading should be completed before we meet for class that day. Assignment due dates and times will vary—and will be discussed in class and posted in Canvas (some will be due before class, others after class). *Because the Short Papers are tied to particular class discussions, they may shift in due date and content to match our progress throughout the term. Students are strongly urged to put all other due dates (medium, long, and research papers) into their calendars at the start of the semester.*

Unit I: Why History?
Week 1: Course Introduction
Aug. 25: Course Introduction & Discussion

History's Toolbox workshop: Assessing Change and Causality
PDF on Canvas: Michael J. Salevouris with Conal Furay, *The Methods and Skills of History: A Practical Guide* (Maleden, Mass.: Wiley and Sons, fourth ed.), 2015, 27-42.

Aug. 27: Where do we get our history from? Why does history matter?

PDF on Canvas: Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), ch. 4.
Workshop Reflection 1: Reaction to Rosenzweig/Thelen chapter.

Week 2: History in Everyday Contexts: Public History and the Classroom
Sept. 1: Public History and the Classroom

(students will be assigned one of these three articles for class discussion)

- PDF on Canvas: Keith C. Barton, "'I Just Kinda Know": Elementary Students' Ideas about Historical Evidence, Theory, & Research in Social Education, 25:4, 407-30.
- PDF on Canvas: Keith C. Barton, "Research on Students' Ideas about History," in Handbook of Research in Social Studies Education, ed. By Linda S. Levstik and Cynthia A. Tyson (New York: Routledge, 2008), ch. 14.

Public History (Civil War era):

- PDF on Canvas: Dwight T. Pitcaithley, "'A Cosmic Threat': The National Park Service Addresses the Causes of the American Civil War," in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American History* (New York: New Press, 2006), ch. 9.

Short Paper 1 due Sept. 1: Using readings from our first two weeks, synthesize problems and possibilities for the discipline of History

Unit II. Interrogating the Past: How do Historians "Do" History?
Sept. 3: Puzzling through Primary Sources

-class workshop: Assessing southern religious newspapers as primary sources

Week 3

Sept. 8: Assessing a Scholarly Article
PDF on Canvas: Scott Stephan, "President James K. Polk's Deathbed Conversion: The Contest of Ideas and Market within the Mid-Nineteenth-Century Southern Evangelical Press," *American Nineteenth Century History,* (Oct. 2024), 1-22.

Medium Paper 1 due: Exploring a scholarly article
Additional Discussion: Scholarly peer review (formal and informal)

CASE 1: Nat Turner: Making Sense of Slavery through Evidence and Argument

Sept. 10: Analyzing a Primary Source
PDF on Canvas: Nat Turner's "Confessions" (UNC, Documenting the American South)
Workshop Reflection 2: Thinking critically about primary sources
(Groups assigned for discussion)

Week 4: Nat Turner's "Confessions"

Sept. 15: Putting Nat Turner into Historical and Historiographic Context
Everyone: PDF on Canvas, Timeline and Maps of Turner's Rebellion
Group 1: Tony Horwitz, "Untrue Confessions: Is Most of What We Know about the Rebel Slave Nat Turner Wrong?," *New Yorker,* Dec. 6, 1999.
Group 2: Patrick H. Breen, *The Land Shall Be Deluged in Blood: A New History of the Nat Turner Revolt,* New York: Oxford University Press, 2015, 169-180 ("Afterword: From His Own Words").
Group 3: Anthony E. Kaye with Gregory Downs, *Nat Turner, Black Prophet: A Visionary History* (New York, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2024), 211-31 ("The Book of Nat").

-Optional materials: PDF on Canvas: Dylan Penningroth, "Writing Slavery's History," *OAH Magazine of History,* vol. 23 (April 2009), 13-20.

Sept. 17: Discuss assigned book chapter on Turner in groups/outline brief presentation/summary findings
Workshop Reflection 3 (due after class): Brief summary of your group's assigned chapter (1 per group)

Week 5: Interpreting Nat Turner's Rebellion (secondary sources)

Sept. 22: Each group will present their findings to class (send summary findings to Dr. Stephan for posting to Canvas)
-10 minutes per group
Medium Paper 2: Exploration of an assigned book chapter due Sept. 22

Sept. 24: Workshop on Turner connecting primary and secondary sources
Workshop Reflection 4: Crafting a research question for Turner paper

Week 6: Developing a Research Question and Research Pathway

Sept. 29: Workshop: Organizing ideas and citing evidence
Oct. 1: Peer review of drafts in class (student offers informal peer review)

Week 7: Peer Review

Oct. 6: How do Historians Debate the Past? Historiography and Book Reviews
Workshop Reflection 5: Groups collect reviews of their assigned book and assess the range of critiques.

Oct. 8: Turner Paper Workshop

Oct. 8 Research Paper 1: Submit Nat Turner Paper

-Fall Break, Oct. 12-Oct. 13 (no class on Tuesday, Oct. 13)

CASE 2: From the Slave South to the Modern Metropolis

Week 8: Chicago Project Foundation

Oct. 15: Discuss Foreword to the Second Edition & Introduction to Carl Smith's *Urban Disorder*

--Groups will be assigned for research paper (Fire, Haymarket, Pullman)

-- **Workshop Reflection 6**: "Following the Footnote" exercise (please bring a copy of the book—electronic or print); at end of class each group will provide instructor with 5 promising leads, including 1 from *Chicago Tribune* (forwarded to our library liaison)

Week 9: Chicago Project Foundation (continued)

Oct. 20: Groups meet to analyze section assigned by instructor & Identify research bottlenecks

Oct. 22: **Library Visit (meet by "Forest Idyll" in main library lobby by staircase)**

-Topic: Tracking down primary and secondary sources online & at library

Medium Paper 3 due: Exploration of 19th century Chicago (assigned book section)

Week 10: Group Work

Oct. 27: Expanding the Primary Source Base (What the authors use and how they use them?)

Connecting Primary and Secondary sources/Chicago Newspapers (PDF on Canvas): David Paul Nord, *Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and Their Readers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), ch. 6.

Oct. 29: Framing Primary Sources & Molding a Research Question

Workshop Reflection 7: Brief Research Prospectus & Sample of Evidence

[Note: Oct. 28—automatic withdrawal from courses ends; after this date all enrolled students will receive a letter grade, A-F]

Week 11: Writing Workshops

Nov. 3: Workshop: Identifying Research Bottlenecks

Nov. 5: Medium Paper 4 Proof of Concept Paper (primary evidence that will be the basis for your paper)

Week 12: Historiography & Evidentiary Base

Nov. 10: Finding additional Articles and Books (including reviews) and assessing their usefulness for your research

Workshop Reflection 8 (secondary sources): Collect 2 articles or 1 book that will be critical to your topic (Fire, Haymarket, or Pullman) and summarize key points

Nov. 12: Groups meet to organize presentations

Unit III: What Now? Thinking about How History Fits with Your Future

Week 13

Nov. 17: Peer Review of first section (**Workshop Reflection 9**)

Nov. 19: Career Center visit: Presentation on services and tips available at the Career Center; HIST 200 skills and career readiness workshop
Workshop Reflection 9: Connecting HIST 200 to Career and Skill development

Week 14: Peer Review of Entire Draft

Nov. 24: **Polished draft of Chicago topic—due to Canvas and your assigned partner by 11:59 pm on Nov. 24 (Medium Paper 5)**
Short Paper 2: Peer review of assigned paper due by Nov. 26 (11:59 pm)
(reviews assigned by instructor)

Thanksgiving Break: No classes Nov. 25-27

Nov. 26: No class—Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 15: Group Presentations

Dec. 1: Groups meet to Finalize Presentations

Dec. 3: Group Presentations start

Research Paper (Chicago) Due Friday, Dec. 5 to Canvas (11:59 pm)

Finals Week: Dec. 8-11
Tuesday, Dec. 8, 9:45-11:45 am, Presentations Conclude & workshop on Reflective Paper
Dec. 8, Short Paper 3 due to Canvas by 11:59 pm: Substantive reflection on skills

Note: This syllabus is subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.

Student Support Services

The Learning Center

The Learning Center offers free Tutoring and Academic Coaching for many courses at Ball State. Students can make appointments for online (Zoom) or in-person (NQ 350) appointments. To make an appointment, visit myballstate.bsu.edu and click on "Navigate" in the Academic Tools section, or just go directly to bsu.navigate.eab.com.

Testing accommodations for students with disabilities are available for students who have received the appropriate documentation from Disability Services. Tests may be administered in the Learning Center.

CSH (College of Sciences and Humanities) Success Hub North Quad, 160. A great starting point for connection to resources ranging from tutoring and writing to career preparation. https://www.bsu.edu/academics/collegesanddepartments/csh/csh-success-hub

Student Success Coaching: North Quad 339. A great starting point for assistance on how to develop skills critical to learning (organization, meeting deadlines, and cultivating your strengths). https://www.bsu.edu/academics/collegesanddepartments/universitycollege/student-success-coaching

The Writing Center

All writers improve with practice and feedback, so as a student in this course, you are encouraged to use the Writing Center (in Robert Bell 295 during weekdays, Bracken Library First Floor West in the evenings, or online during any of our regularly scheduled hours) to get additional feedback on your writing.

The Counseling Center

The Ball State University Counseling Center offers free and confidential services to all students. The Counseling Center is located in Lucina Hall, Room 320. To schedule an appointment, you can contact us at 765-285-1736. Ball State also offers a 24/7 Crisis Line, which can be reached at 765-285-HOPE (4673). The Crisis Line is a mental health resource for those who are struggling with any mental health concerns, including thoughts of self-harm and/or suicide.

The Basic Needs Hub

If you are having difficulty affording enough food, do not have a safe and reliable place to sleep, and/or experiencing an emergency or crisis, help is available through the Basic Needs Hub. The Basic Needs Hub has information, resources, and provides individualized support to students. To talk with a supportive staff member about your experience, receive one on one assistance, or learn more about resources, you can submit a Basic Needs Assistance Form.

Course Expectations and Policies

Attendance & Participation

Students are expected to check Canvas regularly (3-4 times per week) and attend classes except for recognized absences for university-approved travel, bereavement, illness, military absences, or genuine emergencies. Ball State requires all instructors to verify student attendance.

- Students are responsible for informing the instructor in a timely manner of the reason for any absence. Notification is crucial, particularly for any absence extending longer than one meeting. Students who are sick should contact their instructor and follow coursework on the Canvas site if they are able to do so.
- Because this is a workshop style course, active participation will be essential to the course and your success (this is not an attendance grade, though attendance is essential to participation). It will also involve extensive collaboration in pairs and groups (peer reviews and group presentations, for example). Students will be assessed on the quality and quantity of their participation.

Feedback Policy

- I will respond to email from your official Ball State email address within 24 hours during week days (Monday-Friday) and within 48 hours on the weekend.
- I will grade your assignments and discussions no later than within 5 school days of submission. Long and Research papers will be evaluated within 10 school days of submission.
- Contact me directly if you have questions or concerns about your performance in class.

Late Assignment Policy

- All assignments have a clear due date and time on Canvas.
- Any assignments submitted late and without a valid excuse will be penalized 10% upon being late, with an additional 5% for every day thereafter. A fundamental goal of this course is improving each student's ability to write, which starts with routine practice and scaffolding of assignments (both of which occur in this course).
- Please note that any extension will only be granted when a student encounters an extenuating circumstance and notifies the instructor in a timely fashion. If you know you will have a busy schedule, please use the course schedule to work ahead as needed.
- If a student cannot participate in a peer review assignment due to an extenuating circumstance, they must notify the instructor by the due date. If no notification is given, the student will receive a grade of 0 for that assignment. Incompletes will not be granted, and work will not be accepted, in cases where the instructor has not been kept informed.
- Canvas will not accept assignments for grading after 11:59 pm EST/EDT on the final day of class.
- Internet connectivity and technical issues may occur and impede you from turning in work on time. Turn in work early and often, and set up a back-up plan, such as visiting a local library, borrowing a peer's computer, and backing up work (e.g., cloud storage, thumb drives).

Student Academic Ethics Policy

Honesty, trust, and personal responsibility are fundamental attributes of the university community. Academic dishonesty and other forms of academic misconduct threaten the foundation of an institution dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and will not be tolerated. To maintain its credibility and reputation, and to equitably assign evaluations of scholastic and creative performance, Ball State University is committed to maintaining a climate that upholds and values the highest standards of academic integrity. Visit the VPAA's academic integrity website (Students tab) for resources on understanding academic integrity, citing sources properly, and avoiding inadvertent academic dishonesty. To learn about BSU's academic integrity expectations and students' rights, please read the University Student Academic Ethics Policy.

Academic integrity violations include giving or receiving an unfair academic advantage (cheating), presenting someone else's ideas or work as your own (plagiarism), and falsifying academic records. Unless otherwise indicated, you must work independently by yourself. Check with me if you are unsure whether something constitutes academic dishonesty. Examples of academic integrity violations include but are not limited to:

- Using resources not authorized by the faculty member (including devices, AI tools, hidden notes, and open books)
- Using commercial study websites to find answers to graded assignments (Chegg, Course Hero, StudyPool, OneClass, etc.).
- Without the instructor's written permission, giving away, buying, or selling graded assignments class notes, exams, study guides, or other course materials to other students or to third-party vendors (Course Hero, Chegg, 24HourAnswers, etc.).
- Working with another person on any assignment other than authorized group projects.
- Sharing or allowing others to access your files, whether done with permission or not.
- Reusing your own work from another semester, course, or section.
- Sharing answers with others during exams (passing notes, texting, whispering, gesturing)
- Discussing exam questions and answers with students who have not taken the exam.
- Soliciting others to complete work for you.
- The campus subscribes to Turnitin, a plagiarism prevention service, through Canvas. You may need to submit written assignments to Turnitin. Student work will be used for plagiarism detection and for no other purpose.

Penalties for academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, taking a 0 on that assignment.

Generative AI Statement

All work conducted and/or submitted in this course must be your own, completed in accordance with the Ball State University's Student Academic Ethics Policy. You may not collaborate with or make use of ChatGPT or any other generative AI applications at any time to develop materials submitted in this course.

Engagement Expectations

To support a respectful and engaging academic community that encourages the free exchange of ideas and civil discourse, we will follow these ground rules:

- **Respect different perspectives.** Share your ideas and let others share theirs.
- **Challenge ideas, not people.** Disagree respectfully. No personal attacks or put-downs. Focus on exploring ideas critically and constructively.

- **Listen to understand.** Stay curious, ask questions to understand, and give others space to speak.
- **Assume good intentions.** Approach discussions with curiosity and compassion.
- **Keep it private.** What is shared in class stays in class. Do not share others' words or work without permission.
- **Be respectful.** Avoid hurtful language, stereotypes, or content that may demean others. Keep feedback constructive.

University Policies and Statements

University Statement

We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the instructor of record as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services Office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

Freedom of Expression

In this course, we are committed to fostering a learning environment that values intellectual diversity, encourages free expression, and promotes open inquiry. As members of the Ball State Community, we treat each person in the Ball State community with civility, courtesy, compassion, and dignity and respect and learn from differences in people, ideas, and opinions. Please review Ball State University's Statement on Freedom of Expression, the resources on Ball State's Freedom of Expression webpage, and Ball State's Beneficence Pledge.

Title IX

Ball State University is committed to providing a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students. If you or someone you know has experienced sexual harassment—including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, please know that you are not alone. The University offers support services and resources. For more information or to report an incident, please visit bsu.edu/titleix or contact the Title IX Coordinator at 765-285-1545 or at titleix@bsu.edu

As your instructor, I am a mandatory reporter under the Title IX policy and required to report any information I receive about possible sexual harassment. This includes information shared in class discussions, assignments, or private conversations.

FERPA and Privacy

As a student, your educational records are considered confidential. Under FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), your records are confidential and protected. Under most circumstances, your records will not be released without your written and signed consent. However, some directory information may be released to third parties without your prior consent unless a written request to restrict this is on file. You can learn more about student rights to privacy by reading **Ball State's FERPA and Privacy and Protection.**