

Junior Year Writing

The *junior year writing seminar* is a university requirement, fulfilled through your major department. This is the most difficult requirement to complete from off-campus because these are specialized courses developed by full-time History faculty with specific goals and guidelines in mind. At present we do not offer an online version. (Check with the History Dept. at UMass Boston, because we accept their junior writing seminars and they may have developed an online course for this requirement.)

If you are unable to take your junior year writing seminar on campus, you may find a course at another institution that fulfills the guidelines set forth below. We recommend that you forward these guidelines to the professor and ask him/her to confirm that the course meets these requirements.

Be sure to have the course pre-approved, in writing, by the Director of Undergraduate Studies in the History Department at UMass Amherst (email advising@history.umass.edu).

GUIDELINES FOR HISTORY 591-595: PRO-SEMINAR IN HISTORY

(Junior-Year Writing Seminar)

University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Junior Year Writing Seminars (JYWS) fulfill the University of Massachusetts requirement that all undergraduates take a writing-intensive course in their major.

1. Topics. Each section of History 591-595 should have a clear topical definition with readings and research projects selected to focus on a subject of general interest. The primary purpose of the course is training in writing and research; coverage of any given topic is a secondary aim.
2. Classes. Class enrollment is to be restricted to a maximum of 12-15 students, and classes are to be scheduled as either a single-weekly meeting or twice-weekly meetings as mechanics dictate. Unlike graduate-level seminars which focus on research reports leading to a single major paper, these classes should emphasize two elements – discussion of assigned topical readings and the development of research and writing skills.
3. Writing. The major rationale for the History 591-595 requirement is the department's wish that every history major take at least one upper-level course which emphasizes writing skills. In addition, History 591-595 is structured so as to satisfy the Junior-level writing requirement in the University Writing Program. History 591-595 students should produce 30-40 pages of writing over the course of the semester, including a 15-25 page research paper based on primary sources. In order to satisfy the need to train students in both writing skills and research techniques, short writing exercises will be assigned early in the semester, followed by one or more longer papers.
4. Research. The meaning of research in History 591-595 courses must be interpreted flexibly because of the variety of topics and subject areas which will be covered. Students should be required to do library work beyond the assigned topical readings. Instructors should devote some time to introducing the class to techniques of library research. Advance consultation with the library reference staff is highly recommended.
5. Coordination. Although other departments may accept our writing pro-seminar as suitable for the satisfaction of their writing requirements, history majors must have priority in registering for our courses. History majors should fulfill the History 591-595 requirement not earlier than their junior year and not later than the first semester of their senior year.