

GUIDELINES FOR HISTORY 450 : 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 450 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 450 requirement is the department's wish that every history major take at least one upper-level course which emphasizes writing skills. In addition, History 450 is structured so as to satisfy the Junior-level writing requirement in the University Writing Program. History 450 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 450 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 450 requirement not earlier than their junior year and not later than the first semester of their senior year.