The beginning of your Honors capstone research, you will begin your independent research in this course, which is meant to help you draw on what you have learned about the discipline of history at Westminster. You will produce your own original scholarship after asking questions about the past and exploring the relevant historiography and primary sources that will help you answer those questions. Your project will culminate in work that is roughly equivalent to a Master’s thesis. In Honors 664, you will identify a topic, develop a research design and plan, write a historiography, and create an outline. You will also attend the History 601 sessions and engage with students enrolled in that class. We will work out other details and expectations together, after you have chosen a topic.

*Since you will be attending History 601 class sessions, this syllabus is modeled after that one. Some of the content won’t be relevant, but I have left it for consistency’s sake. It has been amended to reflect your specific assignment guidelines, etc.

Course Outcomes:
1. Identify and discuss some of the challenges and common fallacies found in the writing of history with History 601 students.
2. Evaluate your Methods work and/or develop topic ideas.
3. Select a capstone project and develop a research design, plan, and outline.
4. Write a historiographical assessment that analyzes what other scholars have written about their topic.

Texts:
You will need access to:
Optional:

“The problem with the future is that is isn’t as clear as the past. That’s why the writing of history generally – and the writing of biography particularly – requires empathy, which is not the same as sympathy. Is asks a very simple question: What exactly would I, knowing what they knew then, have done differently?” – John Lewis Gaddis, *George F. Kennan*
Evaluation:
- Attendance, Participation, and Professional Behavior: 10% (25 points) [Assesses outcome #1.]
- Assignments: 10% (25 points) [Assesses outcome #1.]
- Evaluating Methods Paper and/or Considering Research Topics: 15% (37 points) [Assesses outcome #2.]
- Research Design: 15% (38 points) [Assesses outcome #3.]
- Research Plan and Outline: 10% (25 points) [Assesses outcome #3.]
- Historiography: 40% (100 points) [Assesses outcome #4.]

Grading Scale:
- A+ 250 – 245 points
- A 244 – 232 points
- A- 231 – 225 points
- B+ 224 – 220 points
- B 219 – 207 points
- B- 206 – 200 points
- C+ 199 – 195 points
- C 194 – 183 points
- C- 192 – 175 points
- D+ 174 – 170 points
- D 169 – 157 points
- D- 156 – 150 points
- F 149 and below

Accessibility Statement:
Students with documented or suspected disabilities that prevent full access to course resources and/or facilities should contact Faith Craig, Disability Resources Director. Find the Disability Resource Office in 209 Thompson-Clark Hall or call 724-946-7192 for more information and assistance.

Learning and Writing Services:
If you are having trouble in class, you are always welcome to contact me for additional help. Learning and Writing Services is another helpful resource. See https://www.westminster.edu/academics/learning-writing-services.cfm.

Academic Integrity:
An explanation of the Academic Integrity Policy is listed in your Westminster Catalog. You must submit your own work and properly acknowledge anyone else’s work you use. If I determine that a student has violated this policy, they will – at a minimum – fail the assignment. (You should know that I, like most college instructors, am pretty good at detecting cheating or plagiarism. I do make use of “Turn It In.”) In addition, the following might result:
“After reviewing the instructor’s explanation of the violation and penalty, as well as the student’s record of previous offenses, the VPAA (Vice President for Academic Affairs) will take the following additional action:
  “a. FOR A FIRST OFFENSE, the VPAA may supplement the instructor’s penalty with further action, up to and including suspension and permanent dismissal. . .
  “b. FOR A SECOND OFFENSE, the VPAA will impose a one-semester suspension. . .
  “c. FOR A THIRD OFFENSE, the VPAA will impose a penalty of permanent dismissal from the College.”

Classroom Etiquette and Professional Behavior:
Since the peer evaluation process is central to capstone, the guidelines below revolve around respecting others’ thoughts and ideas. Violations will result in grade penalties.
- Please respect everyone’s right to participate in class.
- Do not pack up your things before class is over.
- Try to arrive on time. If you know you will be habitually late, please let me know.
- Please turn off your cell phones and keep them out of your reach. Do not engage in text-messaging during class.
- Walking in and out of the room during class is disruptive. Avoid it.
- Please avoid making appointments (etc.) that will require you to leave class early.
- Use common sense. If you disrupt class repeatedly, your grade will be impacted.
- Feedback on another student’s work should be honest and constructive, reflecting a respectful desire to help a peer improve. Do not disparage another student or engage in ad hominem attacks.
- Plagiarism, using another’s words or ideas without acknowledging them, is unacceptable. It could result in a failing grade for an assignment or for the class. See the section on academic integrity above.
Attendance, Class Participation, and Professional Behavior: Regular attendance and active participation, as well as completing assignments and meeting deadlines, are important expectations of the capstone experience. You should try not to miss ANY class sessions or appointments. If you know you will be absent for faith-based holidays, etc., please let me know now. Unless an arrangement has been made with Disability Services, doctor’s appointments, etc. will not be excused. If you know you will be absent for a college-sponsored event, you will need to inform me of that well in advance. Writing history is mostly a solitary endeavor, but the peer process is also a vital part of the discipline. Your relevant, appropriate, meaningful, and constructive participation is therefore required. This grade is worth 10% of your final grade.

Assignments: I will ask you to submit several small assignments intended to help you advance your research and writing. The instructions and due dates for each assignment are found in the course schedule. Please make sure to read ALL the instructions. Collectively, these assignments are worth 10% of your final grade. I will assign up to 10 points to each of these assignments and average them at the end of the semester to determine your assignment grade. [All D2L posts, collectively, will receive one ten-point score.]

Considering Topics:
You will either evaluate your Methods paper (if you choose to revise it for this project) or identify another topic.

If you choose to revise your Methods paper:
1. Reread your paper and evaluate it. What are its strengths and weaknesses? What would each of the four Westminster history professors say about the paper? How would you improve your paper?
2. Find a thesis or a dissertation on a similar topic. (Use the filter functions in WISE. You might need to utilize ILL, so order it as soon as possible.) Evaluate it. What are its strengths and weaknesses? What qualities might you want to emulate in your own work?
3. Summarize how you plan to revise your topic and paper for your independent research. (Note that you will go into more detail on this in your research design, so this can be brief for now.)

If you want to explore other topics:
1. Identify a list of topics you are interested in possibly exploring. (Come up with at least two, but – otherwise – you can include as many as you like.) What interests you about each? How would you narrow the topics, and what research questions would you use for each? What are the positives and negatives, in your estimation, of pursuing each one? (Be sure to factor in your personal preferences.)
2. Choose one of the topics you identified in number one, and find a thesis or a dissertation on a similar topic. (Use the filter functions in WISE. You might need to utilize ILL, so order it as soon as possible.) Evaluate it. What are its strengths and weaknesses? What qualities might you want to emulate in your own work? How might you approach the topic differently?
3. List the topics in order of your preference after completing numbers one and two. What primary sources would you use for your preferred topic? Methodology? (Note that you will go into more detail on this in your research design, so this can be brief for now.)

*Whichever option you choose, the assignment you submit should be about three pages long. Write in complete sentences and paragraphs. This assignment will be graded on how well it answers the above questions and the insightfulness of your analysis, as well as the quality of the writing. It is worth 37 points. Submit it to D2L by Thursday, February 1.

Research Design:
After you have developed a historical topic that interests you, turn in a research design/prospectus that explains your topic, question, and sources. It should include the following components:

1. An Introduction: Use your first paragraph to introduce your topic by drawing the reader in with an anecdote, description, etc. Capture the reader’s attention by passing along some of the enthusiasm you have for the topic. Be sure to also clearly explain your topic. That means including details to describe it. You should write as if I have little prior knowledge of your subject. [You may use the topic assignment you submitted earlier to help you, but you will probably want to revise it.]

2. A Brief Explanation of the Key Historiographical Questions: Since you will write a historiographical essay that more thoroughly flushes out some of what the secondary sources on your topic have to say, this part of your research design can be brief. You will, however, still want to comment on the intellectual context of your subject. Is there a dominant work (or works) on the topic? If so, identify it (them) here briefly and explain its (their) conclusions. Have most of the secondary sources taken a particular approach (political history, for example) when you want to consider a different one? If so, communicate that. Has it been several decades since research has been published on your subject? If so, make that clear.

3. Your Major Question(s): After you have highlighted what some others have written, you will want to clarify your own major question or questions. Your question should express a historical problem. (By “problem,” I don’t mean something that needs to be
fixed. I mean a way to better understand some aspect of the past.) Avoid questions that can easily be answered by going to a reference source. “How” and “why” questions are good places to start. Your topic and question should also be narrowed. Think about the kind of question that you can research and analyze in an article-length paper. If entire books have been written about your question, think about ways to narrow it.

4. A Description of Your Most Important Primary Sources and Your Anticipated Methodology: Next, you will want to identify the most important primary source(s) you will be using. Sometimes, finding a primary source around which you will base your research is a good way to narrow your topic. (For example, a student interested in immigrant experiences in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century might decide to focus on analyzing the content of the “Bintel Brief,” an early advice column in a Jewish newspaper. This source might prompt several questions. For example, how did the “Bintel Brief” advise new Jewish immigrants to the United States? Did that advice encourage assimilation, advise resisting assimilation, or somewhere in between?) Whether you begin with a primary source in mind or not, you will still need to explain what kinds of primary sources you will be examining. You will also need to describe how you will examine and use them to answer your question. This addresses your methodology. You might explain that you will be pursuing quantitative methods by gathering statistics, for example. Perhaps you are doing a close reading of a text or texts. You might mention the kind of historical approach(es) (political, diplomatic, military, economic, social, intellectual, cultural, etc.) that your research will take. Are you planning to incorporate methods of other disciplines? Include that here as well.

5. A Conclusion: Conclude this part of your prospectus by explaining why your research is significant. How does it help us understand the period?

6. A Bibliography: Your bibliography should be properly formatted. Use CMS! (See additional guidelines in the following paragraph.) Divide your primary and secondary sources. You should list AT LEAST six primary sources and AT LEAST 20 secondary sources. (Depending on your topic, it might make sense to amend these source requirements. We can discuss it.)

Components one through five should be organized into a coherent essay that should be AT LEAST two pages long. It should be double-spaced. Use margins of one inch and ten to twelve-point type in Times New Roman font. If you cite sources, use footnotes or endnotes according to CMS guidelines. Use arabic numerals to number your pages. Place those page numbers in the upper right corner. As mentioned above, your bibliography should reflect CMS standards precisely. Single-space each bibliographic entry and use hanging indents.* Include one space between each entry and alphabetize them by authors’ last names. Separate the primary and secondary source entries and use subtitles. (Your subtitles should be “Primary Sources” and “Secondary Sources.” Don’t include the quotation marks in your bibliography, though. List primary sources first.) Handouts with CMS examples will be available on D2L. Upload an electronic copy of your paper to the “Dropbox” on the D2L course page by the due date, Tuesday, February 20. You do not need to turn in a paper copy.

Your research design will be graded on how well it communicates a narrowed topic, its major historiographical questions, a historical question, and an anticipated methodology. Your grade will also assess the content and format of your bibliography and the quality of the writing. Your research design is worth 38 points.

*To include hanging indents in Word, highlight your entries, got to the “Layout” tab and select the small arrow pointing to the bottom right under “Spacing.” In the pop-up box, find the “Special” drop-down box under “Indentation” and select “Hanging.”

Historiography:
You will write an 8-10-page paper analyzing the secondary sources that you listed in your research design. Describe those sources and their arguments, compare and contrast them, assess their strengths and weaknesses, and identify their publication dates. At some point in your essay, you will need to incorporate references to at least two schools that you learned about in Historiography. You will also need to identify the historical approaches (political, diplomatic, military, economic, social, intellectual, cultural, etc.) of at least three of the sources. Avoid simply including a paragraph on each source in your bibliography without connecting them in some way to one another. Instead, identify relevant historiographical trends, point out common approaches, and provide historical context to explain analytical paradigms found in your secondary sources if necessary. Organize your discussion in a way that makes the most sense for your project, whether that means presenting the arguments of your secondary sources chronologically, by approach, or some other way. Be sure to identify authors’ perspectives and biases if relevant. Finally, explain how your project fits into the scholarship. Does it address a question that has largely been ignored? Does it consider primary sources not previously explored? Does it counter an argument made by your secondary sources?

Your paper should be double-spaced and 8-10 pages long. Use margins of one inch and ten to twelve-point type in Times New Roman font. Use footnotes or endnotes to cite your sources, and you must follow CMS guidelines. Single-spaced block quotations should be indented. Endnotes and bibliographic entries should also be single-spaced with blank lines between them (use hanging indents for bibliographic entries). Use arabic numerals to number your pages. Place those page numbers in the upper right corner. See CMS and Turabian for help with your notes and bibliography. Handouts with CMS examples will be available on D2L. Upload an electronic copy of your paper to the “Dropbox” on the D2L course page by the due date, Tuesday, April 17. You do not need to turn in a paper copy.
I will assess your paper according to how well you comprehend and communicate the sources’ conclusions; how well your paper reflects an understanding of various historical approaches and schools; how well your paper analyzes, organizes, compares, and contrasts the literature; and how well you have explained your own research’s place within the scholarship. The quality of your writing (including grammar, syntax, adherence to CMS, organization, etc.) will also impact your grade. This paper is worth 100 points.

**Research Plan:**
Your research plan will both identify personal capstone goals through September 2018 and set up at least one file you can use to assess your primary sources.

1. **Identify and Describe Your Research Goals:** Write a brief summary (no more than two pages) that identifies and describes at least three research goals you wish to accomplish by the end of September 2018, keeping in mind that you will (more than likely) be asked to begin writing by October at the latest. The nature of these goals will depend on your topic, but you will probably want to include setting deadlines for reading and analyzing your primary sources. [Example: I would like to have finished reading and taking notes on all newspaper articles by the end of June and all my other primary sources by the end of the summer. I will spend the month of September analyzing and drawing conclusions about my primary sources. By October 1, I will have completed my primary source analysis and a tentative paper outline.] This summary should also note any potential roadblocks to reaching your goals and how you might account for them. [Example: My summer work and internship schedule will take up much of my time, and I tend to procrastinate. To account for that, I will attempt to devote at least four hours a week (depending on my schedule) to these goals.] The conclusion of your summary should explain what you will need to do in the first few weeks of the fall semester if you do not meet your summer goals.

You should know that we will revisit these plans and the progress you have (or haven’t) made at the beginning of the fall semester. At that time, I will ask you to adjust your objectives, so that you can begin writing sooner rather than later. I plan on asking you to keep a research journal in September that records your progress in detail. I am considering waiving or reducing this assignment for any student who has successfully met his or her goals.

2. **Create a Notetaking File:** Put together at least one file you can use to keep track of the notes you take on your primary sources (and your secondary sources if relevant). This could take many forms, but most students will probably find Excel useful. An example is posted on D2L, but you should design something that is most useful for you. You will want to include a brief description of how you will use this file (or files) in your summary.

3. **Develop an Outline:** Submit an explanation of your thesis and a detailed outline of your project. Begin by identifying your thesis. A detailed outline that includes the main points that support your thesis along with the evidence you will use should follow. Consult Turabian (section 6.2.1) for ideas on how to go about this. (There is also an example template posted on D2L.) As you write, your outline will probably change (so you should be flexible enough to allow for that), but your initial outline should help immensely in guiding your writing and keeping you on an organized path.

Post your summary, your notetaking file, and your outline to D2L by 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 10. This assignment is worth 25 points. It will be assessed according to how well you have followed the instructions, on the level of appropriateness and detail of the three components, and (as always) on the quality of your writing.

**Creating a Community:** Students are encouraged to utilize the advice and wisdom of their professors and fellow students at any (or all) stages of the process. There will be a place to post questions and ask for advice on D2L. (I have titled it “History Capstone Posts” under “Forums.”) Please check these posts frequently (ideally once a day) and respond in kind. The participation grades of the students who make use of this tool will improve. While the research for your project should be your own, you are also encouraged to consult other faculty with expertise on your topic. This includes faculty in other departments as well as librarians. Please set up scheduled appointments with them if you choose to utilize this valuable resource. Come and see me with specific questions or problems at any time.

**Other Items of Note:**
- In addition to regularly keeping up with the assignments in the course schedule, please check your email every day for possible updates and/or announcements.
- Due dates and assignments might be changed if weather interferes or other (unforeseen) events require alterations in the schedule.
- Please regularly monitor D2L so that you may access your grade and feedback in a timely manner. Read the feedback carefully. I expect to see changes in your writing that reflect careful attention to comments on previous assignments.
- We will meet periodically throughout the semester. The most obvious time would be Thursday at 2:00, but we can work around both of our schedules. We will meet the first week of the semester, and whenever necessary after that. After you submit your first assignment, the direction you want to take your research should be clearer. When we meet to discuss that
assignment, we can then start to establish guidelines for your final project that make sense (like page numbers for the final project, etc.). I look forward to reading your work!

“Contingency – the idea that what happens in the world is often a result of the unexpected combination of quite particular circumstances – is the mark of history as a discipline, and, for me at least, the deep common ground of good history is that things did not have to be this way. To say that choices are not limitless, that we always act within constraints imposed by the past, is not the same thing as saying that there were, or are, no choices. . . . [W]e need to think about what did not happen in order to think historically. Considering only what happened is ahistorical, because the past once contained larger possibilities, and part of the historian’s job is to make those possibilities visible; otherwise all that is left for historians to do is to explain the inevitability of the present. The inevitability of the present violates the contingency of the past, which involves alternative choices and outcomes that could have produced alternative presents. To deny the contingency of the past deprives us of alternative futures, for the present is the future’s past. Contingency, in turn, demands hypotheticals about what might have happened. They are fictions, but necessary fictions. It is only by conceiving of alternative worlds that people in the past themselves imagined that we can begin to think historically, to escape the inevitability of the present, and get another perspective on issues that concern us still.” – Richard White, *Railroaded*
Course Schedule

Tuesday, Jan. 16 – Course Introduction

Thursday, Jan. 18 – Meet at 2:00 in Patterson 323 to Discuss the Semester

Stage One: Investigation, Research, and Preparing to Write
“Every important new discovery about the past changes how we think about the present and what we expect of the future; on the other hand every change in the conditions of the present and in the expectations for the future revises our perceptions of the past.”  – Ernst Breisach, Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern

Tuesday, Jan. 23 – Know Thyself: History and Autobiography
 READ: Trueman Introduction
 Assignment: After reading the assignment but before coming to class, post a comment on the History 601 course site on D2L about your own interests and background. How topics and questions interest you? Why? Be prepared to share this in class. If you have already chosen a research topic, consider why you have selected that topic. If you have not yet chosen a topic or are uncertain, make a list of topics, events, individuals, time periods, etc. that you have studied in other classes or have read about on your own and that interest you. What is it that drives your curiosity about the topics on your list?

 Assignment: Start gathering sources and putting together a bibliography, even if you haven’t yet nailed down a topic. Consult Turabian (chapter 3) to help you. Begin reading your secondary sources for background, for ideas on how to fine-tune and further focus your research questions if necessary, and for additional primary and secondary sources. Take good notes as you read. See Turabian (chapter 4).

Tuesday, Jan. 30 – Relativism, Objectivity, and Neutrality
 READ: Trueman Chapter 1
 Assignment: Post a brief response to the following on D2L (before class): Why does Trueman call Holocaust Denial “an extreme modern example of history that is really no history at all. . . . [It is] nonsense”?

Thursday, February 1 – Due: Considering Topics Assignment

Tuesday, February 6 (or some other date this week) – Scheduled Meeting

Tuesday, February 13 – Causal Analysis
 READ: Hoffer Chapter 4 (posted on D2L)
 Assignment: Post one question relevant to your topic that addresses causation on D2L (before class).
 Assignment: Continue reading and taking notes on your primary and secondary sources. Read over papers you have written in your other history classes. Do you find any patterns of strengths or weaknesses? Choose one or two to bring to class. Be ready to comment on your self-evaluation of that (or those) paper(s). You will share what you did very well as well as the weaknesses of your work. What areas for improvement can you identify?

Tuesday, February 20 (or some other date this week) – Scheduled Meeting

Due: Research Design (Post your design BEFORE coming to see me so that we can go over it together.)

Tuesday, February 27 – Imaginative Reconstruction and Historical Narrative
 READ: Hoffer Chapter 5 (posted on D2L)
 Assignment: Using the reading to guide you (especially pages 96-97), use what Hoffer calls “novelistic history” to narrate a “scene” relevant to your topic. Write it down and be prepared to read it in class.
 Assignment: Continue reading and researching your sources. Begin work on an annotated bibliography.

Tuesday, March 6 – No Class - Break
Tuesday, March 13 – **Avoiding the Procrustean Bed**  
**Read:** Trueman Chapter 2  
**Assignment:** Post a brief response to the following on D2L (before class): According to Trueman, how can “grand interpretative schemes” such as Marxism be helpful for historians? When do they lead to bad history? How can historians guard against that?  
**Assignment:** Continue working on your annotated bibliography.

Tuesday, March 20 – **The Anachronism Temptation**  
**Read:** Trueman Chapter 3  
**Assignment:** Post a brief response to the following on D2L (before class): Come up with a term, idea, etc. that could be misused as an anachronism. (You might consider something relevant to your own topic.)  
**Assignment:** Turn in an annotated bibliography of your secondary sources. Consult Turabian (section 16.2) and CMS for help. Please make sure your entries are properly formatted. After each entry, write a few sentences that explains the topic and argument of the source. Explain how it will help you write your paper. You should use the bibliography that you turned in as part of your research design, but it doesn’t have to be the same if your topic has evolved since then and you have discovered more sources or found that some of your original sources are not as helpful as you first thought. As you expand your research over the course of the semester, you should continue to add to your bibliography as you go. Continue reading your secondary sources. There is no need to turn in a paper copy if you successfully upload this assignment electronically.

Tuesday, March 27 – **A Fistful of Fallacies**  
**Read:** Trueman Chapter 4  
**Assignment:** Post a brief response to the following on D2L (before class): Of the fallacies mentioned in Trueman’s book, to which one (or ones) do you see yourself as most susceptible? What is your plan to avoid falling into the trap?  
**Assignment:** Continue reading your secondary sources. Begin examining your primary sources.

Tuesday, April 3 – **No Class – Monday Classes Meet**

Tuesday, April 10 – **Film: Labyrinth of Lies** [Most likely, but this is subject to change.]  
**Assignment:** Begin writing your historiography.

Tuesday, April 17 – **Finish Labyrinth of Lies**  
**Due:** Historiography

Tuesday, April 24 – **The “Secret” to Becoming a Better Historian**  
**Read:** Trueman Concluding Historical Postscript  
**Assignment:** Post a brief response to the following on D2L (before class): What part of Trueman’s formula for becoming a better historian do you believe to be most helpful? Why? Would you add anything to his formula?  
**Assignment:** Continue reading your primary and secondary sources. Read over the papers you have written in your other history classes. Do you find any patterns of strengths or weaknesses? Choose one or two to bring to class. Be ready to comment on your self-evaluation of that (or those) paper(s). You will share what you did very well as well as the weaknesses of your work. What areas for improvement can you identify?

Tuesday, May 1 – **Presentations on a Secondary Source**  
**Assignment:** Prepare and give a 5-10-minute presentation on one of your secondary sources. Identify the author, the author’s credentials, the topic, the thesis, and the method and sources used. Explain how the source fits into the historiography. Summarize its strengths and weaknesses and discuss how it will help you complete your capstone project. Be ready to ask questions when other students present.

**Thursday, May 10 (11:30-2:00) – Presentations on a Primary Source**  
**Assignment:** Prepare and give a 5-10-minute presentation on one of your primary sources. Analyze the source in your presentation by explaining the historical context, authorship, main points, perspective and biases, and significance to your project. Every student will also be expected to offer feedback on their fellow students’ presentations.  
**Due:** Research Plan