

**Florida International University
Department of History**

Professor Terrence G. Peterson



HIS 4935

Senior Seminar: The End of Empires

Spring 2024

Wednesdays, 2:00-4:45 PM in GC 276

Office SIPA II 330
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Office Hours: Wed. 11:30am-1pm
or by appointment

Welcome to Senior Seminar! This course represents the culmination of your career as a history major at FIU. As you've taken history courses, you have learned how to understand and engage the arguments of historians, how to critically analyze primary sources, and how to conduct research of your own. This semester you will combine all those skills to produce a substantive piece of original scholarship: your senior thesis. While the process might seem daunting, the focus of this course is precisely on that process: how to conceptualize, research, draft, and defend a piece of original scholarship from start to finish. We will break the work down into manageable steps and work together to provide each other helpful feedback along the way. By the end of the semester, you will formulate a research question, survey the secondary literature, locate primary sources, and construct your own argument that draws on this research – in short, you will do all of the things professional historians do when writing a piece of scholarship.

While you will each develop your own individual research projects, your work will touch in some way on the history of decolonization or its consequences. Decolonization represented not just the end of European Empires and the birth of new independent nations, but also a radical restructuring of global politics—one that continues to reverberate today. We will examine how a range of scholars have sought to understand this complex process while balancing its local and transnational dimensions. What drove this rapid transformation? How did global and local connect? Was the endpoint of decolonization predetermined, or did it emerge from the process itself? Through our readings and discussions, we will not only work address some of these questions, but to build a methodological tool kit you can use to approach your own research project.

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester students will:

- ✓ Understand the local and global causes of decolonization, the divergent ways the process unfolded in different contexts, and its legacies into our current day.
- ✓ Evaluate the arguments, methods, and sources of historians in order to understand how they have approached the study of
- ✓ Develop a research question on the topic of decolonization, national liberation, or the end of European empires.
- ✓ Conduct original research to identify and analyze primary and secondary sources to answer that question.
- ✓ Produce an argument-driven paper that draws on that primary source research and their engagement with the historiography of their given topic to support that argument.
- ✓ Present their findings and defend their argument in an oral presentation.

Coursework

Descriptions of the assignments are located after the Weekly Schedule below. All assignments are **due by the time we meet** on Wednesday each week.

Late work may be submitted within a 1-week grace period following due dates. Given the intensive nature of our work this semester, however, you must contact Dr. Peterson **ahead of time** to obtain permission. I am happy to be flexible, but Senior Seminar is a course where it is easy to fall behind catastrophically relatively quickly, so please maintain an open dialogue with me about any difficulties you might face submitting assignments.

Weekly assignments must be submitted on time.

Assignment	Due Date	Weight
Participation in Weekly Discussions	Weekly	10%
Weekly Research Diary on Canvas	Weekly	10%
Research Question	1/24	5%
Research Proposal	2/7	5%
Annotated Bibliography	2/21	5%

Primary Source List	3/6	5%
Rough Draft	Fri. 4/5	10%
Oral Presentation	Weeks 14/15	10%
Final Draft	4/24	40%
Total		100%

Grading Scale

A: 94-100	A-: 90-93	B+: 87-89	B: 83-86	B-: 80-82	C+: 77-79
C: 73-76	C-: 70-72	D+: 67-69	D: 60-66	E: 0-59	

Seminar Structure and Policies

Unlike lecture courses, where professors do much of the talking, seminars are a collective, collaborative endeavor. Our in-class work each week will be focused on discussion, where we will break down the readings, grapple with issues in our research, and share our struggles and insights. Likewise, research itself is a collective endeavor, and so we will be working in teams outside of class to help one another reflect on and advance our research.

Attendance and participation are mandatory. If you need to miss class for any reason, please get in touch with me. Unexcused absences will lead to a reduction of your participation grade and eventually a zero.

Weekly Discussions

Each week, we will meet to discuss the assigned readings and to complete activities related to our research. Please complete any assignments and read the assigned texts **before** class and arrive in class prepared to actively participate in and contribute to the discussion. You should also bring a copy of the assigned texts with you – either a printout or an electronic copy on a tablet or laptop (**not** your phone) – so that you can refer to them during the discussion.

At the start of the semester, we will form teams. Once every three weeks, your team will be responsible for **preparing 3-5 open-ended discussion questions** to help lead the discussion. These discussion questions should be posted to Canvas by **Sunday night**. If your group is not leading discussion, please read and reflect on the questions before class.

Weekly Research Diaries

Each week, I will ask you to reflect on your research process: the work you did, the difficulties you encountered, the aha! moments you experienced. Some weeks I will give you a specific question tied to what we're working on; other weeks the reflections will be more open-ended. This is a low-stakes assignment, and you will earn most or all points simply for completing it. The diary is meant to help you **reflect** your research process as it unfolds. It's also meant to help **foster collaborative feedback**: Your diary will be visible to the professor and to the members of your writing group, and I highly encourage you all to offer support and constructive feedback to one another as you grapple with similar issues.

Maintaining a Dialogue with the Professor

We will interact one-on-one throughout the semester so that I can provide you guidance and feedback on your project as it develops. We will meet individually on **weeks 6 and 12** for a check-in, but I am also available to meet every week during my office hours or at another time if those hours don't work. Likewise, I am always available via email at tpeterso@fiu.edu, where I will try to respond to you within 24 hours.

Course Readings

All required readings for the course, listed below by week, are available on Canvas. The sole exception is the following book, which you must purchase:

Jan C. Jansen and Jürgen Osterhammel, *Decolonization: A Short History* (Princeton University Press, 2017). ISBN 978-0691192765.

Standards of Conduct, Accessibility, and Accommodations

Accessibility and Accommodations

I am committed to making this class as inclusive and accessible as possible. If you have concerns, preferred pronouns, or need accommodation of any type in this course, please reach out to me. I highly encourage students with disabilities to contact the [Disability Resources Center](#) to access the array of resources they have available to help you succeed.

Academic Integrity

Academic misconduct is a serious matter which can result in the failure of this course or even expulsion. All the work that you submit **must be your own, and must be properly cited**. Plagiarism in particular is a serious concern in a research-focused class, and I encourage you to familiarize yourself with the FIU's [Standards of Conduct](#) at the beginning of the semester.

AI Writing Tools

Written assignments that are generated using AI, in whole or in part, are considered automated plagiarism in this class. AI-generated text is derived from previously created texts from other sources that the models were trained on, and for which no citations are provided. Moreover, it does not constitute original thinking from the student and is not representative of their work. Any violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action. I reserve the right to question students about assignment submissions that are suspected of being generated by AI tools. An AI detector may be used to detect AI-created work. Assignment submissions that are suspected of being AI-generated will be reported to the university. Assignments found to have been generated by AI tools, in whole or in part, will receive an automatic grade of zero for the assignment, and no resubmissions will be allowed. Second offenses will result in a final grade of F for the course.

Resources

I highly encourage you to take advantage of academic services that FIU offers to students. They are a valuable resource for students at all levels.

The **History Tutors** provide assistance with papers and other written assignments, offering online and in-person tutoring appointments. Tutors have specialized knowledge of writing for History classes. For more info, please visit: <http://history.fiu.edu/tutoring>.

The **Center for Excellence in Writing** is available to help you with all aspects of writing, from approaching the question and brainstorming to techniques for editing: <http://writingcenter.fiu.edu>.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1 (1/10)

Course Introduction

Course overview + requirements. What is a senior thesis? Why study the process of decolonization?

Week 2 (1/17)

What Was Decolonization?

In addition to the readings, we will discuss reading strategies in class.

Before class, please read:

Jan C. Jansen and Jürgen Osterhammel, *Decolonization: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017)

Skim where you need to, but try to have a firm grasp on every chapter of the book, as it will give you the solid ‘big picture’ foundation you will need to understand the rest of the semester’s readings (and to think about your own research question).

Week 3 (1/24)

Colonialism and its Discontents

In addition to the readings, we will discuss what effective research questions and proposals look like.

Research Question due

Before class, please read:

Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela, “The Great War as a Global War: Imperial Conflict and the Reconfiguration of World Order, 1911–1923,” *Diplomatic History* vol. 38, no. 4 (2014): 786-800.

Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (University of California Press, 2005). Chapter 7: “Labor, Politics, and the End of Empire in French Africa,” pages 204-230.

Week 4 (1/31)

Contested Anticolonialisms

We will visit Green Library today during the second half of class.

Before class, please read:

Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton University Press, 2019). Chapter 3, “From Principle to Right: The Anticolonial Reinvention of Self Determination,” pages 71-106.

Marco Duranti, “Decolonizing the United Nations: Anti-colonialism and Human Rights in the French Empire,” in Moses, Duranti, and Burke, eds., *Decolonization, Self-Determination, and the Rise of Global Human Rights Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), pages 54-78.

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (Grove Press, 1963), 1-16.

Week 5 (2/7)

South-South Solidarities

In addition to the readings, we will discuss how to structure an annotated bibliography and how to get a sense of the literature on a given topic: who is talking to whom?

Proposal due

Before class, please read:

Gerard McCann, “Where was the Afro in Afro-Asian Solidarity? Africa’s ‘Bandung Moment’ in 1950s Asia,” *Journal of World History* vol. 30, no. 1 (2019): 89-124.

Jeffrey James Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order* (Oxford University Press, 2016). Chapter 4, “The Allure of Globalism: Algeria amid Continents, Colors, and the Cold War,” pages 172-226.

Week 6 (2/14)

Individual Meetings

Please sign up for a time slot on the form Dr. Peterson circulates.

During the week, please read:

Katherine Pickering Antonova, *The Essential Guide to Writing History Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), page 200-235, “Primary Source Interpretation.”

Week 7 (2/21)**The Counterrevolution**

Please bring printed copies of a short, interesting primary source (or a short excerpt) from your project to class to workshop.

Annotated Bibliography due

Before class, please read:

Martin Thomas, "From Sétif to Moramanga: Identifying Insurgents and Ascribing Guilt in the French Colonial Post-war," *War in History* vol. 25, no. 2 (2018): 227-253.

Mortiz Feichtinger, "Strategic Villages: Forced Relocation, Counter-insurgency and Social Engineering in Kenya and Algeria, 1952-62," in Thomas and Curless, eds., *Decolonization and Conflict: Colonial Comparisons and Legacies* (Bloomsbury, 2017), pages 137-157.

Joshua Cole, "Intimate Acts and Unspeakable Relations: Remembering Torture and the War for Algerian Independence," in Hargreaves, ed., *Memory, Empire and Postcolonialism: Legacies of French Colonialism* (Lexington Books, 2005), pages 125-141.

Week 8 (2/28)

No meeting this week– enjoy your Spring Break!

Week 9 (3/6)

No meeting this week

Use this time to finalize your primary source list and begin working on your rough drafts .

Primary Source List due**Week 10 (3/13)****Entangled Postcolonialisms**

In addition to the readings, we will discuss strategies for planning your writing and sticking to your schedule.

Before class, please read:

Kennetta Hammond Perry, *London is the Place for Me: Black Britons, Citizenship and the Politics of Race* (Oxford University Press, 2015). Chapter 2, "Migration, Citizenship, and the Boundaries of Belonging," pages 48-88.

Andrew Bellisari, "The Art of Decolonization: The Battle for Algeria's French Art, 1962–70," *Journal of Contemporary History* vol. 52, no. 3 (2017): 625-645.

Anne Lamott, "Shitty First Drafts," in Paul Eschholz, Alfred Rosa, and Virginia Clark, eds., *Language Awareness: Readings for College Writers* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005): 93-96.

Week 11 (3/20)	No meeting this week Use this time to work on your rough drafts.
Week 12 (3/27)	Individual meetings Please sign up for a time slot on the form Dr. Peterson circulates.
Week 13 (4/3)	In-class research and writing workshop Bring an issue you are currently struggling with for group feedback. Rough drafts due on Friday 4/5 at midnight
Week 14 (4/10)	Presentations
Week 15 (4/17)	Presentations
Finals Week	Final Draft due Wednesday 4/24 at Midnight

ASSIGNMENT DETAILS AND EXPLANATIONS

Research Question (due 1/24)

All great research begins with a great question. In a well-developed paragraph, describe the question you hope to answer in your research paper. What are you interested in writing about? Why do you think this question is important? This assignment requires a little bit of pre-research: look at secondary to get a sense of what has been written, and think about what sources you might be able to access to address your question.

Research Proposal (due 2/7)

Now that you have a better sense of the research project you'd like to pursue in this class, it is helpful to write a research proposal to outline the question, scope, and sources – both for yourself, and so that I can offer you feedback. Please write a 2-page research proposal that contains the following four elements:

1. **Research Question:** What question do you intend to ask? This should be a refined and tightened version of the question you submitted earlier this semester.
2. **Secondary Literature:** How have historians already approached your topic / question? Please briefly outline the arguments, approaches, and historiographical interventions of at least **four** secondary texts that you will engage.

3. **Primary sources:** Please discuss what types of primary sources you intend to use in your research. What are these sources likely to be, and how will you access them?
4. **Hypothesis:** Do you have a prospective argument, based on the sources that you have consulted so far? Don't stress if this is still fuzzy; you haven't done the research yet!

Annotated Bibliography(due 2/21)

Scholarship never exists in a vacuum. No matter how original or innovative a piece of scholarship may be, it always emerges in dialogue with the historical literature – what we call the historiography – that has come before. In order to write your own original scholarship, then, you will have to get a grasp on the literature in your subfield. Assemble a list of **five** secondary sources (books or scholarly articles) and write an annotated bibliography that includes the following elements:

1. An introductory paragraph that sums up the field as you see it from these sources. What are the controversies or consensuses shared between historians? What kinds of questions have historians asked, or what topics have they focused on? Where might your work fit?
2. For each source, a full and proper citation according to the [Chicago Manual of Style](#).
3. For each source, a brief description of the author's argument, evidence, and methods.
4. For each source, a brief critical assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the piece.

Not every source needs to speak directly to the question you want to ask. In some cases, historians might not have done that work, or you might find work from another field (for example, on the United States, if you're working on Europe) helpful for thinking about how you will carry out your own project. The aim here is to think critically about what historians have written and how that will inform your own research.

Primary Source List (due 3/6)

Original research requires going to the original sources. Assemble a list of **five** primary sources you hope to draw on for your research. Provide a link or citation for each source, and a description of how and why it is useful for your project. Who produced the source, and how does it relate to the other sources you have? How are these sources useful, and what limits do they have? In other words, what can you learn from each source related to your research question, and what might you **not** learn?

Rough Draft (due Friday4/5)

Writing isn't just taking the ideas out of our heads and putting them on paper; it is a means of thinking through our ideas. And every beautiful, insightful piece of historical writing starts out as a *rough* draft. This draft represents an opportunity to get your ideas on the page and get some feedback so that you can fine tune them. Please submit **a rough draft of 15-20 pages**. Your draft should contain all the elements of your final research paper, at least in part: an introduction that lays out your argument, a discussion of the secondary literature, your analysis of your primary sources, citations, etc. Feel free to include notes to your reviewer (me) as well: are there places

where you are struggling to understand a source or clarify what you are saying? Are you not quite sure where your argument differs from that of someone else? Is there a question you can't – but need to – answer based on the sources you have? Leave a note, and we'll work on it. Your grade for this assignment is not based on the 'doneness' of your draft but on the degree of effort it evinces on your part.

Oral Presentation (Scheduled on weeks 14 and 15)

On weeks 14 and 15, students will present their research to their colleagues. Student presentations will last 15 minutes maximum and should be accompanied by slides. Your presentation should discuss your question, your sources, and your findings, as well as how your work intervenes in the current literature.

Final Draft (due Wed. 4/24)

This is the assignment the semester has been building toward: your own piece of original scholarship! Your paper should be a **minimum of 20 pages** in length, and do the following:

- Make a clear argument articulated in the thesis and sustained through the paper, backed up by both primary and scholarly secondary source evidence, that goes beyond the obvious or combines sources in creative ways.
- Explicitly situate your work in relation to the existing historiography. Your paper should reference and engage at least eight to ten secondary sources.
- Demonstrate a thoughtful and critical engagement with five to eight relevant and illuminating primary sources.
- Include a title, footnotes, and a bibliography, all formatted properly according to the [Chicago Manual of Style](#). Please note that footnotes should be in 10pt font and that the bibliography and any title page do not count toward the length of the paper.
- Convey all of the above in clear, relatively concise, proof-read prose.