Surviving Master’s-Level History Programs at Norwich University: A Guide for Students

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Acknowledgments

This document was written to provide clear guidance on program goals, expectations and standards as well as advice on PhD programs and the problems of history. Associate Program Director John “Doc” Broom and Professor John Votaw reviewed and commented on earlier drafts.

Their ideas, comments and editing substantially improved this document and I owe them my thanks and gratitude for their contributions not only to this “Survival Guide,” but for their continuing service to the Master of Arts in Military History program, Master of Arts in History program and Norwich University.
Program Goals
Welcome to the Norwich University College of Graduate and Continuing Studies master’s-level history programs! We hope you are looking forward to the challenge that lies before you. The history graduate faculty and I have created the Survival Guide to help you succeed in this program and to provide a useful reference regarding program goals, expectations, and standards.

All of you have entered the program with goals in mind. Some may use the degree as a springboard to a history PhD program, while our active duty military personnel may use their MA to increase their chances for promotion and to develop their skills as leaders and strategic thinkers. Many secondary school teachers, or those who wish to teach at the community college level, enter the program to gain subject matter expertise in the field of history. Our program also has many students who simply wish to learn more about a subject that fascinates them. Whatever your motivations are, let’s begin the program by clearly articulating its academic goals.

The Norwich University MA in Military History and MA in History curriculum is guided by the American Historical Association’s (AHA) “five elements of mastery” for students enrolled in a history master’s program. Graduate students are expected to gain:

- A base of historical knowledge
- Research and presentation skills
- An introduction to historical pedagogy
- The foundations for a professional identity as a historian
- The skills to think like a historian

Many of you may find the AHA “five elements of mastery” vague. You are not alone. Many traditional MA programs studied by the AHA, as well as graduate school faculty interviewed by the AHA, had difficulty defining the standards, goals, and expectations for students in MA history programs. Much of the problem is rooted in the mistaken notion that a MA degree is useful only as a gateway to a history PhD program. In the most extreme cases, some professors view the MA as a consolation prize for those unwilling or unable to do work at the PhD level. This belief is sadly outdated and out of touch with current realities. Norwich University believes the MA in history has merit as a student’s terminal degree. Indeed, most students who enter traditional, residential MA programs have no desire to go on to a PhD. Instead the vast majority of MA students see the degree as a gateway to teaching positions in secondary schools or community colleges, public history positions in museums or archives, publishing, or, for those in the armed forces, a means to gain professional development and obtain a promotion. Our goal is to provide you with an intellectually rigorous, advanced education in the historical arts.

As you commence your work in the Norwich University graduate history program, keep the “five elements of mastery” in mind as your primary objectives. I have outlined in more detail what each of these five elements mean in our MA programs:

1. A base of historical knowledge.

The Norwich history graduate programs seek to matriculate “educated history generalists” who have both a breadth and depth of historical knowledge. This knowledge should permit you to analyze and synthesize a broad range of historical materials into a coherent whole. All of our seminars cover vast areas of history. We encourage you to read beyond the assigned texts, critically evaluate all historical interpretations, and prepare yourself for the continued study of history long after you have finished your program of study.

1 American Historical Association, Committee on the Master’s Degree in History, Retrieving the Master’s Degree from the Dustbin of History: A Report to the Members of the American Historical Association, (American Historical Association, 2005), 41-44.
In the course of this program, we want students to be aware that historians interpret the past in many different ways and that all areas of the field of history are open to debate and different historical interpretations. The body of past and current interpretations is referred to as historiography. History is not a dead or static field and our understanding and interpretation of the past is constantly changing and evolving. Historians can come to startlingly different conclusions about an event even when they use the same body of evidence. Simply put, history is an unending debate about the meaning of our past.

2. Research and presentation skills.
Many of the seminars in this program require end-of-seminar research papers or historiographic essays. Your capstone paper or thesis will be the longest and most challenging research project you undertake. You should learn to distinguish between scholarly and popular sources, critically evaluate secondary and primary sources, master the library’s computer databases, and use traditional research aids such as bibliographies and research guides.

Honing and developing graduate level writing skills is also an important objective. Historians debate the meaning of historical events via articles and books. Writing clearly and concisely is a critical and fundamental skill. Proper grammar, proper Chicago Manual of Style footnotes and bibliographies, the use of credible sources, and high level analysis are essential elements of a graduate-level paper in history. You are also strongly encouraged to use the spell and grammar check capabilities of your word processing software and have a classmate—a “peer reviewer”—proofread your written work prior to submitting it to their instructor. Having a peer reviewer read your work will help eliminate grammatical errors and improve its clarity.

It is never too early to begin thinking about your capstone paper. The capstone is an original research paper of approximately 45-50 pages due at the end of the sixth and final seminar. We encourage students, if possible, to use primary source and archival materials for this project. While travel to the National Archives, and Library of Congress in Washington, DC might not be possible, state and local historical societies and archives are often overlooked resources. I encourage you to visit them and speak to the archivists about their holdings. You might be pleasantly surprised at what is available in your locality. Many archives are also digitizing substantial amounts of primary source documents and posting them on their websites. It is possible to obtain large amounts of primary source documents online if you know where to look.

Students may petition the Program Director to undertake a traditional MA thesis. A thesis requires letters of recommendation and support from Norwich graduate faculty, an approved research question and extensive use of primary source materials. Depending on the nature of the topic, the thesis may also require reading competency in a foreign language. Given the demands of the thesis option, additional time is provided to complete this project. Those approved for a thesis will have an extended period of enrollment in the program and should not expect to graduate earlier than 24 months from the beginning of their graduate studies.

3. An introduction to historical pedagogy.
One of the goals of the program that is closely related to developing a broad and deep base of historical knowledge, and the ability to analyze and synthesize, is to learn how to impart that information to senior high school and college students as well as the general public. Student projects might also be aimed at “public history” or how to interpret military history for the general public. State and local historical societies and museums might provide excellent opportunities for those interested in the field of public history.
An understanding of the historiography of a topic is an essential element in teaching at the college level and a vital part of being a professional historian. An understanding of the various issues and interpretations of a particular topic or historical era will help you impart an appreciation of the past.

4. Building the foundation for a professional identity as a historian.
This foundation includes knowledge of the development of the field of history, including its ethical standards and practices. Historians must always be open and honest about the sources they use in their writing, carefully document all of the information they use, and avoid plagiarism at all costs. Part of being a professional historian involves collaboration with other historians, and accepting critical feedback other historians may provide about your work. Criticism often emerges when discussing historical problems and research with one another, informing others of useful source material, and reviewing and proofreading drafts of papers. We encourage students to solicit the feedback of their classmates on seminar projects. You can learn as much from your classmates as you can from your professors. A fresh set of eyes can usually detect errors of grammar or logic and make a good paper even better. Debating with your classmates about your readings as well as drafts of your papers will make you a better historian.

5. Learning to think like a historian.
This element requires the development of “historical habits of mind” and “historiographic sensibilities.” This means we should appreciate that all interpretations have their flaws and our understanding of the past evolves and changes over time. Historians also have to be aware of their own prejudices and biases when examining history. Historians must have an appreciation for the enormous complexity of human events, and understand that no matter how much evidence we might have about an event, our knowledge and understanding of the past is extremely limited. Finally, historians must be prepared to outline the historical and historiographic significance of their interpretations. Professional historians use the written and spoken word to provide analysis, synthesis, argument, and significance of past events. If you are not engaging in a higher level analysis and treatment of the past, you are not thinking like a professional historian, but instead a “history buff” or amateur.
Program Objectives
In addition to the AHA’s “five elements of mastery,” the Norwich history graduate faculty have also developed six program objectives. They expand upon the AHA’s five elements to provide specific objectives for our unique online program in the advanced (MA level) study of history.

1. Demonstrate a higher level understanding of the general trends of historiography in general and military, world or American historiography in particular. You will meet this objective through your course papers, discussions, and other projects.

2. Demonstrate the ability to perform historical research at the primary and secondary source levels. Your capstone paper or thesis will be the acme of your demonstration of this objective.

3. Demonstrate the ability to provide analysis, synthesis, argument, and significance through effective graduate level writing. Students must demonstrate the ability to argue new, original, and unique points of historical and historiographic significance through effective, graduate level writing. The seminar papers, capstone paper, thesis or comprehensive examinations and seminar discussions are the means through which you will meet this objective.

4. Demonstrate a mastery of the secondary literature and historiography in a student-selected area of interest. Your capstone, thesis or comprehensive examination is the primary vehicle by which you will meet this objective.

5. Demonstrate a higher level understanding of theory, practice, and historiography across both time and cultures. This is a specific objective that your seminar papers, discussions, and capstone paper will enable you to reach.

6. Demonstrate a higher level understanding of the values and ethics that underpin the historical profession. Again, all your work in the program will allow you to realize this objective.

The study of history, like the advanced study of any field of human inquiry, should provoke a profound sense of humility. History is so vast and so much is unknown and unknowable about the past that it is impossible to know it all. The Norwich graduate history seminars cover vast portions of history in eleven weeks. Our goal is to develop your skills as a historian and introduce you to the major concepts and interpretations within the field of military, world or American history. It is not possible to learn everything about a topic in just eleven weeks. The study of history is a lifelong vocation and we hope you will continue to develop your knowledge and appreciation of history after you matriculate from our program. As you delve deeper into the study of history, it is my hope that your love and appreciation for the field will grow.

In pursuing the professional and program goals outlined above, it is important to note the essentials of learning can be broken down into three components: knowledge, skills, and attitude (KSA). The most important of this trinity is attitude. One can be knowledgeable, and have advanced analytical and writing skills, however, without the proper attitude, no learning or improvement can occur. Our professors are here to provide you with critical feedback on your discussion postings, writing and understanding of the seminar materials. Your capstone advisor provides feedback and advice on all the components of your capstone paper project. This critical feedback is intended to help you improve your knowledge and skills. Criticism is often hard to take, especially when you have spent a great deal of time and energy on a particular project. It is important, however, to take it in the right spirit and with the right attitude. Professors want all their students to improve their skills throughout the program and matriculate from the Norwich history program as a skilled historian. Professors are there to facilitate student development and often that means pointing out shortcomings or errors in student work. Any program that fails to hold students to the standards of the historical profession is not worth a student’s time or money.
Beyond the MA: Thinking about a PhD?
Many of our students and prospective students are curious about PhD programs and have considered applying to one after matriculating from Norwich. As Program Director, I field many questions from students who wish Norwich offered a PhD in history or want additional information and recommendations about traditional, residential PhD programs.

It should be understood that the PhD in history is not an easy undertaking and is many orders of magnitude more difficult than an MA in History. It is not something that can be tackled while working full-time. There are currently no distance education PhD programs in history that I recommend and Norwich currently has no plans to offer a PhD in history. However, we do have a few traditional residential programs we can recommend. The reason Norwich does not have plans to offer a PhD in history is due to the fact doctoral programs are far longer in duration than MA programs, much more difficult to manage and administer, have more demanding coursework and standards, and require significant library resources. Accrediting agencies also have strict guidelines regarding PhD programs. As a result, PhD programs are best tackled by large Division I research institutions capable of supporting graduate students with graduate teaching assistantships (GTAs), research assistantships, (GRAs), dissertation fellowships and research grants.

Recent studies indicate that it takes, on average, nearly ten years to earn a PhD in history. Approximately fifty percent of all students that begin a PhD program in history never finish. Some programs have an even higher rate of attrition. The cost of a PhD can also be substantial. Although most PhD students receive graduate teaching and research assistantships that waive tuition and offer very modest stipends, they are usually not enough to cover food, rent, books, insurance, and other essentials. Other sources of revenue, such
as private funds or student loans are needed to cover those necessities. At the dissertation stage of the program, students also must finance travel to numerous archives in the United States or abroad. Doctoral fellowships and scholarships that cover research expenses are rare and difficult to obtain. Most students in PhD programs are not from families of means or retired hedge fund managers, so they rely on federal student loans. It is not unusual for many students to exit their commencement ceremony with their doctoral gown and hood, PhD, and $50,000 to $100,000 or more in student loan debt.

PhD programs in the United States are broken down into two stages. The first stage is the coursework stage. At this stage you are referred to as a PhD student. When you start a PhD program you are required to form a committee of 5-6 professors and select an advisor, often referred to as your “major professor” or “major advisor.” Usually the program’s Director of Graduate Studies will assign a temporary advisor to you until you can select a professor you plan on working with throughout your program of study. Your selection of a major professor is usually done on the basis of the specific field you want to study and eventually research for your dissertation. Most students have a good idea of who they wish to have as their major professor when they are determining what PhD program to attend. This person will have an enormous influence on your life and you must choose this person very carefully. Your major professor will also help you select members of your committee. Once a committee is formed, the student, in consultation with the committee and major professor, will create and file a “program of study” document with the graduate school. This program of study outlines, in detail, all the courses you plan on taking during the coursework stage of your program. The program of study will also outline your major and minor fields. These are the fields you will be tested on during your comprehensive exams. For example, if you had an interest in studying the Franco-Prussian War your major field will be modern European history. Essentially all of European history from 1789 to the present, not just the military history of modern Europe. Your minor fields will be military history and perhaps French, German, and an outside field such as economics or political science. There are few PhDs in military history because the PhD is most often in the major field, e.g. American, European, or Asian history. Military history is usually a minor field and can certainly be the topic of your dissertation if your major professor and committee support it.

Committee members are also selected based on their expertise in specific areas germane to your program of study. For example, those students who wish to study early modern Europe select professors with expertise in that area to serve on their committee. Some programs require a portion of your coursework be in fields other than history, such as economics, political science, anthropology, women’s studies, a foreign language, etc. The idea behind this is to build intellectual breadth and depth to complement your research skills and growing expertise in a particular field. For example, if you wanted to specialize in Roman history your major professor and committee will insist you take Latin, classics, and archaeology.

Almost all PhD programs in history have a foreign language requirement. The requirements vary depending on the program and the intended field of study. Some programs require students to demonstrate fluency in one or two foreign languages prior to applying for the PhD program. Other programs may require students to demonstrate proficiency in one or two foreign languages by the end of their first year of a PhD program. Depending upon the field you wish to study, your committee may require you to master additional languages. In some instances a program may even permit students to fulfill the language requirement during the first two or three years of their program, but will not allow a student to take preliminary
examinations until the language requirement has been met. Prospective students should also take care to understand what fluency standards will meet the program’s language requirements. Some programs insist on an advanced level of fluency in reading and speaking a foreign language. Other programs may simply allow one to demonstrate advanced reading comprehension skills in a foreign language. Be sure to get all the details about these requirements prior to entering a program. The best advice, however, is to fulfill the language requirement before you enter a PhD program. Doing so will permit you to maintain your focus on your history coursework and reduce your level of angst.

Your advisor will clear you to sit for the preliminary examinations after you have satisfied your foreign language requirements and the PhD level coursework, which usually consist of ten, three-credit hour seminars in history and your outside fields. The mere mention of these exams will provoke fear, anxiety and dread in most PhD students. The “prelims” are usually designed by a departmental preliminary examination committee or your own doctoral committee based on your major and minor fields. The written portion is administered first. Some programs allow you to take the questions home and work on them over a period of a day or two while other programs will only provide a couple of hours to write out an answer to each question.

Generally, these tests consist of a menu of essay questions on the major field and each of your minor fields. You choose one or two questions from the menu and write responses that demonstrate your grasp of the major themes of the historiography of each field, and your ability to synthesize the information into your own interpretation of the period. For example, if you were an American historian you would have a single test covering the major field of American history. This major field might also include “century tests” where you would focus on the major themes and your
own interpretation of the colonial period, as well as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. After completing all the written tests on the major field, your committee will have essay questions for you on each of your minor fields.

After passing the written examinations, students are permitted to take the oral exam. Over a period of two or three hours, the examining committee will grill you over the answers you provided on your written exams. They also have the right to bring up any topic of discussion they wish. This is often a tactic designed to lead you astray. Some students attempt to engage their professors on all the topics that come up, even if it is outside their area of expertise. Doing this is a grave mistake. It is far better to admit you don’t know something and concede the question pertains to an area not germane to your areas of study, rather than to try to bluff your way through the question. Trying to bluff your way through an oral exam will simply challenge the committee to ask tougher and tougher questions until you break. At its worst the oral exam can be like the Spanish Inquisition, at its best it can actually be an enjoyable debate and discussion about history with the committee members. Whether the oral exam is a pleasure or a torment, depends on how well you have prepared for the exams as well as the character and temperament of the examining committee.

The way preliminary exams are administered and structured vary from program to program, but generally all the written tests are taken within a one to two-week period. The oral exam is limited to two or three hours. If you fail your written or oral exams, some programs allow you to retake them. There are limits to how many times you can retake the preliminary exams. Many programs allow students to take the written and oral exams a maximum of two times. If you fail the exams, your program of study ends and your hopes to earn a PhD come to an abrupt and bitter end. This is the reason why PhD students break into cold sweats when they think about their preliminary examinations. The stakes are very high and failure can destroy several years of work and sacrifice.

Once the preliminary exams have been passed, students are given the status of PhD candidate rather than PhD student. Candidate status is also referred to as ABD (All But Dissertation). Once you reach the stage of candidacy, a clock is started that limits the time you have to successfully complete the program. Most programs require candidates to complete their dissertation within five years of passing the preliminary examinations. This may sound like a lot of time but it goes by quickly. The period of candidacy is generally devoted to researching and writing your dissertation. Dissertations in history are 300-400 pages in length and are expected to contribute something new to the field of history. A few very well funded programs have research fellowships to help students defray the cost of research and grant them some distraction-free time for work on the dissertation. Unfortunately most programs don’t have these types of fellowships and candidates must try to fund their research and living expenses with adjunct teaching positions or graduate teaching assistantships. As you write your dissertation you will be handing in chapters and drafts to your major professor and committee members for feedback. When the major professor believes your dissertation is ready to defend, he or she will allow you to call your doctoral committee together for a dissertation defense. The committee will have read your entire dissertation prior to the defense and you will be expected to answer their questions and defend your research and conclusions. In most programs there is no room for error or mistakes in a defense. If you fail your dissertation defense, you do not get the PhD. If you succeed, you will have earned your PhD and the right to be called “Doctor” or “Professor.”
My intention in outlining all the details of a PhD program is not meant to discourage people from applying to PhD programs, but to give students some sense of what to expect. It is always better to have more rather than less information regarding such an important life decision. Getting a PhD is a serious commitment of time and money. It can cost tens of thousands of dollars, create enormous amounts of student loan debt, and place immense emotional strain on PhD students, candidates, their spouses, and children. My advice to you is:

1. Research PhD programs very carefully and do not rush into anything.

2. Use the American Historical Association’s Guide to Departments of History to find programs permitting specialization in the minor field that interests you.

3. Visit the campus and talk to the Department Chair or Director of Graduate Studies as well as potential major professors.

4. Determine the number and availability of teaching assistantships in the program.

5. Understand the foreign language requirements and try to satisfy those requirements before applying to the program.

6. Create a spreadsheet to map out the projected cost and length of your program of study. It is advisable to model best, worst and intermediate scenarios. To build a relatively accurate model research the cost of living for the program’s metropolitan area and ask professors and students for information you can use to help build an accurate financial model.

7. If you are looking at a state university and are not already a resident of that state, determine what is required to obtain “resident for tuition purposes” status.

8. Investigate the number and availability of research fellowships for the program’s PhD candidates.

9. Talk to the program’s PhD students and candidates regarding their experiences and solicit their opinions about the program.

10. Prepare for PhD level work by continuing to read and learn more about your intended major and minor fields of study.
What is History?
History is a field dedicated to interpreting and understanding continuity and change over time and space. History is the first and most pure of the humanities. It focuses on understanding the “why” of the human condition as much as the “how” or “what happened.” History is not a static and unchanging field. Our views and methods for understanding the past are constantly evolving. Naturally, this leads to an unending debate about the meaning and significance of the past. As such, a good portion of history has taken on the elements of the social sciences like anthropology, sociology, political science, and economics, which were originally spin offs of history. As a graduate student in history, however, you must remember that your task is not to use history to make predictions about the future as social scientists. You may adopt their methods and approaches, but remember your fundamental goal always should remain understanding continuity and change over time and space. This is the goal of every historian and should be your primary goal as a graduate student in the Norwich graduate history program. Because the primary objective of historians is to attempt, (to the best of their ability), to understand and appreciate the past, historians borrow heavily from the insights of other fields such as psychology, medicine, archaeology, mathematics, as well as specific subfields of history like cultural (race, class, and gender) and intellectual history (the history of ideas and the men and women who developed them). The various fields and sub-fields of history encompass every human activity. Military, world or American history are just three fields in a large constellation of areas of historical study.2

The key to becoming a respected historian is to have a broad and deep understanding of your field’s historiography and be open to the ideas of other fields of inquiry. This entails understanding the obstacles that all historians face when trying to understand the past. It also entails understanding other disciplines and other fields of history that can enrich our understanding of our specific field of history. We cannot have a very deep understanding of history if we do not understand the evolution of science and technology or the political, diplomatic, economic, social, cultural, intellectual, and ideological factors that influence events or shaped societies. Historians must also develop an understanding and appreciation of “human nature” or human psychology to understand what may have motivated specific patterns of human behavior or specific courses of action.

OBSTACLES TO UNDERSTANDING THE PAST

History is an unending debate about the meaning of the past. Understanding the past as it was and interpreting its meaning is an exceedingly difficult endeavor. While historical facts are indisputable, the meaning of the past and the causality of events as well as the quality and meaning of historical evidence is the fodder of intense debate among historians.

The American Civil War presents an excellent example of the ongoing debate about the past and its meaning. It also presents an excellent example of the concept of historiography. Historians continue to debate and investigate all aspect of the Civil War, but some of the larger questions historians continue to debate are: “Was the war inevitable or avoidable?” and “What provoked the conflict?” Whether a historian lived in the North or the South influenced their interpretation. The time in which the historian lived also influences his or her interpretation.

Obviously the first histories of the Civil War were written by the generation that directly experienced

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2 If you would like to know just how diverse the various fields of history are, I invite you to examine the program for the American Historical Association's (www.thehistorian.org) annual convention or the H-Net Humanities discussion network at Michigan State University.
the conflict. Northerners generally blamed the South, and what they saw as a “slaveholder conspiracy” for provoking the conflict. During the 1850s many Northerners became convinced the South’s slaveholding elite were more committed to the preservation of slavery and its expansion into the territories of the American west than the preservation of the Union and US Constitution. Although most Northerners rejected the idea of racial equality, they did view slavery as a morally repugnant institution. Northerners pointed to the intractable issue of slavery, as well as the secession of the Southern states from the Union and the firing on Fort Sumter in April 1861 as the root cause of hostilities.

Of course, Southerners viewed the conflict in much different terms. Southern historians pointed to the threat to their constitutional freedom by a tyrannical federal government as the key factor leading to secession and war. Southerners believed that like the generation that fought the War of Independence, they had no other choice than to secede and establish their own country. Southerners and their sympathizers, blamed the war on the election of Abraham Lincoln, the activities of abolitionist zealots, Northern aggression and Northern meddling in business that was the prerogative of the States. To Southerners writing in the immediate post-war era, slavery was a moral institution that provided for and controlled a race of humans they believed were inferior to whites, incapable of supporting themselves or handling the responsibilities of citizenship.³

In the years immediately following the destruction of the Confederacy, a third school of interpretation emerged that blamed extremist elements of both the North and the South for the conflict. This school interpreted the war as something that could have been avoided if not for the extremism of Northern abolitionists and Southern secessionists and overzealous defenders of the institution of slavery. According to this interpretation, the actions of firebrands and radicals on each side enhanced sectional discord, closed down all possibility of compromise, and ultimately provoked armed conflict.

By the late nineteenth century, historians’ views of the Civil War began to change and a new school of interpretation emerged. The historians of this era generally had no direct experience of the conflict and were therefore able to view the past with a measure of detachment. Consequently, the histories produced in this era feature less partisan interpretations. Much of this can be attributed to the “zeitgeist” or “spirit of the times” as this era was characterized by an emerging American nationalism and a waning of hard feelings produced by the war. This new nationalism paved the way for a measure of healing between North and South and the histories of the Civil War produced in this era offered more balanced and sophisticated insights. Nationalist historians generally blamed the South for provoking the conflict by attempting to expand slavery into the western territories and viewed slavery as the primary cause of the conflict. These historians, however, rejected any notion of a “slaveholder conspiracy” or “abolitionist conspiracy.” Instead they argued that slavery became embedded in Southern society and economic life due to a confluence of technological developments in the early nineteenth century and powerful economic forces. In the view of these historians, Northerners were hardly above reproach.

³ Such ugly racial stereotypes were common throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The South did not, by any means, have a monopoly on racism. Racial violence occurred in both the North and South in the century following the Civil War. While Northerners condemned the institution of slavery, most did not subscribe to the idea of racial equality. Legal and socially sanctioned discrimination and racist assumptions about the proper place of blacks in American society were not systematically dismantled until the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Arguments about the morality of slavery are certainly repugnant to us in the 21st century, but the historian must understand the ideology of the times they study.
as Northern industries and consumers profited from trade based upon the South’s “peculiar institution” and therefore helped make slavery a more intractable problem. Slavery in the South and the absence of slavery in the North meant that each section developed very different cultures and economies as well as political and social values. These differences naturally exacerbated sectional differences.

Nationalist historians generally rejected the notion that the conflict was in any way avoidable, but saw the war as something that was ultimately good. The war destroyed slavery as well as the volatile sectionalism that characterized the politics of the antebellum period. The war also spurred the industrialization of the United States, and helped it emerge as a great power by the end of the nineteenth century. While the war was destructive in both lives and property, in the opinion of nationalist historians it was something that ultimately made the country stronger.

In the early twentieth century, the currents of historiography shifted yet again as the new Progressive historians interpreted the conflict. Progressives generally focused on domestic reform, social problems and curbing the influence of big business in national politics. Progressive historians generally viewed history as a cycle of conflict between economic and social classes. Progressives saw the roots of the conflict in the social, political, and economic struggle between the Southern slaveholding aristocracy and Northern industrialists, workers, and farmers. While the North prevailed, many Progressives bemoaned the outcome as the postwar era was characterized by rapid industrialization, unbridled capitalism and a host of social, political and economic problems requiring reform.

Marxist historians took the Progressive interpretation a step further by arguing the Civil War represented yet another step toward an inevitable revolution by the proletariat. To Marxists, the war

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1 Historians often use the word “Marxist” in ways that do not necessarily mean a historian is a communist and believes society should implement Marxist remedies to the problems of capitalism. Historians describe something or someone as “Marxist” in the sense that they are “economic determinists”, i.e. they believe economic forces are the primary catalyst for historical events and social, economic and political conflict. Historians call such interpretations Marxist because Marx was the first to assert economic forces are the primary catalyst of human history.
was a good thing as it destroyed slavery and ushered in a new era of capitalism and national unity. The next stage in the historical development of the United States was, to Marxist historians, a conflict that would ultimately destroy capitalism. During the Great Depression, a time in which many believed capitalism was discredited as an effective and just economic system, Marxist interpretations of history enjoyed a measure of popularity. In the 1930s and early 1940s, yet another school or interpretation of the Civil War emerged. This was the “revisionist school”⁵ and this interpretation was influenced by disillusionment with the experience and consequences of the First World War and the rise of totalitarianism in the interwar period. This interpretation argued that the Civil War could have been avoided and the differences between the sections were not so great or intractable as to make war inevitable. Revisionists tended to blame extremists, politicians that chose to exacerbate the sectional conflict for political gain, and a generation that allowed itself to be led by rabble rousers. Revisionists tended to see all wars as avoidable and that war itself was a social pathology. Obviously the perceptions of the “revisionist” school were colored by the deep disillusionment with the results of the First World War and influenced by a pacifist outlook that characterized the political culture of the democracies in the 1920s and 1930s.

With the experience of the Second World War and the evil epitomized by the Axis, some historians in the 1940s began to reject the arguments and assumptions of the “revisionist school.” While accepting that war was horrible and evil they argued that under certain circumstances it could be the lesser of two evils. Historians of this era believed nothing other than war could have destroyed Nazi Germany or Imperial Japan. In examining the Civil War, these historians saw the conflict as both inevitable and just because no other method could have destroyed slavery and reunified the country. This understanding about the nature of war in general and the Civil War in particular also found support in the early Cold War as the nation confronted the evils of communism and built a powerful military force capable of going to war at a moment’s notice.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the historiography of the Civil War continued to evolve. Some of the best works in this era resist classification as their sophisticated interpretations of the war synthesized the most convincing aspects of the nationalist, Progressive, revisionist, and post-revisionist arguments. With the explosion of sub-fields and the hyper-specialization of the historical field in the 1960s, scholars began to examine the impact of political ideology, party systems, voting behavior, religious, cultural and ethnic issues and utilized quantitative methods to examine what factors may or may not have led to the Civil War.⁶

⁵ The term “revisionist history” usually has a very ugly connotation in popular culture. Often this is used as a criticism of an interpretation that does not conform to one’s particular political ideology or cherished “historical memory” or belief. Historians use the word in a much different context. Because history is an ongoing debate about the meaning and significance of the past, our understanding and perception of the past is constantly changing. Revisions also occur when significant new evidence about the past is unearthed. For example in the 1970s the National Archives released documents revealing the Allies had succeeded in breaking the codes of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. This information led to a new understanding of how and why certain events occurred. Access to Soviet military archives following the fall of the Soviet Union compelled a revision of our understanding of the Eastern Front in the Second World War. For historians, revision is a good thing and contributes to our understanding of the past and the debate about its meaning and significance. In a sense, each generation of historians are revisionists because the significance and meaning of the past is under constant scrutiny.

⁶ This very abbreviated outline of the evolution of the historiography of the American Civil War is derived from Gerald N. Grob and George Athan Billias, ed. “The Civil War: Repressible or Irrepressible” in Interpretations of American History: Patterns and Perspectives, Volume I to 1877, 6th ed. (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1992), 376-391. This series is an excellent introduction to some of the major debates within the field of American history.
The main point of this basic outline of the historiography of the Civil War is to point out that history is not static, but an evolving field of inquiry. History is not only influenced by the concerns and perspectives of the present, but also by how we weigh and perceive a variety of evidence. Each generation of historians will look back on the past and interpret its meaning. The debate about the meaning, significance, and causality of historical events will continue until the end of human civilization.

A review of the historiography of the Civil War should also raise important and perhaps unsettling questions regarding objectivity and truth. The concept of truth is a tricky thing in the history profession. Historians certainly distinguish truth, or right or wrong, when it comes to facts. The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, not the Germans, and a mountain of documents, physical evidence and eyewitness accounts prove the Holocaust did indeed occur. An event either happened or it did not. The difficult part comes with interpretation. Certainly historians should reject sources or interpretations that are suspect, fictional or based upon suspect evidence. However, in investigating the past is it possible to determine what interpretation is closest to the truth or history “as it was”? Of all the various schools of interpretation regarding the Civil War, which one is the best, most accurate interpretation of the war and its causes? This question is impossible to answer because vast portions of the past are lost to us. Even in our individual lives it is impossible to have a complete record of all our actions, thoughts and experiences, and our memories of past events can fade or change over time. In addition, human psychology and the subconscious mean individuals are often completely unaware of all the reasons for a particular action, decision or behavior. History, unlike science or mathematics, which permits independent verification of discoveries via logic and the scientific method, cannot be repeated. We cannot travel back in time or isolate a past era in a lab and study it until certain verifiable truths are revealed. So, unfortunately, history cannot work its way toward truth in the sense of knowing everything about the past or work toward some absolutely definitive, verifiable conclusion about why something occurred and its meaning. The best it can do is develop interpretations that are credible and supported by the best available evidence. Unlike the sciences, history operates on a continuum of grays rather than stark blacks and whites. This means that every interpretation has its strengths and weaknesses. It also means historians can examine the same body of evidence, but come to very different interpretations about an event.

In a sense, the job of a historian is not unlike that of a police detective. Under the best circumstances detectives arrive at a crime scene that has been secured and has not been contaminated. Professional criminalists collect physical evidence linking the suspect to the scene, and the victim and/or witnesses provide statements consistent with the physical evidence and accounts of other witnesses. In cases of assault, rape or murder, the body of the victim will provide additional physical evidence. In some instances surveillance cameras will record the crime. Under these circumstances, the truth or facts of the case and the guilt of the accused is exceptionally easy to establish beyond a reasonable doubt.

Some cases are far more difficult to solve. State, federal and local police forces all have “cold cases” that have not or cannot be solved due to a lack of evidence or leads. In some cases crime scenes become contaminated, witnesses will not cooperate with detectives or will give fragmented or contradictory accounts. Sometimes witnesses
will be of questionable character and intentionally provide unreliable, dishonest statements. In some instances there are no witnesses and exceptionally intelligent and careful criminals will do a thorough job destroying evidence linking them to the crime. Occasionally, incompetent detectives or prosecutors will bungle an investigation or dishonest police will plant evidence or coerce an innocent person into confessing to a crime they did not commit. Under these circumstances, guilt beyond a reasonable doubt is difficult to prove and defense attorneys have exceptional opportunities to discredit witnesses and evidence and provide compelling alternative explanations to jurors.

In many ways historians are analogous to detectives or district attorneys working a difficult cold case featuring a contaminated crime scene, limited body of evidence, contradictory and occasionally unreliable witness accounts, and multiple suspects with motive and opportunity. The complexity, number of suspects and limited evidence of the case permits the development of numerous theories, based upon the evidence, about who did what to whom and why. To take the legal analogy a step further, historians constantly have the past on trial and are, like prosecutors or defense attorneys, attempting to convince a jury of their arguments, the strength of their evidence, as well as the causality and significance of events.

Objectivity and the concept of “absolute truth” is also a difficult concept for budding historians and there are some facets to the problem of objectivity and truth that need to be explored. Often the complaint about objectivity is raised when a person encounters an historical interpretation that is not consistent with his or her political beliefs, preconceived notions or cherished memories about the past. History is not about buttressing a specific political ideology or reinforcing preconceptions or popular myths about the past, it is about understanding the past in all its complexity. There is a distinct difference between being a historian and being an ideologue. Ideologues view everything through a well defined and often rigid set of concepts regarding how things are and how they should be. Ideologues are intellectually inflexible. History, on the other hand, is so complex that it does not neatly fit in any ideological box. Historians certainly have their own religious and political beliefs, but true scholars are open minded, critical thinkers who are capable of acknowledging other interpretations that may not be consistent with their privately held beliefs have merit and may enhance our understanding of the past.

Objectivity is a problem for historians because it suggests human beings are capable of representing facts and information in an impartial, detached manner. This is not a large problem when we discuss historical facts, but it does become problematic when humans interpret facts and attempt to determine the significance and meaning of past events. It is impossible for humans to interpret history in a completely impartial, objective manner. All humans have lenses through which they view the world. These lenses are shaped by factors such as class, race, religion, gender, education, nationality, language, and culture. Often we are not even aware of these influences as they can be very subtle or completely subconscious. These influences actually program how our brains perceive and interpret reality. Barbara Oakley, the author of *Evil Genes*, wrote:

“As a language and surrounding culture are learned, however, it subtly shapes perception, often in ways in which people aren’t consciously aware. Those who grow up speaking Chinese, for example, process mathematics in different areas of the brain than those who grow up speaking English...
as their first language... Chinese speakers literally see the world differently than English speakers—eye tracking studies show that English speakers tend to first focus on individual items in the foreground of the picture, while Chinese speakers tend to first take in the background and the picture as a whole. 7

Because culture actually influences the wiring of our brains and how we view the world, how is it possible to determine whether a particular interpretation of history is correct and objective? How does one prove it is objective? In the brief summary of the historiography of the American Civil War provided above, what specific interpretation is the most objective? Unfortunately it is impossible for humans to definitively answer these questions because we have no way of viewing the past or our current reality objectively. The brief review of the historiography of the American Civil War demonstrates that interpretations of that conflict evolved over time and were influenced by the major events or "zeitgeist" of a specific era. The best we can do is to carefully study the past and determine which specific interpretation is most credible. We must also concede that others may view the past in different ways and that subsequent generations will most likely view the past through different lenses.

The impossibility of viewing the past in a truly objective manner suggests that views of the past are relative and often determined by a number of cultural influences. This, however, creates yet another problem. While historians will accept a certain degree of relativism in the interpretation of the past, taken to its extreme the concept of relativism also suggests that all interpretations of history are equally valid. In its most extreme forms, this suggests that the Nazi or neo-Nazi interpretation of history and denial of the Holocaust is as valid as any other. Fortunately, historians do not accept this sort of extreme relativism and defend the concept that some interpretations are more valid and credible than others. For example the Nazi view of history is built upon a belief in a grand "Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy," race hierarchy, extreme form of Social Darwinism, irrationalism and a rather bizarre and perverted mysticism. No historical evidence supports the major tenets of the Nazi view of history. Neo-Nazis and Holocaust deniers also ignore mountains of evidence documenting the horrendous crimes of the Nazi regime. Because historians are, like detectives, dedicated to understanding the past via the documents and physical evidence left behind, Nazi or other extreme interpretations of history are not accepted as credible or valid.

Historians, therefore, find themselves in a very difficult position. Total objectivity is impossible to achieve while relativism, taken to its most extreme form, creates a world in which the most loathsome and flawed interpretations are as valid as those based upon solid evidence and careful scholarship. The best historians can do is strive toward objectivity, be ruthlessly self-critical, acknowledge (to the best of our abilities), the cultural lenses through which we view the past, and base our interpretations on a careful examination of all the available evidence.

7 Barbara Oakley, Evil Genes: Why Rome Fell, Hitler Rose, Enron Failed, and My Sister Stole My Mother's Boyfriend, (New York, NY: Prometheus Books, 2008), 175-176. Oakley is a scientist and engineer investigating the role of genetics in borderline personality disorder, Machiavellianism, and malignant narcissism and how these disorders may affect the brain.
Program Standards, Assignments and Expectations
WHO TO CALL FOR HELP

Prospective History students and applicants should contact their Admissions Advisor for any questions regarding their application.

Admissions Advisor:
Tara Salt
tsalt@online.norwich.edu

Questions or problems of an academic nature should first be taken up with your seminar instructor. If the problem cannot be resolved, you may wish to contact the Associate Program Director, Professor John “Doc” Broom at jbroom@norwich.edu. If Professor Broom cannot resolve the issue, he will refer it to the Master of Arts in Military History (MMH)/Master of Arts in History (MAH) Director, David J. Ulbrich at dulbrich@norwich.edu.

Capstone related questions should be referred to your capstone advisor.

THE ADMISSION ESSAY

When evaluating an application for admission to the MMH or MAH program, transcripts, letters of recommendation and the statement of intent provide critical background and information on the ability of the applicant to succeed in a graduate program in history. The most important document in the file, however, is the admission essay. For essay questions that require applicants to read and evaluate books, the article and book dissection exercises outlined in this guide can be useful tools in preparing your essay. Applicants should keep in mind that the essay is not simply a series of expanded book dissections. The essay questions requiring the applicant to access primary source document archives and develop an interpretive argument based on the evidence found there is challenging given the number of primary sources and the task of putting them in a coherent order and discerning the specific motives and intentions of leaders.

Whether the essay is one based on books with opposing interpretations or primary source documents, the paper is designed to determine an applicant’s ability to compare, contrast, evaluate and analyze differing interpretations or evaluate and analyze primary source document and organize them into a coherent, and compelling interpretive argument. It is also a means to evaluate the applicant’s ability to write in clear, concise, correct English, cite sources using the correct Chicago Manual of Style format and follow directions. While the applicant may be evaluating evidence as well as the interpretations of others, having their own voice and argument should be front and center. The essay is not the opportunity to provide a glorified book report but rather to use the books or primary source documents to construct their own argument based on evidence.

A rejection of an application for admission is almost always related to the quality of the essay. An essay featuring poor grammar and spelling, little or no analysis, no discernable thesis, improper citations or the absence of citations, or suggests the applicant did not read the assigned books or carefully review the primary documents, will result in a rejection. Poorly crafted essays suggest the applicant does not take the exercise seriously or is deficient in specific skills required for success in graduate school.

The following are some of the criteria used to evaluate an applicant’s essay:

- Does the essay have a clear, concise introduction that features a thesis statement?
- Does the introduction give the reader some idea of the major points that support the thesis statement?
- Does the essay have a clear structure?
- Does the applicant develop each point in a logical and sequential way?
• Does the applicant fully develop each point before moving to the next point?

• Does the applicant cite evidence to support each point?

• Does the applicant summarize the argument and its major points in a conclusion?

• Does the applicant use proper Chicago Manual of Style format for footnotes and bibliographic citations?

• Does the applicant demonstrate the capacity to write in a clear, concise or correct English?

• Did the applicant bother to proofread or use spell/grammar check?

• Does the applicant demonstrate high level critical thinking and analytical skills?

• Does the applicant demonstrate the capacity to think like a historian and ground their argument and analysis in the proper historical context?

• Does the applicant answer the essay question or do they ignore it and write the essay on a topic of their choosing?

• Does the applicant follow directions?

We all love to read history as a relaxing leisure activity, but you cannot approach your MMH/MAH readings in the same manner. In leisure reading, we have the time to read and absorb every single page as well as the time to reflect on the information. You will not have the luxury of doing that for your MAH readings and will have to develop the capacity to “gut” or skim a book quickly.

So, how do you “gut” a book in a week in order to make some intelligent and insightful critiques of the work in your discussion forum? Here are some tips:

1. Carefully read the preface or introduction to determine the author’s thesis or main argument. When you find the thesis statement highlight it or write it down.

2. In the preface or introduction, the author might outline the entire argument of the book chapter by chapter, so be sure to take note of this. The author might also indicate where his or her work fits in the existing historiography of the topic. This is important information so take note of this as well.

3. Note when the book was published; this might yield important information regarding the major intellectual currents that may have influenced the book and whether the argument is dated. Obviously a book on the Civil War written in 1880 will have a different perspective and sources than one written in 1976.

4. Carefully dissect each chapter. Locate the thesis statement and outline the argument of each chapter and how it fits into the main thesis of the book.

5. Pay careful attention to the sources the author uses to support the argument. For example if the book is making an argument about German military effectiveness on the Eastern Front in the Second World War and relies almost exclusively on German sources, it may be presenting a skewed view. Also if the book relies almost exclusively on secondary

**READING SKILLS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS**

One of the most shocking things students encounter when they enter any graduate program in history is the sheer size of the reading assignments for each seminar. In traditional, residential programs it is not unusual for professors to assign students a book or two each week. Reading and mastering a 200-400 page book each week can be a challenge, especially if you have a demanding day job and busy family life. In the MMH/MAH programs, we try to keep the reading load to around 200-300 pages per week although there will be weeks the load exceeds this.
rather than primary or archival sources, there may be reason to doubt its level of scholarship.

6. Once you have completed items 1-5 above, consider the argument the author presents. Is it compelling? Plausible? Credible? What are its strengths and weaknesses? What historical examples support or contradict it?

7. Take all the information you have gathered in items 1-6 above and compile it all into a synopsis no longer than 1 single-spaced page. Store it in a place where it is accessible such as a three ring binder. Do this with all the books you read in graduate school as it can be a useful reference for PhD preliminary examinations or when you write a lecture for a history class.

8. Only after you have completed steps 1-7 above—and only if you have sufficient time—should you begin reading the book page by page. If a more careful read of the book reveals that something in steps 1-7 should be revised, then do so immediately.

The book and article dissection assignments are intended to help you refine this skill. By compiling a three ring binder of book and article dissections you have read for your graduate work, you will have a very useful reference that will help you prepare for comprehensive examinations or build a college level course on a specific topic.

PROPER DOCUMENTATION

In the United States, historians document their work using the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS) system of footnotes and bibliographies. All your papers should utilize Chicago-style footnotes and bibliographies. Instructors will not accept work documented using the APA or MLA system, which permits parenthetical citations. Chicago-style footnotes should use superscripted numbers next to the text you are documenting. Microsoft Word helps automate footnote placement and numbering so be sure you understand how to use this function of your word processor before you hand in your papers.

As a MMH/MAH student you will have access to the complete 15th and 16th edition of the Chicago Manual of Style via the Kreitzberg Library. Norwich has an electronic subscription to this reference.

The full Chicago Manual of Style must be used for all paper assignments. In the case of discussion postings, a modified form of the Chicago system, as outlined below, is permitted due to the technological limitations of the learning management system (LMS).

LMS systems may not allow for the use of the full Chicago Manual of Style citation system in discussion postings unless you cut and paste from MS Word. So for your discussion posting, you’ll use a modified CMS format using (#) within the text of the discussion posting and endnotes at the end of the discussion posting if you do not cut paste and from MS Word. The precise tabbing and spacing may not be possible within the university’s learning management system (LMS) but the fundamentals can be used.

WRITING AND RESEARCH STANDARDS

Historians communicate via books, articles and reviews. Consequently, advanced writing skills are vital to your success in this program. Each seminar in the MMH/MAH programs requires a number of different writing assignments. They might be short books and article dissections, analytical essays or short papers, research papers, or historiographic essays. Whatever the assignment, proper grammar and clarity are important elements of your writing. If a paper is poorly written or uses improper grammar, it will be penalized. Be sure to proofread your paper prior to submitting it to your instructor. Reading your paper aloud to yourself is an excellent way to
catch errors. An even better method is to exchange papers with a trusted classmate and proofread each other’s papers.

In your research and writing, keep these general rules in mind:

1. Writing should be clear, concise and grammatically correct.

2. Organize your writing so it flows logically from one point to another.

3. Focus on argument, synthesis, analysis and significance, (ASAS) rather than narrative, descriptive treatments of your subject. This distinguishes graduate papers from undergraduate papers.

4. Avoid Pentagon or defense industry lingo, clichés, buzzwords and phrases in your writing.

5. Understand the historiography of your topic and the major interpretations and books for your particular subject.

6. Carefully document your sources using the Chicago Manual of Style. Learn how to paraphrase information as well as gracefully weave direct quotes into your paper.

7. Learn to differentiate between scholarly and popular sources. Do not use any source that has not gone through a scholarly peer-review process. Coffee table books and Wikipedia are not serious sources and should never be included as a source in any paper.

8. If in doubt about a source, ask your professor.


Book Dissections:

INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

Chemists and biologists perform much of their research in laboratories. The library is the historian’s laboratory, and books and articles are the primary tools of our research. The single most basic skill for any historian is to know how to read a historical monograph critically and thoroughly. That means knowing the parts of a book, grasping the arguments of its author, and understanding other historians’ criticisms and analyses of that book. It also means that historians must be able to efficiently explain to others where they found the information or interpretations they use in their own work. Since historians are entrusted with the past, they carry a lot of responsibility for getting it right. They must check their sources for bias, confirm their information from as many sources as possible, try as hard as they can to be objective in their own work, and make sure someone else has checked their work before they publish it. This exercise is designed to help students develop some of those skills. Everyone is an historian to some extent and it’s important to be a good one.

This exercise is also a very useful habit to acquire for your future work in the field of military history. It is often used in traditional MA and PhD history programs. Compiling a binder of such dissections on all the books and/or articles you read is an excellent way to help prepare for preliminary examinations and is also very helpful when teaching or writing in a particular area of history.

Having such a binder is invaluable when you are asked to teach in a particular area, or cannot remember the thesis of a particular book or your own reactions to a particular monograph. A binder

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8 This assignment was developed by Professor Reina Pennington (Norwich University) for the MMH program from the “Book Dissection Exercise” developed by Professor Greg Monahan of Eastern Oregon University.
full of book dissections also helps you synthesize vast sections of history. As you finish the MAH program and begin your work in this field either as a teacher or writer, I would encourage you to methodically build a bank of book dissections on all your readings in military history.

THE BOOK DISSECTION EXERCISE

Part One: Citation/Acknowledgments/Author Credentials

The first page of your paper will contain the citation and acknowledgments analysis. This portion of the assignment allows you to describe certain physical parts of the book and cite it properly. Answer the following questions and perform the following:

1. Type out a bibliographical citation (not a footnote or endnote citation) at the beginning of Part One, using “Chicago style” bibliographical style (sometimes called "works cited" format). The form must be precisely correct.

2. What is the ISBN (International Standard Book Number) of your book? If it does not have one, what is its L.C. (Library of Congress) number?

3. Does it have an index? How useful is the index? Does it include multiple ways of finding entries (cross-referencing) and index entries for topics as well as proper names?

4. How is the bibliography of the book organized? Is it annotated?

5. Approximately what percentage of the sources the author cites in her/his notes are primary? What percentage are secondary? Did your author consult archives or depend entirely on published materials?

6. Who read all or part of the book prior to its publication to check it for mistakes?

What organization, if any, supported the author with money to do the research and/or writing of the book? (This information can usually be found in the Preface or Introduction).

7. What are the author’s credentials? Evaluate the author’s education; use of languages appropriate to the topic; other works on the topic; and professional work.

Part Two: Arguments

The purpose of monographs is to present evidence (sources like documents, letters, interviews, and official records) and argue an interpretation of that evidence. Your purpose in this section of the paper is to summarize the arguments of the author of your book and indicate some of the evidence used to support those interpretations. This part is the most involved, and requires a thorough reading of the book.

Review the assigned chapters or portions of the book, looking for the key chapters that contain arguments, new ideas, controversial discussions, etc. and analyze the arguments in those chapters. (In general, the introduction and conclusion chapters are not suitable.)

Once you have completed your review of the assigned readings, write three sentences—and only three—on your chosen chapters of the book, as follows:

1. Give the chapter number and title.

2. For the first sentence on each chapter, begin with the words, “The main subject of this chapter is …” The subject is the general topic of the essay, but specific enough to identify this chapter or article compared to others. Complete the sentence using your own words; do not repeat the essay title in your description.
No footnote is needed because you are summarizing the entire chapter rather than referring to a specific point or quotation in the article.

3. For the second sentence on each chapter, begin with the words, “The author’s purpose in this chapter is to argue that …” An argument, or thesis, is a point of view or interpretation; it is what the author sees as the meaning or significance of facts, rather than the facts themselves. Readers may agree or disagree with the author’s argument. Complete the sentence by quoting exactly what you believe is the author’s central argument. Footnote this sentence according to Chicago Manual of Style note citation style.

4. For the third sentence on each chapter, begin with the words, “One key piece of evidence the author uses to support his/her case is …” List only ONE piece of relevant evidence. Evidence is very specific and is generally from primary sources (documents, letters, interviews, and official records). Do not quote exactly. Paraphrase by describing the evidence in your own words.

Footnote this sentence according to Chicago Manual of Style note citation style.

Example:

“Chapter 1 is entitled, “Title.” The main subject of this chapter is …. The author’s purpose in this chapter is to argue that … One key piece of evidence the author uses to support his/her case is …”

5. After you have written a trio of sentences for each chapter, write one single paragraph at the end of Part Two of your paper summarizing the author’s arguments as a whole.

Example:

“In summary, the author is attempting to show that …”

Part Three: Analysis and Critique

Part Three of the paper is more free-flowing and allows you to evaluate the book in terms of its value as a source. In this section, you have only one thing to do:

1. First, analyze the argument from the standpoint of the course. What did this book teach you that you did not already know about military history? Was the argument convincing? Well-supported? (This is not a literary critique; it is not particularly relevant whether you thought the book well-written or interesting).

Style, Spelling, Grammar

All papers are expected to be written in clear, correct English with proper spelling. A good, solid dictionary and a thesaurus should be your constant companions when you write any college paper. Use a spell checker, if you’re using a computer—but be aware that the computer can’t correct mistakes like loose/lose or it’s/its (your grammar guide includes a useful “Glossary of Usage” which all writers should review periodically.) Be precise and direct in your writing.

Book Dissection Example:

John Doe
MMH Seminar XX: Seminar Title
Week X: Book Dissection
March 18, 2007

Part One: Citation, Acknowledgments and Author Credentials


The author, Jeffrey Record, earned his PhD from John Hopkins University and wrote a dissertation that examined the socio-economic background of Viet Cong defectors. Dr. Record is a defense
analyst and has taught courses on the Vietnam War at the George Institute of Technology, North Georgia College and the US Air Force’s Air War College. Professor Record has also served as a fellow for several Washington, DC area think tanks, as a staff member for the US Senate Armed Services Committee and has published a number of monographs on US military history and strategy in the post-1945 era. Professor Record’s book, *The Wrong War*, includes a very useful index with thorough cross-referencing. The bibliography is not annotated and is divided into two sections: “Books and Reports” and “Articles and Speeches.” The organization of the bibliography makes it more difficult to determine what primary or archival sources were used in writing this monograph. A quick review of the author’s bibliography and footnotes indicate the book is based on an impressive number of quality secondary sources but perhaps no more than five percent of the book is based on primary sources. The book does not contain acknowledgments or a preface, so it is not possible to determine if any organization helped finance the author’s research and writing or assisted in editing the monograph.

**Part Two: Arguments**

Chapter 1 is entitled, “The Reasons Why.” The main subject of this chapter is to review the reasons why the United States military forces became involved in the Vietnam War. The author’s purpose in this chapter is to argue that “US foreign policy decision makers in the mid-1960s committed a supreme act of misjudgment by intervening directly in the Vietnam War.” One key piece of evidence the author uses to support his case are quotes from President Kennedy and Johnson indicating these men, despite misgivings about becoming involved in Vietnam, feared serious domestic political consequences if they failed to prevent the fall of South Vietnam to communist forces.10

Chapter 2 is entitled, “Stakes, Stamina and Fighting Power.” The main subject of this chapter is to review the motivation, will power and goals of the North Vietnamese, Viet Cong and the United States. The author’s purpose in this chapter is to argue that, “when the time came for its turn in Indochina, the United States, for cultural and political reasons, also underestimated the patience, tenacity and military capacity of the Vietnamese communists, while at the same time inflating its own power to prevail over what was, after all, an impoverished, pre-industrial state.”11 One key piece of evidence the author uses to support his case are official US and Vietnamese government statistics indicating communist losses amounted to nearly five percent of North Vietnam’s total population, a level of sacrifice far exceeding anything in the American military experience.12

**Part Three: Analysis and Evaluation**

Record’s book provides a superb and forceful analysis of the Vietnam War and provided information on both the tenacity and staying power of the North Vietnamese, as well as the extraordinary hollowness of the South Vietnamese regime, that I did not know before. His argument is sound and well supported by both primary and secondary sources. The analysis provided in *The Wrong War* also indicates that superior technology and material, an essential component of the “Western Way of War” and “American Way of War” theses, neither guarantees victory nor compensates for gross flaws in strategy and leadership. Consequently these “ways of war” may not be as superior and decisive as their proponents suggest.

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The most provocative chapter in the book is entitled, “The War on the Potomac,” and reveals the nation’s most powerful military and political leaders were completely lacking in moral integrity and unwilling to make wise but difficult, unpopular and controversial choices regarding US involvement in Indochina. Instead, America’s political leadership placed its own political ambitions and agendas above the long-term interests of the nation. The Joint Chiefs of Staff also bear some responsibility for the debacle in Vietnam by urging the escalation and Americanization of the conflict at key points and for failing to confront President Johnson and Secretary of Defense McNamara over their mismanagement of the war. When it became clear that the South Vietnamese regime was not reliable or viable, and the costs associated with maintaining a non-communist South Vietnam far exceeded the benefits, the Joint Chiefs did not urge withdrawal. Their silence helped prolong the conflict and increase the cost of the war. In retrospect, had the Joint Chiefs of Staff been assertive and vocal in their calls for an American withdrawal from South Vietnam it may have insulated President Johnson from the domestic political backlash he feared would occur if he “lost Vietnam.”

While Record’s book is a superior piece of analysis, the reader should be aware of one potential weakness of the book. The subject of Vietnam remains a very raw and provocative issue for the generation that fought the war or protested it at home. Record served in Vietnam with the State Department’s Civil Operations for Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) in the Mekong Delta in 1968. The author indicates he believed throughout the war that the American effort in Vietnam was counterproductive and the South Vietnamese regime unviable. Record’s views on Vietnam certainly contradict those of others such as William Colby or Richard Nixon, who maintain that South Vietnam enjoyed a favorable set of circumstances after the Tet Offensive of 1968, but that diminished American domestic support for the war and the Watergate scandal destroyed any prospect of continued American support for South Vietnam.

Record provides an excellent analysis of the war, but one must question how dispassionate and objective he could be in evaluating a conflict he experienced firsthand.

ARTICLE DISSECTION PAPER GUIDELINES

Introduction and Objectives

The goals of writing an Article Dissection Paper are very similar to those of a Book Dissection Paper, but have a more limited scope. Please review the Book Dissection Paper guidelines for additional information.

There are several important objectives of this exercise:

• to read critically, analyze arguments and use evidence

• to understand the differences between scholarly and popular history

• to use proper Chicago-style citation, and understand the difference between note style and bibliographic or “works cited” style

• to understand the importance of “scholarly apparatus” (citations, bibliographies and indexes)

• to learn how to paraphrase, how to use exact quotes properly and how to write concisely

The Article Dissection Paper

The purpose of monographs is to present evidence (sources like documents, letters, interviews, and official records) and argue an interpretation of that
evidence. Your purpose in this section of the paper is to summarize the arguments of the author of a scholarly article and indicate some of the evidence used to support those interpretations.

1. Type out a bibliographical citation (not a note citation) using “Chicago-style” bibliographical style (sometimes called “works cited” format), as defined in the Chicago Manual of Style. Be sure to use the format for an article in a journal or a selection from an anthology, as appropriate. The form must be precisely correct.

2. Write three sentences as follows:
   - The first sentence begins with the words, “The main subject of this chapter is … ” The subject is the general topic of the essay, but specific enough to identify this chapter or article compared to others. Complete the sentence using your own words; do not repeat the essay title in your description. No footnote is needed, since you are summarizing the entire article rather than referring to a specific point or quotation in the article.
   - The second sentence begins with the words, “The author’s purpose in this chapter is to argue that … ” An argument, or thesis, is a point of view or interpretation; it is what the author sees as the meaning or significance of facts, rather than the facts themselves. Readers may agree or disagree with the author’s argument. Complete the sentence by quoting exactly what you believe is the author’s central argument. Footnote this sentence according to Chicago Manual of Style note citation style.
   - The third sentence begins with the words, “One key piece of evidence the author uses to support his/her case is … ” List only ONE piece of relevant evidence. Evidence is very specific and is generally from primary sources (documents, letters, interviews, and official records). Do not quote exactly. Instead, paraphrase by describing the evidence in your own words as concisely as possible. Footnote this sentence according to Chicago Manual of Style note citation.

• Write a final single paragraph analyzing the article from the standpoint of the course. What did this article teach you that you did not already know about military history? Was the argument convincing? Well-supported? (This is not a literary critique; it is not particularly relevant whether you thought the article was well-written or interesting.)

The entire Article Dissection Paper should not be more than 1-1 ½ pages.

Style, Spelling, Grammar

All papers are expected to be written in clear, correct English with proper spelling. A good, solid dictionary and a thesaurus should be your constant companions when you write any college paper. Use a spell checker, if you’re using a computer—but be aware that the computer can’t correct mistakes like loose/lose or it’s/its (the Little, Brown Essential Handbook includes a useful “Glossary of Usage” all writers should review periodically.) Be precise and direct in your writing.

John Doe
MMH Seminar XX: Seminar Title
Week X: Article Dissection Example
March 7, 2007


The main subject of this article is to study whether Geoffrey Parker’s argument linking the increasing use of the trace italienne style fortress to the
rapid growth of European armies, and European absolutism, in the early modern period explain the rapid growth of the French armies in the same era. The author’s purpose in this article is “to demonstrate that such a great and influential phenomenon as army growth did not arise from a single technological innovation, such as the trace italienne.”13 One key piece of evidence the author uses to support his case are statistics regarding French sieges in the period 1445-1715 which reveal that the size of French armies engaged in sieges remained remarkably stable between 1445 and 1715.14

Lynn’s article does an admirable job using the French example to challenge Parker’s broad assertions regarding the link between the trace italienne, the size of European armies, and the rise of European absolutism. The article is well documented and clearly reasoned. Like a lawyer approaching a complex case, Lynn lays out a well organized and persuasive argument that, in the French example, the trace italienne was not the factor that provoked the growth of large French armies and French absolutism. A careful reading of Lynn’s article indicates the growth of European military forces and the evolution if its political systems in the early modern era are multifaceted and complex. The growth of French military forces and the French state are far too complex to be neatly explained away by a single factor such as the trace italienne. While Lynn does make a persuasive case against Parker’s thesis and suggests population growth and prosperity sparked the growth of French armies and the development of French absolutism, his alternative explanation tantalizes rather than satisfies. Lynn fails to fully develop his alternative explanation or present evidence documenting an increase in French prosperity and population in this era, its relation to the size of French armies and the number and quality of French fortresses.

**Historiographic Essays:**

This particular type of essay reviews the body of interpretations on a particular subject. It generally traces the evolution of interpretations of a topic over time and analyzes how and why interpretations changed. An annotated bibliography is a helpful first step in writing a historiographic essay. In some seminars you may be required to write a historiographic essay covering a particular conflict or armed force. Our objective in assigning historiographic essays as the end-of-seminar long paper is to introduce you to the concept of historiography and help you become more of an expert in a particular topic. This will be valuable to you should you teach a course on a particular conflict and will be a helpful skill to master when it is time to research and write your capstone prospectus and paper.

A portion of your capstone prospectus will cover the historiography of your capstone topic. The objective of this is to help the student know and understand the existing literature on the topic and determine where their paper fits in the existing historiography. Historiographic essays are also helpful to professional historians in the course of their research or in developing a course or seminar because these essays summarize the major works of a specific field as well as outline the major schools or interpretations that have evolved over time.

A capstone prospectus is a document that helps students outline the historiography of their topic and frame the question they propose to explore in their capstone paper. Below is an example of a very high quality prospectus.

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Prospectus Example:
By: Kalli J. Ritter

For a multitude of reasons, World War II remains one of the most studied conflicts among amateurs and professionals alike. Historians can now study the conflict with a fair amount of objectivity as the intervening years have largely erased any biases resulting from the intensity and the all-or-nothing nature of the conflict. At the same time, the fact that World War II occurred in the modern era means historians have access to a wealth of resources largely unavailable to those absorbed in the study of earlier wars. Despite the enormous amount of attention devoted to the subject, many facets of the war still remain unexplored. Among these unexplored areas, few topics present a question as intriguing as the relationship between the Nazi Party’s anti-Slavic policies and their effect on the German home front. Specifically, how did the German perception of Russia in general and the Soviet Army in particular influence women within Germany and the wartime decisions made to protect them?

Somewhat surprisingly, the answer to such a complex question proves remarkably simple: the rhetoric that served as a foundation for the Nazi Party’s early successes fatally limited the Party’s options as the war progressed. Swept into office amidst a smokescreen of traditional values and a dedication to returning women to the role of mother, Hitler and his compatriots established two dangerous precedents. First, by upholding motherhood as the proper and ideal occupation for women, the Nazi Party prevented effectual mobilization of half of Germany’s population. Second, the rhetoric established an equally strong expectation for men to protect and provide for women. While neither of these concepts represent particularly revolutionary ideas, the ardor with which the Nazi regime advocated them prevented Germany from abandoning them when confronted by wartime necessity as its antagonists did.

The other major tenet of Nazi ideology—Aryan racial superiority—played a significant role as well. The early propaganda used to vilify the Russians and thereby justify the German violation of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact combined with the already prevalent belief of Slavic inferiority to produce widespread fear of the Soviet Army out of all proportion to its actual capabilities. The German women’s fear bolstered the resolve of German men to defeat the Russian hordes. The speed and thoroughness of the initial German victories dispirited many Soviets and convinced large numbers to lay down their weapons, but the brutal treatment of these captives at the hands of the Germans turned the conflict on the Eastern front into a grudge match of momentous proportions. As the conflict dragged on, the brutality escalated, increasing the fear of German men for their wives and daughters back home. This in turn encouraged them to new levels of brutality, perpetuating the cycle. By the time the Russians began their final offensive drive into the crumbling German state, the tenacity of the German defense inspired reprisals of the sort long described in Nazi propaganda efforts, resulting in a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy.

This cyclical relationship between the events on the Eastern Front and the reactions of the largely female population back on the German home front demands further attention because it suggests a previously overlooked link between racial and gender issues within the policies of Nazi Germany. This argument also considers Nazi propaganda from a whole new perspective—the impact it had on its own governmental policies. Even a dictatorship such as Nazi Germany could not afford to break faith with its very publicly established agenda without running

the risk of alienating the army and its citizens alike. Quite possibly the segment of people most affected by Nazi propaganda consisted of the German policy makers.

In order to establish the existence of a relationship between race and gender in the policies of Nazi Germany, I intend to analyze the philosophy of the Nazi Party, Nazi propaganda, women’s combat roles in World War II, and rape during wartime. Undeniably a disparate collection at first glance, these subjects actually point to a complex interrelated social tapestry that dictated Germany’s actions during World War II just as much as any battlefield outcome. In brief, I will prove that the philosophy of the Nazi Party dictated their social policies towards women. That philosophy and the policies derived from it formed the basis of a majority of the Nazi propaganda. In turn, that propaganda influenced the actions of German men and ultimately contributed to the Russian excesses at the close of the conflict.

Since very few historians have yet to take up the challenge of uncovering the correlation between race and gender issues in Nazi Germany, little real historiography exists for the topic. Gisela Bock’s “Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization, and the State,” proves the exception to the rule. Bock took the first real steps towards establishing a connection between the racial and gender policies of Nazi Germany, but her effort focused on the rather narrow subject of reproduction issues under the Nazi regime. She failed to expand her topic to include an analysis of how the government’s policies (and the people’s reaction to them) impacted the war effort. Despite this shortfall, Bock’s work deserves recognition because it stands alone in its attempt to link race and gender issues during the time period in question.

Although not dealing directly with the link between gender and race issues within Nazi Germany, Richard J. Evans’, “German Social Democracy and Women’s Suffrage 1891-1918,” provides important social background information. The fact that the women’s suffrage movement developed in tandem with the German socialist movement probably cast the idea of women’s enfranchisement and the women’s movement in general in a radical light. Additionally, the close relationship between communism and the women’s movement in the not too distant past probably contributed to the Nazi Party’s gender discrimination. After all, the barbarian Slavic race represented the main proponent of communism. And if women had previously associated with the socialist movement, then they might also share something in common with the barbarians.

With the exception of Bock and Evans, no other historian has really explored the possibility of a link between race and gender policies within Nazi Germany. Fortunately, more works of solid historical and sociological value exist for each of the component topics I plan to construct my thesis around.

In terms of understanding the philosophy guiding Nazi Germany, one cannot do much better than Adolf Hitler’s work, Mein Kampf. Far from a literary or historical masterpiece, it nonetheless captures the twisted logic and xenophobic rhetoric of the Nazi leader far better than any secondary source. Looking beyond the repetitive and sometimes confusing prose, one can discern the anti-Slavic and chauvinistic beliefs Hitler managed to conceal during his campaign for power, but which would significantly influence his policies once in office.

Not all would agree on the importance of Hitler’s personal beliefs on the development of Nazi policy, however. Some historians, H. W. Koch among
them, contend that the German staff, not the Fuhrer, viewed Slavic Russia as the major threat. In his article, “Hitler’s Programme’ and the Genesis of Operation, Barbarossa,” Koch argues convincingly that Hitler had little to do with the decision to attack Russia. I highlight this article because even though debate may surround the question of who exactly wielded the power in Nazi Germany, almost no contention exists regarding that person or person’s view of Soviet Russia as a menace more terrifying than any of the Western powers due to the perceived inferiority and barbarism of the Slavic race.

In order to understand the impact Nazi philosophy had on a more general level, I turned to the work of Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz. Produced almost immediately after the war, “Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II,” provides a concise analysis of the sociological factors behind the continued resistance of the German Army even after its eventual defeat became obvious. Although primarily a sociological study, Shils and Janowitz’s work still proves useful because it highlights the significant influence of personal motivations on the average German soldier’s willingness to continue fighting even in the face of defeat. That trend implies that a desire to protect hearth and home rather than an overwhelming belief in the justice of the Nazi cause motivated the soldiers of the Third Reich. Somewhat paradoxically, the average German soldier believed he faced better odds of survival through continued resistance than by surrendering to the Soviet Army.

Propaganda represented a key avenue in disseminating the Nazi philosophy. Any consideration of Nazi propaganda must start with German Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels. Universally considered a master of his trade, Goebbels, more than anyone else, shaped the image that Nazi Germany presented to its citizens and the world. A partial section of his diary recovered by Americans in Berlin in the final days of the war provides unique insight into the goals and intended result of the German propaganda effort. Unfortunately, I do not have access to the original manuscript, but Leonard W. Doob does a fine job of distilling the document down to its salient points, which he identifies as a series of recurring principles in his, “Goebbels’ Principles of Propaganda.” Analysis of these principles and their intended targets indicates that the Nazi government deliberately vilified the Soviet Army in order to build fear within the German population, thereby encouraging the Nazi Army to greater efforts.

Julius Yourman’s article, “Propaganda Techniques Within Nazi Germany,” serves as an interesting counterpoint to Goebbels perspective. Published at the beginning of the war, it analyzes the primary methods employed by the German propaganda ministry and their effectiveness from the Allied point of view. Yourman pays particular attention to both the characterization of the Soviets and the behavior cultivated among German women, so the article is uniquely suited to my purposes while still falling in line with similar analyses. Like Goebbels’ diary, Yourman’s article points towards a deliberate effort to build fear of Soviet excesses among the female population of Germany.

Ruth Harris explores the legacy of the propaganda efforts during World War I, especially in regards to the international perception of rape in “The Child of the Barbarian” Rape, Race and Nationalism in France during the First World War.” In describing the Russians during World War II, the Germans co-opted many of the techniques and characterizations pioneered by the French and used to describe the Germans during World War I. The fact that the destruction and mass rape the French warned their

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citizens about actually came to pass only added further credence to the later German warnings about the Russians.

The traditional international acceptance of widespread rape as part of military victory precluded any German assumptions of restraint on the part of the Russians due to fear of retribution. Roland Littlewood addresses this issue from an anthropological perspective in his article, “Military Rape,” while Theodor Meron’s, “Rape as a Crime Under International Humanitarian Law,” applies a more historical approach. No matter which angle one chooses, the evidence clearly suggests that defeated peoples expect to suffer large scale rape at the hands of the victors. For the overly race conscious German people, few prospects represented as horrifying a possibility as the contamination of “pure” Aryan blood as a result of interbreeding with the Slavic race.

Continuing in the vein of propaganda as it relates to rape during wartime, I next turned my attention to Susan Jeffords’, “Rape and the New World Order.” Although not directly related to World War II, the case study of the United States’ rescue of Kuwait during the First Gulf War contains interesting assertions about the political and military benefits of describing the enemy as rapists. The study illustrates the effectiveness of government propaganda on shaping the subject population’s perceptions of the war. The characterization of the enemy, namely the Soviets, as rapists not only solidified German support behind the government’s decision to break the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, but it also played on the already existing perception of the Soviet Union as a nation full of barbarians.

In more general terms, Rachel Bridges Whaley identifies a striking relationship between equality and rape within a society. According to Whaley, societies in which women are gaining equality with men experience a sharp increase in the number of rapes that occur. Although primarily a sociological and not historical argument, the principle has interesting implications when applied to Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. The equality inherent to communism may have resulted in an increased occurrence of rape within Russia, thereby lending credence to Nazi depictions of the Soviets Army as barbarians intent on raping German women. In contrast, women probably did not have to really worry about rape in ultra-masculine German society. Since most rapists draw motivation from a desire to establish power and dominance over the victim, the already dominant German males had little to gain from its perpetration under the Nazi social structure.

Lynda Lytle Holmstrom and Ann Wolbert Burgess produced yet another sociological argument with interesting implications for Nazi Germany. Based on conclusions derived from a case study analyzing the reactions of husbands and boyfriends of rape victims, their article suggests that men often view rape as an attack against themselves and their masculinity. Applied to the situation in Nazi Germany, that conclusion merely underscores the already prevalent impulse of German men to protect German women. Soviet encroachment not only threatened women directly then, but also struck at the masculine identity of German men. This perceived personal affront more than likely contributed to the excess brutality the Nazis employed against the Russians as they sought to reassert their dominance and masculinity.

Two authors provide helpful analyses of the post-war era in Germany. The first, Atina Grossmann, addresses the widespread rape of German women by the Russian occupying force. The threat highlighted by the Nazi propaganda actually came to pass, not least because the stubborn defense by the German Army, even after defeat became inevitable,
provoked the Russians to increased brutality. Undoubtedly, the continued personnel losses suffered by the Soviets when the Nazis clearly lacked the ability to win, combined with the millions already lost during the brutal fighting along the Eastern Front, produced a desire for retaliation and retribution among the Soviets that they embraced fully. Fear encouraged the Nazis to previously unknown levels of brutality and the resulting Soviet anger only upped the ante further.

The second author, Elizabeth Heineman, argues that the overtly masculine and militaristic image of Nazi Germany resulted in a postwar backlash and the development of a distinctly female conceptualization of West Germany. The argument for a more feminine post-war Germany only emphasizes the role that male behavioral attitudes played during the war years. The limitation of women to domestic roles prevented their effective military mobilization, but even more importantly, it limited their introduction into the civilian workforce. Germany simply did not have enough manpower to both field an army and run the industry to supply it, yet the rigid Nazi gender roles fatally hindered the implementation of the obvious solution—women workers.

However, women in Germany played more roles than just that of victim or mother. D'Ann Campbell, one of the foremost authorities on the combat experiences of American women, expands her scope beyond her usual area of expertise in, “Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany and the Soviet Union.” Although somewhat predictably overbalanced towards the American and British experience, her study nevertheless highlights the striking contrast between the minimal direct contributions German women made to the war effort as compared to their American, British and Russian counterparts. Campbell helpfully couches the German reluctance to use women in combat in terms of the perceived “unnaturalness” of female Russian combatants.17

The Nazi government apparently paid little attention to the Western Allies’ experiments with women in the military, but focused instead on the Slavic practices. True, the Soviets alone used women in frontline combat, but the United States and Great Britain still greatly expanded the accepted roles of women which one would expect the Nazi government to address. Instead, the almost singular focus on the Soviet efforts suggests both a preoccupation with the Slavic nation and a correspondingly disdainful perception of their society.

The eventual use of German women in even limited military roles stems in large part from the efforts of Minister of War Albert Speer. Only when the war turned south for the Nazis and Speer assumed the role of economic czar did Germany finally make an appreciable effort to fully harness the power of its female population. Given that fact, any study of German women in World War II must include an analysis of Speer and his policies. For that purpose, I consulted David Edgar’s Albert Speer. More practical than the majority of his compatriots, Speer sought to solve the critical manpower shortage by incorporating women wherever possible. The ingrained German preconception of women as people needing protection limited the effectiveness of all of the German measures, however. While military necessity eventually made the Nazis intellectually accept the idea of women in non-traditional roles, male chauvinism prevented them from embracing the change.

Approaching the subject of women in combat from a different perspective, George H. Quester addresses the underlying reasoning behind excluding women from military service. Analyzing the performance

of women in various military capacities throughout history and around the world, he concludes that objections based on capability and performance remain unsubstantiated. He identifies the only real limiting factor as the perceived immorality of the move by the majority of societies. This falls perfectly in line with Nazi Germany’s treatment of women in the military during World War II, especially as they compared to the barbaric Soviet example. To the Nazis, Germany’s refusal to resort to the large scale employment of women in military capacities only further illustrated their beliefs about the superiority of the Aryan race.

With such a wide range of component sources, the risk lies less with not having enough information as it does with having too much. In order to avoid getting lost within any one component, I plan to maintain a fairly strict balance in terms of the number of sources for each supporting topic. Additionally, the success of my thesis depends on the interweaving of the various supporting components into one cohesive argument, so I will avoid addressing each topic separately and in sequential order. The final product will blend all of my research into one argument with the expectation that the reader will never know that it developed from four distinct historiographies. Hopefully my efforts will serve as the starting point that I lacked for future historians considering the link between racial and gender policies in Nazi Germany.
Works Cited


Bibliography


