HIST 407/507: THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR

Winter Term 2013 – W 2:00-4:50pm – McKenzie 475 – CRN 23291/23308

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Office hours: T 2:00-4:00pm, & by appointment.

Overview and Objectives

The South African War (1899-1902), known by various other names like “The Anglo-Boer War” and “The 2nd War of [Boer] Independence,” was a defining historical moment on a variety of levels. It was at once a foreshadowing of the destructive all-encompassing wars of the early twentieth century and the culmination of the art of mechanized war in the nineteenth. The war was a defining moment in the history of South Africa; its peace settlement, which led eventually to the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, can be defensibly characterized as a decisive step towards the later system of racial segregation known as apartheid. However the war was also a defining moment in global history; as the first mass-media war and arguably the first “total” war, its conditions and combatants created a level of global attention and commentary never before seen, not even in the contemporary conflicts of other colonial powers like the US and Japan. So many threads of society, politics, and culture interact with the South African War that its footprint in the popular mind of the era is far larger than general histories might lead us to believe.

Given that the war’s importance is neither limited to the period of hostilities nor to the South African subcontinent, our seminar will focus less on battles and “bullet-counting” and more on the bigger picture both inside and outside South Africa. Historically the narrative has been that this was a “White Man’s War” focused on the British and the Boers, but with the war’s centenary came many challenges to that popular image, so we will consider the myths surrounding the war and its horrors as well as the historical shifts that have culminated in our major course text, Bill Nasson’s The War for South Africa, published just last July in South Africa. Our discussions, and your research, may surprise you with the relevance of this seemingly distant conflict.

The primary purpose of this course, as with all HIST 407/507 seminars, is for you to learn how to craft a major analytical research paper (5000-7500 words, not including notes and bibliography) that makes significant use of primary sources. Our seminar schedule is therefore geared towards giving us a balance between common readings, methodological tutelage, and writing and critical discussion of our ongoing work. We cannot cover everything exhaustively, but completing this course will give you a general understanding of the war, deeper knowledge of your chosen subjects, and the skills necessary to research and write analytical papers on further historical subjects. In addition, this course satisfies the 50% threshold for the African Studies minor and may serve as credit towards an Africa concentration in the History major, though in either case you must write your major paper on a narrowly African topic.

A Note About This Syllabus

Everything on this syllabus is important; you need to read it carefully and refer to it frequently. You are solely responsible for knowing and understanding its contents. The paper copy you receive at the beginning of the course is, ideally, the final version, but the unexpected can intrude and changes may be made. The version posted on Blackboard at any given time should be the latest version.
Requirements and Grading

Participation is about 40% of your grade. This includes discussion in class and Blackboard questions as well as group work connected to your paper drafts (see the schedule and the assignment list at the end of this syllabus, pp. 8-9). If you are silent and/or unengaged with the seminar, or disregard these exercises, you will receive a low or failing grade no matter how inspired your other work may be.

The proposal for the major paper, due in the third week of classes, comprises about 10% of your final grade. This proposal is expected to identify a topic, propose a basic thesis, and identify at least ten sources (three primary), in proper style as per Rampolla (see page 7 of this syllabus). Although only a small part of the grade in itself, failure to tender this proposal on time will result in a failing grade for the seminar.

The biggest piece of your grade (~50%) is the major research paper based on primary sources. This paper must be a polished piece of writing that is correct in grammar and style (formatting) to Rampolla’s Pocket Guide or the Chicago Manual of Style (16th edition) on which it is based, using footnotes/endnotes and a bibliography. MLA, APA, and other styles will not be accepted. Style overall constitutes 1/3 of the paper grade. Failure to tender the major paper on time (either the rough draft for Week 9 or final revised copy during Finals Week) will result in a failing grade in the seminar.

Unless you are prevented from completing coursework in such a way that the University administration notifies me officially, no excuses or extensions will be accepted. The due dates for work in this course are set out on day one, so you have all term to prepare for them. Plan ahead. Note: if you email your work, you alone are responsible for my receipt of it; if the email gets lost or you send the wrong file, it is a zero. I WILL NOT ACCEPT ANY WRITTEN WORK LATE, WHETHER HARDCOPY OR BY EMAIL.

Course Texts

This seminar requires three very new texts, all of which should be available at the Duck Store. Make sure to get the editions indicated, especially for Rampolla. All of these are required purchases.


The “master” style guide from which Rampolla pulls (and Turabian, if you know it), the Chicago Manual of Style, is worth acquiring if you intend to continue in history or any field that uses Chicago style. It is however an entirely optional purchase and is not available at the Duck Store; if we need its guidance in any matters, I will bring mine or we can consult it via the UO Libraries online.

All other readings will be available on Blackboard, and should be obtainable electronically at the requisite time via links on the course website. I expect you to print these readings out and bring them with you to the relevant meetings; the required course books must always be with you in seminar. Let me know as soon as possible if you have any problems accessing Blackboard, or if a reading is unavailable.

(Note: When reading, it will helpful to think not only about the subject itself, but also the text as a composition: what is the thesis of the reading, what evidence does the author use, is there an agenda at work, and does the author convince you? Considering these elements of how a historian writes their history will suggest issues and questions you can raise for the broader class.)
Graduate Students in History 507 (CRN 23308)

Graduate students enrolled in History 507 will have modified requirements, most notably a longer paper (7000-9000 words) that deals more heavily with a particular subject’s historiography or that engages in comparative or broader contextual analysis. The finished paper should be of publishable quality. There will also be additional readings and meetings that we will arrange at the relevant time, and tailor somewhat to your own research strengths and interests. Graduate students are still beholden to all 407 assigned work.

Other Policy Statements:

100% Attendance: Because this is a participatory seminar that depends on your input, attendance is required at all class meetings and events; the standard penalty for absence works out to about one full letter grade for each instance. We meet only once per week, so even one absence affects the whole seminar; naturally if you are missing for reasons beyond your control (health, weather, family) UO policy covers that. Please inform me immediately if you anticipate an absence, not so much to ameliorate any penalties, but to allow me to keep you abreast of developments in the course and assure that I receive any work that is due. Late arrival and early departure have a similarly detrimental effect on the seminar.

Special Needs and Gizmos: Although I’m otherwise a technophile, gadgets in class are annoying and distracting not only for the user but for the people around her or him. They also create a physical barrier that stifles conversation. Therefore I request that you leave laptop computers in their bags (print out your notes, or use a tablet) and turn off or silence your personal communications devices. Of course the rule is not absolute, and if you wish to show images or play music that require technology, just ask for clearance.

If you have physical or learning differences that require special accommodations such as a laptop for general use, official notice from Disability Services (see http://ds.uoregon.edu) is required. I will do everything in my power to address all documented needs, but I cannot make exceptions without it.

Academic Honesty: The information in this subsection should go without saying, but unfortunate experience and surprisingly uneven familiarity with issues of academic honesty among students has prompted me to include it in all of my syllabi. I refer you, for your information, to Student Conduct and Community Standards at the Office of Student Life:

http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/tabid/68/Default.aspx

You will find there a number of relevant headings to policies on academic honesty and conduct. In our case, inadvertent plagiarism will be the greatest source of peril. If you are unsure of what plagiarism is, you can consult Rampolla’s relevant selections (86-92), or the U of O’s own particular guide to the subject:

http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/

It is a gross understatement to say that academic dishonesty will adversely affect your grade. At the very least, you will receive an automatic failing mark for the course. However, my personal view of the matter is that plagiarists have no place in an institution of higher learning. Therefore I always press for the maximum penalty for offenses of this nature, which means suspension or expulsion from the University. If you have any concerns or you’re not sure whether something is plagiarism, ask me as soon as possible, before you turn it in for a grade. At the seminar level, there is no wiggle room.

Everything Else: In all other matters, I default to the Duck Guide or the relevant Departmental policy. If you’re not sure of something, please ask!
Complete **all** session readings before the meeting assigned, and be ready to discuss them. Bring all relevant readings and textbooks to class with you. Note the deadlines; remember that each Sunday before weeks 2 through 6, you must submit a question/ruminating query to Blackboard!

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>W 9 Jan (Week 1)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Introduction to the Seminar &amp; Requirements: Why the SA War?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading:</td>
<td>Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson, <em>The Oxford History of South Africa</em> v. 2</td>
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<td>(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 313-33. (Blackboard or emailed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td>Introduction of seminar members, backgrounds, and interests.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Explanation of seminar scope, goals, ambitions, and expectations.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Library visit with John Russell (library materials and references), 144 Knight</td>
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<td>Discussion: historical research, types of sources, and refining topics.</td>
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<td><strong>W 16 Jan (Week 2)</strong></td>
<td><strong>History, Historiography, and Sources: Orientation</strong></td>
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<td>Reading:</td>
<td>Pretorius, <em>A to Z</em>, 511-17; also look through the bibliography and the “rough narrative” of the course of the war, xv-lvii. (How does Hunter compare?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td>Discussion: the war and its portrayal; avenues for research inquiries.</td>
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<td>Assignment Due:</td>
<td>Five possible paper topics, each with a brief description of broader aims or questions the paper might answer. See assignment list.</td>
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| **W 23 Jan (Week 3)** | **Causes of the South African War**  |
| Reading:  | Nasson, *War for South Africa*, 33-97 (chs. 2 & 3); review ch. 1 (20-32) as well. |
| Activities: | Discussion: Style and citation standards (Rampolla). |
|            | Discussion: Devising a clear thesis and roadmap for research. |

| **F 25 Jan (Week 3.5)** | **Paper Proposal due by 5:00pm. See the proposal/paper description.**  |

<p>| <strong>W 30 Jan (Week 4)</strong> | <strong>The Combatants and the Course of the War</strong> |
| Activities: | Discussion: Planning your research and your paper arrangement; evaluating sources for value, content, bias, et cetera. |</p>
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<tr>
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<td>W 20 Feb (Week 7)</td>
<td>No regular seminar meeting. Individual meetings required.</td>
<td>Every seminar member must meet with me at least once between 14 Feb and 25 Feb to consult on paper progress. You may arrange more than one visit, but one (expect up to an hour) is required.</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 27 Feb (Week 8)</td>
<td>No regular seminar meeting. Individual meetings required.</td>
<td>See prior week’s note for requirement.</td>
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<td>W 6 Mar (Week 9)</td>
<td>Rough Draft Exchange (Short meeting)</td>
<td>Draft papers due for exchange at class time. Bring four copies; see assignment list.</td>
<td>Discussion of the current state of your work, problems and issues, and any other relevant matters that have arisen.</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 13 Mar (Week 10)</td>
<td>Small Group Critiques</td>
<td>Peer Critiques. Bring two extra copies of each critique. See assignment list.</td>
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<td>M 18 Mar (Finals)</td>
<td>Final Papers due by 5:00pm in my office, 311 McKenzie Hall. REMINDER: NO EXTENSIONS OR INCOMPLETES WILL BE PERMITTED. See the proposal/paper description.</td>
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**Deadlines:**
- Friday, 25 Jan, 5:00PM Paper Proposals Due
- Wednesday, 6 Mar, 2:00PM Rough Drafts Due (4 copies)
- Monday, 18 Mar, 5:00PM Final Research Paper Due
THE PROPOSAL AND THE PAPER

As you are all well aware, terms at the U of O are extremely short. It is therefore essential that you begin devising workable research subjects as early as possible. With that in mind, the “five topics” assignment is set for week 2 (see assignment list, next page), but following on that you must tender a proposal by 5:00pm on Friday, 25 January 2013, that indicates your subject, articulates a likely thesis (or its research question), and demonstrates its viability as a research subject. Failure to tender this proposal on time will result in a failing grade for the entire seminar.

I require this early start and approval process in order to prevent the scramble for hard-to-acquire resources or the belated discovery that a topic is unworkable. Your thesis and your focus within the subject may (and likely shall) shift significantly as you conduct research, but I want us to have a good starting point to prevent frustration, undue stress, and ultimately sub-par work at the end of the term.

The proposal for the major paper must include the following elements:

- Statement of the subject or problem, and your tentative thesis with a clear thesis statement, which may be in the form of the question or unknown factor you expect your research to answer;
- A discussion of the historical context and the importance of the subject; here you may draw on the secondary literature (history books, etc) and other historical interpretations of your subject; and
- A preliminary bibliography (annotation optional, depending on the strength of your introduction) of at least ten potential sources, including sufficient primary sources (letters, novels, memoirs, speeches, government reports, and the like). Divide the bibliography into two sections, one for “primary sources” and one for “secondary sources.” Annotation is not required. This bibliography may include material you have not yet received but which looks promising, and you need not have read everything yet. Fortunately, we can get a lot from around the world online, at Knight, or via ILL. You are to avoid internet-originated sources—digitized books and articles are OK, but check with me for anything that’s not on Google Books or a journal website. This bibliography must be stylistically correct as per Rampolla (or Chicago). See me if you have any questions; John Russell (History and African Studies librarian) will also be available to aid your search.

It is important that you make clear what you understand about the subject you are proposing, based on your preliminary research investigations, and what your proposed subject might mean. At the very least, you are to make the case that your thesis is arguable and that materials adequate to investigate it are available in the time allotted. Your proposal is only expected to be three pages or so in length (800+ words), not counting the bibliography. Much of that text may make it into the final paper, so it is not lost writing effort by any means. Beyond the requirements, you may want to write about anything else you’ve considered relative to the paper. Displaying deep, careful thought will not only improve your grade, but also allow me to make more useful and thoughtful comments that will put you ahead of the proverbial game.

The final paper itself must be 5000-7500 words, not counting footnotes, bibliography, cover sheet, and so forth; it must make use of no less than ten relevant and significant sources (including primary sources), but successful papers generally employ many more. The paper is to be a piece of formal writing, in clear and concise college-level English; style counts for 1/3 of the overall paper grade. For the final proposal and the paper, Chicago Manual N + B styles (footnotes plus bibliography, as laid out in Rampolla’s Guide or Turabian’s Manual for those who know it) are to be used for citations—not APA, MLA, or any other style guide; using the wrong style, or no discernable style at all, will earn you a style grade of F if not worse. Following a style guide’s prescriptions are more than just a matter of cosmetics; being assiduous about documenting your research can save you from inadvertent failure to cite sources (plagiarism) and the epic sadness that attends it. General writing help is available from the Writing Labs at the University’s Teaching and Learning Center; see http://tlc.uoregon.edu/ for more information. The final draft is due in my office at 5:00pm on Monday, 18 March 2013; no late papers will be accepted. Plan ahead!
SEMINAR WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT LIST & DESCRIPTIONS (All due at class time, 2pm.)

Weeks 2-6 (Each Sunday prior): On 13 Jan, 20 Jan, 27 Jan, 3 Feb, & 10 Feb, before midnight, I expect you to post one question relevant to the readings on Blackboard, in our course forum for that week. This question must not be a simple request for information, but rather a question of some intellectual and analytical substance regarding the readings or the issues raised in connection with the South African War or the historian’s craft. Your post may be a couple of sentences to couch one question, or it may be a paragraph (or more) if you have a lot of interrelated questions to ask about one idea that’s piqued you.

Besides forcing you to get the reading done early enough to digest it, devising a question also permits you to raise issues or questions that we can touch upon in seminar and so serves an important role in your participation grade. I also expect you to read over your fellow students’ questions before seminar, and not to ask the same question someone else has (although you may build upon their thoughts). Even if you will be absent, I expect you to tender these questions, as with all the weekly assignments.

Week 2 (16 Jan): Bring five potential research topics, with a once-sentence statement for each with possible questions or research directions for this topic. Of the five topics, you must include the following: 1) An individual; 2) an event; 3) a social, cultural, or economic theme; 4) a historiographical topic. The goal of requiring this “spread” is to get you thinking in a variety of ways about devising topics and questions. Use Pretorius, Nasson, and any other relevant readings to help push you along. This is a brainstorming exercise, but try your best to choose topics you think may be new, or might offer new insights.

Those seminarians in African Studies must assure that most, if not all, of these also are “African,” that is to say not dealing primarily with topics outside the continent. Some topics may satisfy more than one of these categories, as well. Hopefully one of these ideas will form the seed for your proposal (due 20 Jan).

Week 5 (6 Feb): You are to write a review of the most important book (secondary source) on your topic as proposed, about two to three pages (500-800 words) in length. In this review, I want you to describe the book’s topic, its thesis (that is, what is the book trying to prove or to say?), the main points of its argument, and assessment of its effectiveness as well as its use of sources. The purpose of this exercise is for you to think critically about historical writing and to begin to evaluate others’ work.

Week 6 (13 Feb): Thesis statement and paper outline. By this time you should have an idea of generally where your paper is going. You are to tender a one-sentence thesis statement together with an outline in this classic “nested” format:

I. Happy things
   a. Warm donuts with coffee on a winter morning
   b. Getting both Park Place and Boardwalk in Monopoly
   c. Pigs in mud
      i. Wet mud
      ii. Dry mud

II. Unhappy things
   a. Sending risqué text message to a parent by mistake
      i. Worse: a sibling
      ii. Worst: a grandparent
   b. Startled rock hyraxes
      i. They’re already really, really ill-tempered
   c. Et cetera

You can annotate your points more fully with text if you wish, but the primary goal is to be clear. (No, I don’t know what topic this outline could possibly address.)
Week 9 (6 Mar): Tender of draft research papers. Bring four copies of your research paper drafts, whatever state they may be in. I will organize you into complementary groups of four writers as peer groups for critique and commentary. Ideally you will be well along in your writing; matters of style will not be graded at this point. If you have not progressed significantly beyond your outline, your final paper will at the very least be denied the full value of the peer critiques the following week. In any case, be sure to continue your writing between weeks 9 and 10.

Week 10 (13 Mar): Peer critiques. Meet to exchange written comments and talk about draft papers in small groups. One author will talk about their paper a bit, and then the readers will each present their individual commentaries/critiques, and discussion will follow. Every 25-30 minutes, I will signal the groups to move to the next paper and author.

Format for the Commentaries/Critiques:

Your comments for each paper in your 4-person group must be typed and 1-2 pages (300-600 words) in length. Bring two extra copies, one for the paper’s writer and one for the professor.

At the outset of your commentary/critique you must briefly, in a sentence or two, identify the subject of the paper and state its thesis as you, the reader, see it. This seems elementary but it is hard for writers sometimes to distance themselves and read their work as an outside viewer might. If a thesis is hard for a paper’s commentators to divine, that is a valid point for discussion.

After that, segue into talking about the paper itself, its strengths and weaknesses, any issues you might have about its approach, things you think might strengthen the paper or that you feel are superfluous, and the like. Keep these questions (and perhaps others) in mind as you write your evaluation:

- Is the core thesis clear, and does the author adequately support it?
- Is the organizational framework reasonable and logical? Can you follow the narrative or argument?
- Are key questions left unanswered or unaddressed? Does the approach presume or omit anything problematic?
- Is any portion of the paper particularly strong or weak?
- Do you think primary sources used judiciously, and in a way that contributes materially to the strength of the paper?
- Is the paper fair to other potential ways to read sources on its subject, if any?
- Does the paper adequately deal with the seminar context, that is, the South African war and its various contexts?

In all of these cases you must assure that your comments are constructive, meaning that you should offer a solution to the issue at hand (which may be implicit in your comment, for example in corrections). You should also feel free to praise the author at strong points of the paper, and perhaps consider why those parts were so impressive and how to expand that strength. More specific comments, such as names or terms that are not defined, are at your discretion as to whether you wish to include them in the written comments or communicate them orally.

Generally you should avoid making comments on the prose in a draft unless it is exceptionally difficult to read or needs reorganization. Citations, too, may be in a fairly rough state, and should not be the subject of commentary. If you wish, you may also return a marked draft of the paper to the author, but that is entirely up to you as the reader and is not required.

(Thanks to Dr. Alex Dracobly for his input and inspiration in refining the assignments and critiques. –LFB)