

History 4990: Senior Thesis Seminar
Political Trials (Fall 2007)
MWF 2:30- 3:20

Professor Laura Mason
318 Leconte Hall
542-2484

lmason@uga.edu
office hours by appointment

Required Texts

Richard Marius, [A Short Guide to Writing About History](#)
John R. Trimble, [Writing with Style: Conversations on the Art of Writing](#)

Course Description

This course is designed to help students produce a 20-25 pp. senior thesis about a political trial. After discussing the nature of political trials and taking a library tutorial, students will choose a topic in consultation with me, conduct research with primary and secondary sources, and develop an original analysis of the chosen subject. Produced in several stages, the final thesis should explain: what defendants were being tried for (conspiracy? libel? murder? etc); why their trials resonated so powerfully within the societies in which they occurred (in other words, what political, social, or cultural hotpoints did these trials touch?). Because students **must** use primary sources, pick a trial for which primary sources are available in a language you can read.

Course Requirements

Students must attend all classes and participate in discussion. *Any student with an unexcused absence will be dropped from the class without further warning.* Students must complete all written assignments to pass the course; no late papers will be accepted without a formal medical or administrative excuse. *Students who fail to turn in a written assignment will be dropped from the course without further warning.*

Grades

Participation	5%	First section	20%
Short statement	10%	First draft	25%
Proposal	10%	Final draft	30%

Statement on Plagiarism

Plagiarism means taking credit for research, writing, or ideas not your own. Students caught plagiarizing will fail the class and be reported to university authorities. For further information, go to: http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/academic_honesty/sect05.htm. Please keep copies of all thesis notes until you receive a final grade.

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

Mo Aug 20 Course requirements

- We Aug 22 Discuss Ron Christenson, "What is a Political Trial?" Political Trials: Gordian Knots in the Law (1999) pp. 1-14 (on-line reserve w/ password: trials)
- Fr Aug 24 Discuss Robert Harriman, "Introduction" & "Performing the Laws: Popular Trials and Social Knowledge," R. Harriman (ed) Popular Trials pp. 1-30 (on-line reserve w/ password: trials)
- Mo Aug 27 Discuss Harriman (continued)
- We Aug 29 Class meets in SLC rm 370 for tutorial in library methods w/ Carla Buss
- Fr Aug 31 Class meets in SLC rm 370 for tutorial in library methods w/ Carla Buss
- We Sep 5 **Short statement due** in my department mailbox by 5 pm (Do leave papers at my office; they will not be picked up).
- Mo Sept 24 **Thesis proposal due** in my department mailbox by 5 pm (Do leave papers at my office; they will not be picked up).
- Mo Oct 15 **First section due** in my department mailbox by 5 pm (Do leave papers at my office; they will not be picked up).
- Mo Nov 12 **First draft due** in my department mailbox by 5 pm (Do leave papers at my office; they will not be picked up).
- Fri Dec 7 **Final draft due** in my department mailbox by 5 pm (Do leave papers at my office; they will not be picked up).

Description of Assignments

Short Statement of Topic

2-3 pp. description of the topic about which you propose to write. Please address the following questions: what interests you about this topic? What do you know about the period and country in which the trial occurred (i.e., have you taken classes on this period? read independently?) What book introduced you to your subject? What kinds of questions will you ask? What primary source(s) have you identified? (Your short statement **must** include **at least one** primary source of at least 50 pages. A single document from a document collection is insufficient.)

** Bibliography for this statement should cite your primary source and the book that introduced you to the subject

Thesis Proposal

3-4 pp. development of short statement based on further research. This proposal must identify and critically discuss **at least two** secondary sources (textbooks and websites do not count), explaining how they illuminate your primary source. What do your secondary sources argue and why do you believe they are relevant to your paper? What are the origins and concerns of your primary sources? How do you expect to use

it? Make clear how research changed or helped you to refine your topic since your short statement.

**Bibliography should cite at least two secondary sources and two or more primary sources.

First Section

First half of the thesis (9-11 pp.) should address historiography on your subject, introduce the trial and explain the central problem. Footnote all references.

**Bibliography must include all primary and secondary sources consulted.

First Draft

18-20 pp. thesis that presents all of your research and sketches your argument as fully as possible. Your conclusion may still be a bit weak, but this should otherwise be a finished research paper. Footnote all references.

**Bibliography must include all primary and secondary sources consulted.

Final Draft

20-25 pp. research paper with polished introduction, argument subdivided into relevant sections, finished conclusion, footnotes and bibliography. A complete thesis should be based on 8-12 secondary sources (full books and articles) and **at least** 2-3 primary sources.

**Bibliography must include all primary and secondary sources consulted.

Please note: Every completed assignment must be accompanied by a bibliography. Any paper turned in without a bibliography will lose a grade.

A Few Political Trials

(Browse Ron Christensen, [Political Trials in History](#) on reserve)

Ancient World

Socrates
Cataline

Salem Witch Trials

Early Modern Europe

Joan of Arc
Gunpowder Plot
Charles I
John Lilburne (treason)
English Libel Trials of 1790s

Modern United States

Sacco & Vanzetti
Marcus Garvey
Rosenbergs
Zoot Suit Riots
Watergate

Modern Europe

Trial of King Louis XVI
Alfred Dreyfus
Oscar Wilde

Modern Caribbean

Pedro Albizu Campos (Puerto Rican nationalism)

America

Cerro Maravilla (Puerto Rican
independence)

War Crimes

Nuremberg (WWII)

My Lai (Vietnam)

the Hague (Rwanda, former Yugoslavia)