

## **Change in Seminar Program for History Majors, RU-N and NJIT**

**Effective Fall 2017**, the format of the seminar sequence, 510:489, 490, is being changed. Instead of a two-semester sequence, the History Seminar-Research 510:490 will now be a single semester, with sections held during the fall and the spring. Students can choose to take a section of the Seminar-Research during either semester.

The Seminar-Research will continue to be the capstone experience for History Majors by introducing students to archival research in local history collections, and students will continue to work in small, focused groups with direct, in-depth guidance from a faculty instructor.

The Seminar-Research will complement the other History Major methods requirement, Perspectives in History (510:315, 316), and History Majors at RU-N and NJIT are required to complete both of these two courses as part of the major. We strongly recommend that students take the Perspectives course before the Seminar-Research, since Perspectives teaches historical methods and analytical methods designed to help students succeed in Seminar-Research. However, the two courses are not linked either in their topic or in the sequence of when students can take them; they are taken independently of each other, giving students more flexibility in their schedules. Students may take multiple sections of either course, and may take them at any point, even before their senior year.

Read on below for answers to questions you may have about the new format for 510:490, Seminar-Research.

### **Must I take 21:490 in order to graduate?**

Yes.

### **How long is the Seminar-Research and how many credits?**

The Seminar-Research is one semester long, and is worth 3 credits.

### **How is the new Seminar-Research different from the previous year-long sequence?**

1). The new Seminar-Research gives a more guided approach to research. Like the year-long sequence, each section of the Seminar is topically focused and taught by a member of the faculty with particular expertise in that field. What's new to this seminar is that, after learning about the topic, students will spend a substantial amount of class time in local history collections. Students will go to those collections and archives as a group, and with the guidance of the instructor will do individual research for a paper related to the seminar topic. While the topics will vary, they will give students the opportunity to research questions of their interest, and will place special emphasis on themes of social justice, local history, diversity and heritage, and community engagement.

2). The research paper for the one-semester Seminar-Research will be shorter than the one for the previous year-long seminar.

3). Students can take 510:490 as soon as they have completed a Writing Intensive course, although we strongly recommend that students take a Perspectives in History (510:315, 316) course, which is Writing Intensive, before taking the Seminar-Research.

4). Limited to one semester, the seminar will be easier for students to fit into their schedules.

### **Is there a prerequisite for 510:490 Seminar-Research?**

Yes, students must complete a Writing Intensive course before enrolling in Seminar-Research. Perspectives in History can count as that Writing Intensive course.

**Is Perspectives in History a prerequisite for 510:490?**

No, but we strongly encourage students to take a section of Perspectives before enrolling in 510:490. Perspectives teaches skills in source analysis and in how to structure an effective history paper that will help students when writing the research paper in the Seminar-Research.

**When should I enroll in the Seminar-Research?**

You may take them as soon as you have fulfilled the Writing Intensive requirement, but we would usually expect students to take the Seminar-Research in their junior or senior year.

**When should Education students who plan to do their student teaching take the Seminar-Research?**

You can take it in your junior year or the first semester of your senior year, so that the second semester of your senior year is free for student teaching.

**May I take more than one Seminar-Research or Perspectives in History?**

You certainly may. Students who enjoy the small-class setting may want to take several of these courses before they graduate.

**Are the courses Writing Intensive?**

Both Perspectives and the Seminar-Research are Writing Intensive courses.

**May I write a Senior Thesis?**

Yes, you may. Some students may wish to write a senior thesis, rather than taking Seminar-Research, either because the topic they wish to write about is not available in one of the above courses, or because they wish to produce a more lengthy and substantial piece of writing for future use. With that in mind, theses are expected to be longer (approximately 25 pages in length) and more in-depth in research than the papers in Seminar-Research. Students who want to write a thesis may do so as an independent study; that independent study (510:499, 512:499) may be substituted for 510:490. Such students will need the advance permission of the faculty member who will advise them, of course, as well as the permission of the Undergraduate Director.

**Benefits of the new Research Seminar structure:**

Our goal is to help all of our students become accomplished historians by providing them with the skills, supervision, and encouragement they need. The new Seminar-Research will retain the goals of the year-long seminar sequence, but in a more focused format that will give students more direct guidance on how to do research, as well as greater flexibility in scheduling.

Since the seminar will continue to be capped at 15 students, students will still have a unique opportunity to get greater attention from their instructor than in larger courses. They will also continue to learn from each other and collaborate in the seminar setting. They will be introduced to the library and other primary source collections, on which they will base their research papers. As part of the archival field trips, undertaken as a group with the instructor during class time, students will get the historian's experience of working with authentic, original historical materials, which will act as the core of the material for their research papers. These physical documents can also be supplemented with on-line or edited collections of documents, which students will learn to access during their time in the library. Since the research will be conducted during class time, students will have more direct access to and guidance from the instructor as their research moves along. In the Seminar-Research, students will gain valuable skills in research, critical evaluation of evidence, data analysis and pattern recognition, and the organization of information into a substantial paper or report.