History of Science, Medicine and Technology 140.601
An Introduction to Historical Methods Fall 2007

This course is composed of three strands: 1. An introduction to current topics in the history of science, medicine, and technology. 2. An introduction to the history of the discipline(s). 3. An introduction to historical research and writing methods. Class time will be focused on discussion of assigned articles and of research tactics and strategies based on your own research project for the semester or year. Written assignments are designed to strengthen analytic skills and to complement your own ongoing research in other seminars. When the written assignments focus on your own research project during the second half of the course, you are still expected to take notes on each article in terms of methods and sources, contributions, limitations, and questions left unanswered. Articles on-line at MSE’s e-reserves under Hanson/Fissell.


Week 1 Sept. 6 Introduction: Primary Sources & Historical Evidence
The first class will meet at the 3505 Charles St History of Science and Technology Department seminar room. We may alternate with East Baltimore seminar room depending on location of colloquium. Handouts on primary sources given in class.

Friday Sept. 7 3-5: Visit Walters Museum, Cabinet of Curiosities Exhibition
We will meet at the 600 North Charles Street entrance: http://www.thewalters.org

Week 2 Sept. 13 From Whence We’ve Come: The Scientific Revolution Issue

Assignment: Respond in 3-4 pgs to Cook’s arguments and the Cabinet of Curiosities exhibition in light of the issues regarding the “Scientific Revolution” raised in one of this week’s articles.
**Week 3 Sept 20 LIBRARY SESSION WITH CHRISTINE RUGGERE**

**Assignment:** Prepare by working through exercises in library research handout.

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**Week 4 Sept 27 Nature and Empire**

**9:30-10 MSE History of STM librarian, Susan Vazakas, will introduce research resources.**


**Written Assignment:** Write a one-page summary of one of these articles, summarizing the article rather than recounting it in detail. Cut to the chase; get to the core of the argument.

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**Week 5 Oct 4 Workplaces 1: The Laboratory**


**Writing Assignment:** Compare two of the assigned articles by discussing their methods, primary sources, contributions, and limitations. 3 pp max. [For guidelines on how to write a balanced assessment, see e-reserves George Sarton, “Notes on the Reviewing of Learned Books,” *Science* vol. 131, No. 3408 (1960): 1182-87.]

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**Week 6 Oct. 11 Workplaces 2: The Field**

- Michael Lynch and John Law, “Pictures, Texts, and Objects: The Literary Language Game of

**Assignment: The History of the Disciplines.** You may work as a group on this project. Choose a representative year from the 1930s, the 1950s, the 1970s and the 1990s from *Isis*, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, or *Technology and Culture*. (nb. T&C only starts in 1959 -- choose a year from the early 1960s, the '70s and the '90s). Analyze the changes and continuities in the journals over time in a presentation in class. Questions you might consider include: What kinds of topics and arguments were made? Was there a chronological or geographical focus? Can you tell what sorts of people were publishing? What kinds of sources did they use? What else was in the journal besides scholarly articles?


**Week 7 Oct 18 Making Knowledge: Material Practices**

**Written Assignment based on your research:** Write 2 pp on the questions you are asking and the primary sources you are planning to use in your research paper. Include a preliminary biblio. Be prepared as well to discuss the “art of footnotes.” In-class handout.

**Week 8 Oct 25 Making Knowledge: The Workers**

**Written Assignment:** In 3 pp present a primary source (or type of source) you are using in your research paper. Analyze the problems and prospects of the source: who produced this source? why did they produce it? what cautions are necessary in using it? Be prepared to present your
analysis to your classmates in terms of the sources reliability, typicality, and historical value.

**Week 9 Nov 1 Making Knowledge: The Tools**

**Written Assignment:** Write an overview of the secondary literature on your research topic, a “literature review” in 3 pp. Pay attention to how you position your own research in the field.

**Weekend Nov 1-4, History of Science Society Meeting,** Arlington, VA, Marriott Crystal Gateway Hotel. (Transportation will be worked out depending on who is attending)
Attendance one day highly recommended. Write a 2 pp response to one of the panels attended.

**Week 10 Nov 8 Power and Patronage**

**Written Assignment:** Revise your literature review in light of comments given, lessons learned, and be prepared to discuss the state of your research project in class.

**Week 11 Nov 15 Writing Knowledge**

**Written Assignment:** building on your analysis of a primary source, pick a case available in the
JSTOR online version of the Philosophical Transactions. Discuss it in light of arguments used in articles assigned for this week. 2 pp.

Week 12 Nov 22 Drawing Knowledge [Discuss change to M-W alternatives]

Assignment: Present (in class) one of your primary sources from the perspective of visual evidence—what kinds of questions do you need to ask of a picture or title page? What other evidence, textual and visual, would you require for a full analysis of the image? 1-2 pp handout.

Week 13 Nov 29 Consuming Knowledge

Written Assignment: Making an argument: Complete a preliminary outline of your research paper asking yourself what work is your evidence doing for your central argument? Indicate what evidence you are using and what interpretative methods you are employing. 2-3 pp.

Week 14 Dec 6 Gender and Science

Written Assignment: Turn in a detailed outline of your research paper, more than 3 pp.