Notes for prospective students

Thank you for considering enrolling in History 450: The Growth of Metropolitan Milwaukee. Before you enroll, there are a couple of things you should know about this course.

First and most important, it will probably be a lot of fun. Second, this class is built around a series of public-facing assignments. Almost everything that students write in this class will be for public audiences. Third, this class is a “Course-Based Research Project” sponsored by UWM’s Office of Undergraduate Research. Enrollment is limited to 20 undergraduate and 5 graduate students. It is also open to Senior Auditors, who should read the note below before deciding whether to sign up for the class.

Second, of today it is unclear what shape fall semester classes will take at UWM due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I hope very much this will be a face-to-face class, and the draft syllabus below assumes that we will be meeting live throughout the semester. Obviously once the university announces a plan for fall 2020, adjustments may need to be made.

Third, several sessions of the class will meet at the Milwaukee Public Museum. Some of these sessions are professional development workshops with the MPM staff. Some of these sessions are live interactions with the MPM public audiences. The session on Thursday November 5 will be an extra-long field trip to conduct the class’s live Tweeting event. You should block off the entire morning from your calendar. I will be happy to provide a note to your employer or another professor if you enroll in this class and need help freeing up the morning of November 5. If you anticipate a conflict with another commitment that you cannot be excused from on November 5, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss how this can be handled.

Fourth, please note that this is a draft syllabus. The schedule, assignments, and assessment methods are subject to change. The required books will not change this semester. In future semesters there will be different themes and different required readings.

Fifth, assessment in this course will probably consist of “ungrading.” Students will collaborate with me to set their own course grades. Intrigued? Read on.

Sixth, if you are a Senior Auditor considering enrolling in the course, please read this: In general, I welcome Senior Auditors to enroll in my courses. However, this is an unusual class in which students will be producing public-facing research and given professional development opportunities. Senior Auditors who enroll in this course should pick one of the three tracks listed below. Please let me know which track you intend to take.

1. Lectures only. There will be approximately half a dozen course meetings devoted to lecture on Milwaukee history. Senior Auditors picking this track should attend only on the days listed as lectures in the schedule section of the syllabus.
2. Constructive critics: attend all classes and commit to sharing your insights with students about their draft materials in the spirit of improving their work before it is shared with the public.
3. Full immersion. Do everything the regularly-enrolled students do, including tabling at MPM, participating in the live-twitter re-enactment, and blogging.
Welcome to History 450, the Growth of Metropolitan Milwaukee, the inaugural offering of a new format for this class. All the assignments in this class are public-facing or self-reflective. You will participate in your own assessment through ungrading. If you find these ideas exciting, read on.

In History 450, you will learn about the broad history of the Milwaukee area and the deep history of one particular event. You will develop research skills and interpret one aspect of Milwaukee’s history to public audiences at the Milwaukee Public Museum (MPM) and online. You will collaborate with your classmates in a live Twitter re-enactment of a historical Milwaukee event, write for a course blog about your research, curate a primary source with the option to publish it on the Documenting Milwaukee website, and enjoy professional development opportunities at MPM and the UWM Libraries.

Course Goals

This course cultivates four goals for student learning.

First, it provides a broad overview of the history of the Milwaukee metropolitan area. This information is provided through traditional lectures and readings.

Second, it provides in-depth knowledge—achieved through original student research—of one particular aspect of Milwaukee history. That single event is a theme that will change every time this course is offered. In fall 2020, the theme is natural scientist Increase Lapham’s issuance of the first weather forecast in US history, which occurred on November 8, 1870.

Third, students will develop skills in primary and secondary source research related to the course theme.

Fourth, students will develop skills communicating history to public audiences. Instead of traditional papers, students in this course will prepare tweets, write blog posts, and interact with visitors to the Milwaukee Public Museum about their research as it develops.

Readings

There are two books required for purchase for this course. The required books are:


All other readings will be available as PDFs or links on the course Canvas site. You should come to class having done the assigned readings and prepared to share your reactions to and questions about the contents. In addition, you will need to identify and read additional sources as part of the research work for this class.

**Course Theme**

Every fall, History 450 is built around a different theme that provides the jumping-off point for student research and history communication. The 2020 theme for the course is the first official weather forecast in the United States, issued on November 8, 1870 by Milwaukee naturalist Increase Lapham. We will mark the 150th anniversary of this event with a live Twitter re-enactment hosted at the Milwaukee Public Museum on the morning on Thursday, November 5. For an introduction to Increase Lapham, see the sources listed in the footnote.¹

Increase Lapham examines a meteorite

**Undergraduate Assignments**

There are three kinds of assignments in this course. Most of the work presents historical knowledge about the annual course theme to the public. There are also scaffolded assignments listed in the schedule that will help you prepare those public-facing assignments. Additionally, you will write private reflections on their work for the course, to be shared only with me. There are no exams or traditional papers.

**Tabling at the Milwaukee Public Museum**

Twice during the semester you will have the opportunity to staff a table at the Milwaukee Public Museum and interact with the public about your research. Visitors to the museum will be able to come to your table and ask you about the material you have brought to share. The goal is to

engage other museum attendees in thinking about and interpreting that primary source. You will be asked to sign up for a 90-minute shift at the Museum on tabling day. There will be no class meeting on tabling day.

- At the first tabling opportunity, you will bring a copy of a single primary source related to the course theme to share with members of the public. Before this tabling session, you should have done some significant thinking about the source and its historical implications. But you can also use your interactions with museum visitors as an opportunity to develop your questions and analysis further: what insights do members of the public have about the source that you are sharing with them? What do their questions make you think about that you had not thought of on your own? Later in the semester, you will curate a primary source for a research poster to be shared at MPM. You might choose the source that you started with or move on to some other source.
- At the second tabling day, you will share your curated primary source on a poster with museum visitors. This is an opportunity to show off the expertise you have developed about Milwaukee history, to learn about what museum-goers think of your work, and consider new questions.
- In fall 2020, the dates for the MPM tabling opportunities are October 1 and December 3.

Live Twitter Reenactment

On November 5, our class will meet in the Education Department of the Milwaukee Public Museum to reenact the first official weather forecast in American history, issued by Increase Lapham on November 8, 1870. You will be responsible for developing one “character” based on appropriate historical research and writing at least twenty tweets in the voice of that character to be sent out during our live-tweeting event. The character of Increase Lapham may be shared by multiple students who will each be responsible for twenty tweets, but the “Increase Lapham” team must coordinate carefully in preparation and release of “his” tweets to avoid inconsistency and redundancy. You will be tweeting from the character’s Twitter account, which you will make for this course, not from your personal Twitter account. You are welcome to share class tweets from your personal Twitter and other social media accounts, but you are not required to link your public online presence with your Twitter re-enactment character.

This is a multi-hour, collaborative event which we will spend much of the semester preparing for. Please work with your employers and other UWM instructors early in the semester to make sure that you are available to spend the entire morning at MPM. If it will help you, I can provide a letter of explanation for you to share with your supervisor or instructors.

Blog posts

Each student will write two blog posts for distribution on the History 450 course blog. The expected length is 250-500 words. Each post will be submitted through Canvas; I will respond to and edit your post; you will revise and resubmit; and I will be responsible for posting to the
course blog. Students will receive byline² credit for their blog posts. The topics for the two blog posts are as follows:

- Introduce your Twitter re-enactment character. Explain who they were, whether they are a real historical or fictional composite figure, what Twitter handle you will be using, and their relationship with the theme of the Twitter re-enactment. If you can locate, secure permission to use, and provide a copy of an image to accompany your post, I can post an illustration.
- Explain your experience conducting primary source research for some aspect of the course: where did you go, what did you look at, what was the experience like, what did you find, what was missing?

Primary Source Curation

Students will select, research, and curate a primary source (or set of primary sources) relevant to the course theme. The curations will be shared in two distinct formats: a research poster (required) and on the Documenting Milwaukee website (optional). It is advisable to select a primary source that helps you develop your Twitter-reenactment character, but this conjuncture is not required.

- A separate handout explains the structure and requirements of the Primary Source Curation in greater detail. We will also go over this assignment in class.
- Information about printing posters, including the free printing service for UWM students, is here: https://uwm.edu/print-copy/wide-formatposter-printing/for-students/. Note that the UWM Print and Copy Services office requires three full business days to print a poster, so the contents of your poster need to be completely ready by the morning of Monday, November 30 for you to share at MPM on Thursday, December 3.
- In addition to presenting your research poster at MPM, you have the option to save it and present it at the spring 2021 UWM Undergraduate Research Symposium. See under “Optional Course Extensions” for more information.
- If you would like a publication credit, you may also opt to submit your curated primary source for professional editing and sharing on Documenting Milwaukee website. See under “Optional Course Extensions” for more information.

Written Reflections

After each of the three presentation opportunities at Milwaukee Public Museum, students will submit written reflections on their experience. Considerations include how well you prepared for the presentation, what your interactions with the public were like, what challenges you faced and whether and how you overcame them, and what you could have done better. Length is approximately 500 words. Due dates and specific prompts are listed in the schedule section of the syllabus.

² There may be students for whom public acknowledgment of their work is hazardous or inappropriate for personal reasons. If you have circumstances that mean that you do not want your name associated with the blog post, please see me privately. You do not have to share why you need to protect your identity, only that it is necessary for you. Options for protecting your identity include posting anonymously or under a pseudonym.
After the final class, students will also submit a narrative reflection on their performance in the class as a whole. To prepare for this assignment, we will hold individual conferences instead of a class meeting on December 8. You should comment on your most and least favorite course activities; what challenged you during the course and what you found easy, the extent to which you completed all assignments in a timely fashion (and why or why not); how the assigned readings helped you understand the topic; which classmates made the most contributions to your learning; and what you would do differently if you had it to do all over again. You are also invited to assign yourself a letter grade for the course as a whole and provide a rationale for your self-assessment.

Optional course extensions

Students have the opportunity to extend their participation in this course in three ways.

1. UWM Undergraduate Research Symposium. Every spring, UWM’s Office of Undergraduate Research hosts a symposium where hundreds of students share the results of their work with the university community. The date of the spring 2021 symposium is [TBD]. Because one of the assignments in History 450 is curating a primary source into a research poster and you will debut your poster in a tabling session at the Milwaukee Public Museum, you will have a ready-to-go offering for this event. More information about the Symposium can be found here: https://uwm.edu/our/programs/symposium/.

2. You may submit your primary source curation for inclusion the Documenting Milwaukee (DMKE) website, a companion to the Encyclopedia of Milwaukee. If you submit your curation to DMKE, you will have the opportunity to experience professional historical editing and revision that will result in a publication you can include on your résumé, graduate school application, LinkedIn profile, or other social media. The DMKE staff must be able to secure permission to post the source itself as well as your curation. To submit your curation for consideration, send an email to Dr. Joseph Walzer (jbwalzer@uwm.edu) and copy me (seligman@uwm.edu) on the message.

3. Do you love doing this kind of research? Would you like to help lay the foundation for next fall’s History 450 theme? UWM’s Office of Undergraduate Research has Student Undergraduate Research Fellowships. Students can work for pay or credit on background research for the next iteration of this course. If you are interested in a SURF application for next spring or summer, please contact me to discuss possibilities. More information on the SURF program can be found here: https://uwm.edu/our/programs/support-for-undergraduate-research-fellows-surf/.

Graduate students

Graduate students in this course have a different set of course requirements than the undergraduates. Your focus will be on deepening your primary and secondary source research
skills and on collaborating\(^3\) with the undergraduates in the class. You are not required to curate a
primary source or participate in tabling at the Milwaukee Public Museum, although you are
welcome to take the opportunity to do this work if it will support your educational goals.

You are required to develop a character for and participate in the live Twitter re-enactment. In
addition, you will function as the re-enactment “dramaturg.” You will be a research resource for
the undergraduates in the class, helping them locate and interpret primary and secondary sources
that allow them to understand and develop their characters to be as historically accurate as
possible.

To facilitate your role as dramaturg and deepen your own historical research and writing skills,
you will write a 5,000 word research paper related to the course theme. Please come and see me
in my student hours or by appointment to develop the scope of and parameters for this paper.

Like the undergraduates, you will be “ungraded” in this course. You will submit short reflections
assessing the work you produce for the course and develop your grade in collaboration with me.

_Assessment:_

Assessment in this course occurs through “ungrading.” What does that mean? Because this class
is focused on communication skills, you and I will engage together in a process of reflection
about your intellectual development throughout the semester and collaborate on determining
your course grade. How will this work? First, I encourage you to attend my student hours (held
weekly) whenever you need to discuss your academic progress. Additionally, while I will
provide feedback about your work, you will also submit a series of reflections about how you
think you did on the course assignments. At the end of the semester, we will meet to discuss
what you have learned and agree on a grade.

Our evaluation of your work in the class should consider the following elements:

- Primary source tabling at Milwaukee Public Museum
- Tweets issued for the live Twitter re-enactment
- Primary source curation poster and tabling at MPM
- Blog posts
- Your contributions to class discussion
- Reading of the assigned texts
- Drafts and revisions of all writing assignments
- The series of written reflections

In your final reflection, I will also ask you to provide feedback about who among your
classmates most contributed to your intellectual development. Feedback from other students

\(^3\) Collaboration is one of the American Historical Associations Career Diversity Five Skills. See “Collaboration,”
American Historical Association website, [https://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/career-
resources/five-skills/collaboration](https://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/career-
resources/five-skills/collaboration), last accessed January 13, 2020.
about who contributed to their learning will probably influence my perception of your course grade.

Senior Auditors

Senior Auditors who enroll in this course should pick one of the three tracks listed below. Please let me know which track you intend to take.

1. Lectures only. There will be approximately half a dozen days of the course devoted to lecture on Milwaukee history. Senior Auditors picking this track should attend only on the days listed as lectures in the schedule section of the syllabus.
2. Constructive critics: attend all classes and commit to sharing your insights with students about their draft materials in the spirit of improving their work before it is shared with the public.
3. Full immersion. Do everything the regularly-enrolled students do, including tabling at MPM, participating in the live-twitter re-enactment, and blogging.

Course partners

Beyond the instructor and the students, this course has three major partners who have each contributed to its development. I am grateful to the following entities for their work in developing and sustaining this class.

- The Milwaukee Public Museum originated the Twitter re-enactment assignment and is providing professional development and communication opportunities to students.
- The UWM Libraries is providing extensive instructional support in research, analysis, and communication skills.
- UWM’s Office of Undergraduate Research is offering this class as a “Course-Based Research Project.” That means OUR is subsidizing the cost of the course, allowing us to keep enrollment to a lower limit and providing logistical support for our efforts.

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4 For more on Course-Based Research Projects, see the OUR website at https://uwm.edu/our/programs/cbrp/.
Schedule of class meetings
Note that schedule is tentative and subject to change. Schedule assumes this course will proceed in Fall 2020 as a face-to-face class. If the whole or portions of the class are to be offered virtually, this schedule may change. In any case, reading and writing assignments will be added to the schedule later in the summer.

Thursday September 3: Introduction

Tuesday September 8: Lecture: Indigenous Milwaukee

Thursday September 10: Detailed introduction of research theme, including
  • Overview and sequencing of assignments
  • Introductions to Increase Lapham and the history of weather

Tuesday September 15: Possible guest speaker

Thursday September 17: library instruction: How to find and assess primary sources in the archives.

Tuesday September 22: Professional Development with Milwaukee Public Museum staff

Thursday September 24: Library instruction: the basics of primary sources.

Tuesday September 29: lecture: Milwaukee’s development as a city and metropolitan area

Thursday October 1: Tabling at MPM. Each student brings a copy of one primary source to share with museum-goers. Instead of class, everyone schedules a 1.5 hour shift at the museum.

Tuesday October 6: introduction of primary source curation
  • Reflection on tabling experience
  • Use the tabling conversations as background for the draft primary source curation

Thursday October 8: Lecture: Immigration to Milwaukee

Tuesday October 13: Brainstorm, choose, and refine characters

Thursday October 15: Library Instruction: Six Hats

Tuesday October 20: Develop detailed timeline for event

Thursday October 22: Library Instruction: social media

Tuesday October 27: Socialism in Milwaukee

Thursday October 29: Workshop draft tweets
Tuesday November 3: Revise tweets for character interaction and story development
Election Day: please register and vote if you are eligible.

Thursday November 5: Live Tweeting Day: meet at Milwaukee Public Museum. Exact times TBD

Tuesday November 10
- Reflection on re-enactment
- Introduction to curated primary sources and posters.

Thursday November 12: lecture: The Great Migration and Civil Rights Movement

Tuesday November 17: Possible guest speaker on research posters

Thursday November 19: Professional Development workshop at Milwaukee Public Museum with History Curator of Collections Al Muchka

Tuesday November 24: workshop draft research posters

Thursday November 26: Thanksgiving: no class meeting. Remember to submit your poster to the UWM Print and Copy Services office by the morning of Monday November 30.

Tuesday December 1: lecture: Milwaukee’s changing economy

Thursday December 3: poster showcase MPM. Instead of class, everyone schedules a 1.5 hour shift at the museum.

Tuesday December 8: Individual reflective conferences in lieu of class meeting

Thursday December 10: Conclusion and course evaluations