

This syllabus is your guide to the course. It lists readings, describes assignments and spells out expectations. Look here first for answers to your questions.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln – Fall 2012

HIST 398 - “History Harvest”

Professor Patrick Jones

Class Meetings: T-Th 2-3:15pm

Classroom: 110 Avery Hall

Office: 632 Oldfather Hall

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11-12:30pm or by appointment

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Email: pjones2@unl.edu or democracy8888@yahoo.com

Office Phone: 472-3250

“American history is longer, larger, more various, more beautiful, and more terrible than anything anyone has ever said about it.” (James Baldwin)

Course Overview:

In HIST 398 a team of advanced undergraduate History majors will work directly with the professor and community groups to organize, promote and execute the History Harvest; collect oral histories with local people; and process the interviews and artifacts we collect for the History Harvest website. The idea is to give students a more hands-on and community-oriented experience in History.

Class Format:

This is an innovative and unique hybrid class. Over the first several weeks, we will be doing some traditional “book learning” and classroom work to develop a basic understanding of the refugees and their experiences, and to hone some core skills we will need to conduct the History Harvest. For the remainder of the semester, we will be working as a team planning, executing and processing the History Harvest. As we move through the semester, the class will become increasingly *improvisational*. Our work schedule will be dictated largely by the demands of completing the History Harvest, conducting oral history interviews and processing materials for the website. It is critical that each member of the class take seriously her/his responsibility to the project and the group. We are relying on our collective power to make the History Harvest a success!

Readings:

In the “Topics and Assignments” section of this syllabus you will find a list of class topics and the corresponding readings/resources for each date. It is your responsibility to have all readings completed by the start of class on the dates indicated. Please come to class prepared to discuss readings and other assignments.

The following books are required and are available at the University bookstore:

- Dave Eggers, *What is the What: The Autobiography of Valentino Achak Deng*
- Pipher, *The Middle of Everywhere: Helping Refugees Enter the American Community*

Reading Quizzes:

Students will take a brief reading quiz at the start of each class in which we discuss the two assigned texts. Reading quiz questions will be short-answer format.

Classroom Participation:

Your active participation is critical to the success of this course. In general, I will be looking for you to be consistently prepared for class and enthusiastically engaged in our work. Periodically, students will complete brief assignments to help us explore and better understand the major ideas and themes related to the class. These brief assignments will take a variety of formats and will contribute to your classroom participation grade.

Family Artifact Assignment:

Each student will complete a brief artifact assignment. Details of this assignment will be provided in class.

Oral History Interview Assignment:

Each student will conduct and process at least one oral history interview with a member of the community. Details of this assignment will be provided in class.

History Harvest Contribution:

The bulk of each student’s grade will be determined by their participation in the History Harvest. There will be a number of ways for students to be involved and take a leadership role in the History Harvest project. The key here is for each student to actively engage the project and to find ways to contribute meaningfully.

Grading:

Here is the breakdown of your final course grade and the overall grading scale that I use:

• Class Participation:	20%
• Reading Quizzes:	10%
• Artifact Assignment:	10%
• Oral History Interview Assignment:	10%
• History Harvest Contribution:	50%
	<hr/>
	100%

A + = 99-100%; A = 93-98%; A- = 90-92%; B+ = 88-89%; B = 83-87%; B- = 80-82%; C+ = 78-79%; C = 73-77%; C- = 70-72%; D+ = 68-69%; D = 60-67%; F = 59% and lower

Office Hours:

If you have any questions, comments, suggestions or problems during the semester, please feel free to come speak with me. Open communication is crucial to our success. My office hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11am-12:30pm or by appointment.

Students With Special Needs:

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact me for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

Topics & Assignments

T (8/21)	Course Introduction
TH (8/23)	Immigrants or Refugees? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assignment explained in class
T (8/28)	Family Artifacts as History <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Artifact Assignment Due
TH (8/30)	Community Visitor: Beatty Brasch <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lincoln survey of refugees
T (9/4)	Book Discussion #1 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pipher, <i>Middle of Everywhere</i>, Foreword through Chapter 5
TH (9/6)	HH Work Day: Working with Artifacts <ul style="list-style-type: none">• resources posted to Blackboard
T (9/11)	Book Discussion #2 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pipher, <i>Middle of Everywhere</i>, Chapter 6 through Appendices
TH (9/13)	Community Visitor: Zainab Al-Baaj <ul style="list-style-type: none">• folder of brief readings on Iraqi history and culture posted to Blackboard
T (9/18)	HH Work Day: A Primer on Oral History
TH (9/20)	Community Visitor from the Sudanese Community <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brief Reading TBA in class
T (9/25)	Book Discussion #3 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eggers, <i>What is the What?</i>, Book I
TH (9/27)	Film: "Paths of the Displaced" <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guest: filmmaker
T (10/2)	HH Work Day: Community Engagement and Outreach <ul style="list-style-type: none">• assignment explained in class
TH (10/4)	Book Discussion #4 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eggers, <i>What is the What?</i>, Book II and Book III

T (10/9) **HH Work Day: Building the History Harvest Web-Archive**

- Guest - Brandon Locke

TH (10/11) **HH Work Day: Interpreting and Analyzing Artifacts**

- resources posted to Blackboard

T (10/16) **No Class – Fall Break**

TH (10/18) **HH Work Day: Technology, Equipment and the History Harvest**

T (10/23) **HH Work Day**

TH (10/25) **HH Work Day**

**** SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28: Tentative Date for the History Harvest! All students are required to participate in this event, as it is the centerpiece of the class. ****

T (10/30) **TBD**

TH (11/1) **TBD**

T (11/6) **TBD**

TH (11/8) **TBD**

T (11/13) **TBD**

TH (11/15) **No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday**

T (11/20) **TBD**

TH (11/22) **TBD**

T (11/27) **TBD**

TH (11/29) **TBD**

T (12/4) **TBD**

TH (12/6) **Final Class: Public Presentation of the Website**

A Brief Overview of the History Harvest Concept:

A couple of years ago, the History Department initiated a new program, called the "**History Harvest**" (HH). The History Harvest program was born out of an acknowledgement that Nebraska is a diverse state with a rich and complex history that is often overlooked and that everyday people are the main "keepers" of that history, in the things they hold onto and in the stories they have to share from their own experience. The History Harvest program is a collaborative effort aimed at uncovering, collecting, preserving, archiving and sharing some of the many "hidden" historical treasures located right here in our own communities.

Here is how the History Harvest program works. Once a year, we go to a different town, neighborhood or community and hold a "History Harvest," inviting local people to bring us interesting historical artifacts they have in their personal collections. Historical artifacts might include letters, diaries, photographs, pamphlets, records, legal documents, memorabilia from local or national events or campaigns (buttons, fliers, posters, programs, etc.), popular culture objects, artwork, graphic arts, textiles, signage, clothing, or other three-dimensional objects that have some sort of historical significance. Community members bring their artifact(s) to our site, where a team of professional historians, as well as graduate students and advanced undergraduate History majors, are on hand to talk to them about the ways their artifacts connect with the broader national story of American history. In short, we try to let folks know the *historical value* of their artifacts.

In addition, we make a ***digital copy*** of each historical artifact (either photographing it or scanning it) and collect any interesting *stories* that might go along with the object. The digitized historical artifacts we collect are then included in an expanding web-based public archive of Nebraska history that we are creating. This History Harvest web-archive will be free and open to teachers, students and the general public in Nebraska, across the country and beyond. At each History Harvest stop, we also try to build partnerships with community organizations that have an interest in preserving local history.

In 2010, we held the **first History Harvest in Lincoln** and set a theme, "railroads." Needless to say, with Nebraska's long railroad history, lots of folks came out and brought a wealth of fascinating materials. A few months later, we held a **second History Harvest in Nebraska City**, this one without a specific theme. Again, there was a nice turn-out from community members and a number of interesting artifacts turned up, including some fascinating Civil War era materials.

Last Fall, we conducted our third History Harvest event in North Omaha and focused on the hidden history of African Americans in Nebraska's largest city. For the first time, eight advanced undergraduate History majors worked on the project as a part of an internship class taught by Professor Patrick Jones. Students learned about the history of African Americans in North Omaha, then planned, organized, advertised and executed the History Harvest in late-October, then worked on building the web-archive for the remainder of the semester. They also collected oral history interviews with community members. Among the many interesting objects brought in by community members during the North O History Harvest were a slave cup, a 1925 North Omaha business directory, photographs of jazz bands and other musicians, various artifacts related to a local Tuskegee Airman, and early-20th

century sheet music by three North Omaha composers. Students also worked with the Great Plains Black History Museum, an important community institution in North Omaha that has been closed for more than a decade. Students helped refurbish damaged and decaying archival holdings and spent a day inventorying a wonderful cache of artifacts that had been locked away in a storage container for several years. Among the hundreds of objects we cataloged that day were a commemorative Bob Gibson baseball bat from the 1976 Major League Baseball All-Star Game; a number of church photographs from the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s; a pristine WWI uniform; a band uniform and two horns from the Dan Des Dunes Jazz Band; a sculpture of Harriet Tubman; funeral home fans; dozens of lp records; a few pieces of original African art; and several diplomas from local schools. Through this immersion in local African American history, students came to understand the myriad ways that local black people built a strong community, created a vibrant culture and significantly contributed to the life of the city over the years, despite the historical realities of inequality and discrimination.

All of the students involved with the History Harvest project last year described the experience as **“transformative”** and one of the best educational experiences of their entire academic careers at UNL. “Being able to do work outside the classroom,” reflected Senior Matt Koziol, “and realizing that what we were doing in the community was making a difference” is what set this class apart. “ I loved the honesty in this class,” said Senior Kelsey Jistel. “It was really personal.” Senior Nick Pestello agreed, stating, “The whole hands-on experience really made me realize how great it is to be a History student. I really felt like I gained something from it... it was everything I ever wanted to do as a History major!” Justin Stawarz concluded, “I’d like to see elements of this in all History classes. Getting that hands-on experience is so radically different than anything else and it helps you internalize the learning a lot more.”

This Fall, we will focus on refugee communities in Lincoln. Lincoln, Nebraska, is an official refugee relocation site in the United States. Refugees have a distinct legal standing, different from immigrants. Many refugees have fled political persecution and extreme violence. Some have been victimized by war, murder, rape and torture. These communities are often invisible, or marginalized, in our community, so the History Harvest offers an important opportunity to highlight the rich and diverse cultures and histories of these people and to share it with the broader community. In doing so, we hope to build bridges of understanding between the majority and these new arrivals in Lincoln.