

UWO/FIMS 9350: “Genealogy: Practice, Mediascape, and Infosphere”



Professor: Daniel Robinson

drobin@uwo.ca; office: FNB 4057

Office hours: Thursdays 1-2:30pm (in person or by phone 416.829.2919).

Also by appointment.

Class Time: Wed 5:30-8:30PM, FNB 4070, In-person.

Course Description

This course examines genealogy as a social, cultural, and commercial phenomenon, while providing students with a basic primer in genealogical research. Topics examined include: locating and evaluating primary sources (e.g., parish/census records) using databases like ancestry.com and familysearch.org; “Genealogy Inc.” and the rise of Ancestry; community formation and genealogical practice; ancestry and nationhood; forensic genetic genealogy; DNA testing; Indigenous identity and genealogical practice; and television shows like “Finding Your Roots” and “Who Do You Think You Are.”

Learning Outcomes/Objectives:

The course will enable students to: conduct original genealogical research; lead weekly discussions based on course readings; conceive, research, and write a course paper (12-15 pgs.) using extensive secondary and primary sources. Students taking this course will acquire a deep-seated understanding of the techno-informational, cultural, and social contexts and consequences involving genealogical practice since the late 20th century.

Enrolment in this course is restricted to graduate students in FIMS graduate programs.

Course Materials

There’s no required text. All readings are available on-line. You will need to purchase a subscription to Ancestry.ca (approx. \$85 for six months)

Class Format

This is a discussion seminar class. While at times I may lecture a little, the bulk of the class consists of weekly discussions of selected readings and other texts. Be prepared to discuss the assigned readings in light of argument/persuasiveness; type & use of evidence; empirical and/or theoretical approaches; and relation to other readings. Each student will lead the seminar discussion at least once.

Student Evaluation

Seminar Participation:	30% (ongoing)
Seminar Leading/Presentation:	10% (once)
Genealogical Assignment:	15% (Due: Oct 25)
Essay Proposal/Presentation:	10% (Due: Nov. 29)
Essay (12-15 pgs.):	35% (Due: Dec 19)

Weekly Schedule

Sept 13: Introduction

John D. Reid, "The Development and Transformation of Canadian Genealogy," *Canadian Issues*, Spring/Summer 2020, 17-21

<https://acs-metropolis.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/DXAwHgvry9bqsfVLVZrn.pdf>

Tracy Arial, "How Genealogy Improves Historical Study," *Canadian Issues*, Spring/Summer 2020, 67-70

<https://acs-metropolis.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/DXAwHgvry9bqsfVLVZrn.pdf>

Sept 20: 2 Key Databases and the Genealogical Proof Standard

Explore (before class): 1) Ancestry.ca; 2) familysearch.org; 3) findmypast.com [optional]

Sunny Jane Morton, "The Genealogical Proof Standard: An Expert Explanation for Guiding Your Research," familytreemagazine.com

<https://familytreemagazine.com/strategies/genealogical-proof-standard/>

"Guidelines for Sound Genealogical Research"

https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/wp-content/uploads/NGS-Guidelines/Guidelines_Sound-Research2016-FINAL-30Sep2018.pdf

[Neilson, L.C.](#) (2022), "Accessing primary sources for marketing and advertising history research from family history websites", *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, Vol. 14 No. 2, pp. 281-291.

<https://doi-org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/10.1108/JHRM-10-2021-0055>

Sept 27: Communities of Practice

Yakel, Elizabeth, and Deborah A. Torres. "Genealogists as a 'Community of Records.'" *American Archivist* 70, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2007): 93–113. doi:10.17723/aarc.70.1.II5414u736440636.

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ahl&AN=25429315&site=ehost-live>

Paul Darby and Paul Clough, "Investigating the Information-Seeking Behaviour of Genealogists and Family Historians," *Journal of Information Science* (39), 1, 73-84

https://journals-scholarsportal-info.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/pdf/01655515/v39i0001/73_itibogafh.xml_en

Shaw, Emma L., and Debra J. Donnelly. 2021. "(Re)discovering the Familial Past and Its Impact on Historical Consciousness" *Genealogy* 5, no. 4: 102. <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy5040102>

Tanya Evans, "The Emotions of Family History in Canada," *Canadian Issues*, Spring/Summer 2020, 9-12

<https://acs-metropolis.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/DXAwHgvry9bqsfVLVZrn.pdf>

Oct 4: Place, Ancestral Origin, and Meaning

Nash, Catherine. 2017. "Genealogical Relatedness: Geographies of Shared Descent and Difference" *Genealogy* 1, no. 2: 7. <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy1020007>

Leroux, Darryl. "A Genealogist's Paradise': France, Québec and the Genealogics of Race." *Ethnic & Racial Studies* 38, no. 5 (April 2015): 718–33. doi:10.1080/01419870.2014.939206.

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ahl&AN=100853847&site=ehost-live>

Robinson, Rebecca. 2021. "Pilgrimage and Purpose: Ancestor Research as Sacred Practice in a Secular Age" *Genealogy* 5, no. 4: 90. <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy5040090>

Oct 11: Genealogy Inc.,

de Groot, Jerome. "Ancestry.com and the Evolving Nature of Historical Information Companies." *The Public Historian* 42, no. 1 (2020): 8-28. muse.jhu.edu/article/750992.

Hjorthén, Adam. 2022. "Reframing the History of American Genealogy: On the Paradigm of Democratization and the Capitalization of Longing" *Genealogy* 6, no. 1: 21. <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy6010021>

Jones, Paul. "Baptizing the Dead." *Canada's History* 94, no. 2 (May 4, 2014): 50–51.

Jones, Paul. "On a Mission." *Canada's History* 94, no. 1 (March 2, 2014): 17–18.

Oct 18 Genetic (DNA) Genealogy (Part 1)

Matthew Stollard and Jerome de Groot, "'Things are Coming Out That Are Questionable, We Never Knew About': DNA and the New Family History," *Journal of Family History*, 45, 3, (2020) <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0363199020906853>

Putman, Angela L., and Kristen L. Cole. "All Hail DNA: The Constitutive Rhetoric of AncestryDNA™ Advertising." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 37, no. 3 (August 2020): 207–20. <https://www.tandfonline-com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/doi/pdf/10.1080/15295036.2020.1767796>

Bobkowski, Piotr S., John C. Watson, and Olushola O. Aromona. 2020. "A Little Bit of That from One of Your Grandparents: Interpreting Others' Direct-to-Consumer Genetic Ancestry Results" *Genealogy* 4, no. 2: 54. <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy4020054>

News Story:

Dyer, Owen. "Oregon Doctor Sues University, Claiming That 'Irresponsible' Use of His Sperm Created at Least 17 Children." *BMJ : British Medical Journal (Online)* 367 (October 17, 2019). <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.l6082>.

Oct 25: Genetic (DNA) Genealogy, (Part 2)

WARD, NATALIE. "Exploring the Intersection between Genealogy, Genomics and Self/Identity." *Canadian Issues / Thèmes Canadiens*, Spring/Summer2020 2020, 13–16 <https://acs-metropolis.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/DXAwHgvy9bqsfVLVZrn.pdf>

Foeman, Anita, Bessie Lee Lawton, and Randall Rieger. "Questioning Race: Ancestry DNA and Dialog on Race." *Communication Monographs* 82, no. 2 (June 2015): 271–90. <https://www.tandfonline-com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/doi/pdf/10.1080/03637751.2014.972966>

News Story:

Norimitsu Onishi, "Switched at Birth, Two Canadians Discover Their Roots at 67," *New York Times*, August 2, 2023. <https://archive.ph/Pogj4>.

Nov 1 Reading Week/No Class

Nov 8: Forensic Genetic Genealogy

Glynn, Claire L. "Bridging Disciplines to Form a New One: The Emergence of Forensic Genetic Genealogy." *Genes* 13, no. 8 (August 1, 2022): 1381. <https://doi.org/10.3390/genes13081381>.

Syndercombe Court, Denise. "Forensic Genealogy: Some Serious Concerns." *Forensic Science International: Genetics* 36 (September 1, 2018): 203–4. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fsigen.2018.07.011>.

Kennett, Debbie. "Using Genetic Genealogy Databases in Missing Persons Cases and to Develop Suspect Leads in Violent Crimes." *Forensic Science International* 301 (August 2019): 107–17. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forsciint.2019.05.016>.

News Articles:

Sheena Goodyear "He Disappeared 46 Years Ago. Thanks to Forensic Genealogy, His Family Finally Knows What Happened" CBC, Feb. 7, 2023. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/gary-frank-sotherden-1.6740097>.

Sara Jabakhanji "It's an 'exciting Time' for DNA Genealogy in Solving Cold Cases, Experts Say. But Some Urge Caution" CBC, November 29, 2022. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/cold-cases-genome-testing-toronto-police-1.6666671>.

Matthew Lapierre "DNA Nails Montreal Teen's Killer in 1975 Cold Case" CBC, May 23, 2023. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-sharron-prior-murder-update-1.6851664>.

Nov. 15 Indigenous Issues/First Nations

TallBear, Kim. (2013). Genomic articulations of indigeneity. *Social Studies of Science*, 43(4), 509–533. [10.1177/0306312713483893](https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312713483893)

Leroux, Darryl. "'We've Been Here for 2,000 Years': White Settlers, Native American DNA and the Phenomenon of Indigenization." *Social Studies of Science* (Sage Publications, Ltd.) 48, no. (February 2018): 80–100. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0306312717751863>

Cyca, Michelle "The Curious Case of Gina Adams: A 'Pretendian' Investigation." *Macleans.ca* <https://macleans.ca/longforms/the-curious-case-of-gina-adams-a-pretendian-investigation/>

News Articles:

Laura Beaulne-Stuebing "Saulteaux RCMP Officer Helps Connect Sixties Scoop Survivors with Biological Families" CBC, April 7, 2023. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/saulteaux-rcmp-officer-helps-connect-sixties-scoop-survivors-with-biological-families-1.6803498>.

"Review of Genealogies, Other Records Fails to Support Local Leaders' Claims of Abenaki Ancestry," May 22, 2023. <https://www.nhpr.org/nh-news/2023-05-22/review-of-genealogies-other-records-fails-to-support-local-leaders-claims-of-abenaki-ancestry>.

Keeler, Jacqueline. "Sacheen Littlefeather Was a Native Icon. Her Sisters Say She Was an Ethnic Fraud." *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 22, 2022. <https://www.sfchronicle.com/opinion/openforum/article/Sacheen-Littlefeather-oscar-Native-pretendian-17520648.php>.

Nov. 22 Indigenous Issues/Métis

TEILLET, JEAN. "Indigenization: How Genealogy and DNA Justify Race Shifting in Eastern Canada." *Canadian Issues / Thèmes Canadiens*, Spring/Summer 2020, 40–43.
<https://acs-metropolis.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/DXAwHgvry9bqsfVLVZrn.pdf>

Gaudry, Adam. "Communing with the Dead: The 'New Métis,' Métis Identity Appropriation, and the Displacement of Living Métis Culture." *American Indian Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (2018): 162–90.
<https://www-jstor-org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/10.5250/amerindiquar.42.2.0162>

LaForest, James. "A Métis Family in the Detroit River Region and Pays d'en Haut." *Michigan Historical Review* 42, no. 2 (Fall 2016): 67–80. doi:10.5342/michhistrevi.42.2.0067
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ahl&AN=120222066&site=ehost-live>

News Articles:

"Métis Nation of Ontario Accused of Recasting First Nations' Ancestors as Métis" 27 May 2023
<https://globalnews.ca/news/9702924/metis-nation-of-ontario-accused-of-recasting-first-nations-ancestors-as-metis/>.

Joanne Levasseur, "Environment Minister Kevin Klein's Claim to Be Métis Denounced by Brother, Manitoba Métis Federation" CBC, July 31, 2023. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/kevin-klein-indigenous-manitoba-government-1.6876688>.

Nov 29: Paper Proposal Presentations

Dec 6: Genealogy TV

Elliott, Matthew. "The Inconvenient Ancestor: Slavery and Selective Remembrance on Genealogy Television." *Studies in Popular Culture* 39, no. 2 (2017): 73–90.
<https://www-jstor-org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/44779932>

Scodari, Christine. "Roots, Representation, and Resistance? Family History Media & Culture through a Critical Lens." *Journal of American Culture* 36, no. 3 (September 2013): 206–20.
<https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/doi/pdfdirect/10.1111/jacc.12025>

Episodes:

"Who Do You Think You Are" (Claire Foy)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcxArJPIQkc>

"Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr." (Maya Rudolph, Shonda Rhimes, Keenan Ivory Wayans)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gny1ubQK7II>

Dec. 13: Critical Family History

Bell, Avril. 2022. "Introduction: Studies of Critical Settler Family History" *Genealogy* 6, no. 2: 49.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy6020049>

Freeman, Victoria. 2021. "Revisiting Distant Relations" *Genealogy* 5, no. 4: 86.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy5040086>

Health/Wellness Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health Support at <https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Accessible Education Western (AEW)

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf