

Introduction to Historical Research (A004006)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 1)	Dutch	Gent	practical independent work excursion seminar lecture
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Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Belaen, Johan	LW03	staff member
Dubois, Marie-Charlotte	LW03	staff member
Everaert, Janna	LW03	staff member
Paeps, Philippe	LW03	staff member
Slotman, Dineke Riët	LW03	staff member
Vandersmissen, Jan	LW03	staff member
Verboven, Koenraad	LW03	lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

	crdts	offering
Bachelor of Arts in History	5	A
Linking Course Master of Arts in History	5	A
Preparatory Course Master of Arts in History	5	A

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

Introduction to historical research;
archives;
libraries
bibliographies and databases;
critical apparatus;
academic writing;
data management

Position of the course

This is an introductory course in the first year of the BA in history curriculum. What you will learn in this course is closely connected to what you will learn in the first-year courses "Historical Practice I" and "Introduction to Historical Criticism".

The course also prepares you for other subjects later in the curriculum. You will further develop the attitudes and basic skills you learn in this course (see below) in the second- and third-year methodological and practical courses and in your BA- and MA-thesis. The insights you gain in this course will be important in the later courses in which you further reflect on history and its social relevance. The knowledge of the field you acquire in this course will help you better understand the coherence and objectives of the different subjects in the programme, and it will help you to choose more knowingly between the elective courses and research focuses from the second year in the programme onwards.

Contents

This course firstly focuses on the **insights, attitudes and basic skills you need to critically read academic publications and report on them in written academic Dutch, respecting the rules of grammar and spelling**. You will learn how an academic paper or book is structured, what to look for when assessing its quality, and which aspects to include in your report. We will teach you the characteristics of 'academic' Dutch and what jargon words are. We will not actively focus on grammar and spelling rules because we consider these to have been acquired in your secondary school years (see 'initial competences' below), but we will offer opportunities to further practise your basic writing skills and refer to additional external resources and supporting digital tools, including AI, if necessary.

A second focus is **setting up, starting and conducting research yourself**. This means that you will learn what good problem statements and research questions should look like, how you can formulate them yourself, and how they play a guiding role in research. We will also teach you how to develop effective search strategies to find information. This means that, using concrete examples, you will learn about the most important tools for the targeted collection of sources and literature and how to work with them. In connection with this, we will teach you the principles and tools for storing the collected information in a way that ensures its later accessibility. We will do this using the reference manager Zotero. Finally, we will teach you how to formally process this information in papers in such a way that readers can verify its accuracy and relevance. These include principally the basic principles of an adequate critical apparatus, with footnotes, a list of sources and a bibliography.

For both focuses, the further application of the insights and the practice of the corresponding skills will mainly take place in the course 'Historical Practice I'.

A third focus of this course is **the organisation, functioning and evolution of the discipline**. In concrete terms, this means that we offer an introduction to the work field of professional historians, both within the university and beyond, and both in the material world and in digital 'cyberspace'. You will learn which types of institutions—primarily archives, libraries, museums and heritage institutions—are important for conducting historical research, how they are organised, how they work and how you can use them. You will also learn how historical works (primarily but not exclusively written) are published and what different genres exist. Finally, you will learn what role academically trained historians can play in the broad field of public history.

Throughout the course, we will pay special attention to **digital tools and skills**, including the use of AI.

In terms of attitudes, you will learn to take a constructively critical stance towards opinions and interpretations, to substantiate your own opinions with correct readings and observations of facts and arguments, and to use AI ethically in line with the requirements of academic integrity.

Initial competences

No specific prior knowledge is required for this course. However, we do expect you to have attained the end level of the 6th ASO secondary school for the subjects history, Dutch, English and French and the general learning skills associated with graduating in the third grade of secondary education. In technical terms, we expect you to have acquired the general educational objectives of cross-domain orientations in the third grade of secondary education, especially as regards 'historical awareness', 'learning competences', and Dutch, French and English language skills.

We will not test these initial competences beforehand, but we encourage you to assess your own level via the online preparatory test "Simon says" (<https://www.ugent.be/student/nl/studeren/studiebegeleiding/simon>).m te editeren ---

Final competences

- 1 You know the most important concepts that are relevant to describing and analyzing the practice of historical research.
- 2 You know, in broad terms, the history of the most important institutions and processes in the field of history and you know how these, as components of the "external history of science" of the discipline, have co-determined the developments in historical research.
- 3 You know the field for academically trained historians (including but not limited

to archives and libraries) and you know how this is organized and works.

4 You know how scientific research in history is set up and conducted, and you can design a simple step-by-step plan for historical research yourself.

5 You know the selection criteria for collecting sources and literature in relation to a specific research question and can correctly apply these in your own work.

6 You know and have insight into different types of sources and literature.

7 You can request desired information in archives and libraries.

8 You know the criteria that research output, in particular written publications, must meet and you can apply these correctly.

9 You know the function of the critical apparatus of an academic publication and you can use it in evaluating the publication.

10 You know the scientific integrity criteria that historical research must meet, including when using GenAI, and you can apply these correctly in your own work.

11 You recognize and understand the key statements and arguments in scientific articles in Dutch, French and English.

12 You know what is characteristic of the academic language register and you can correctly apply the academic language register in your own texts.

13 You can communicate both your own ideas and insights as well as those found in the work of others in correct academic Dutch, respecting grammar and spelling rules.

14 You can create a critical apparatus yourself, using a correctly applied citation style, both manually and with appropriate software.

15 You know the possibilities and limitations of GenAI in the editing of academic texts and can apply them correctly.

16 For all kinds of information offered to you or that you find yourself, you constantly question the validity of this information and the explicit or implicit perspectives present in it.

17 You recognize and understand the core statements and arguments in scientific articles in Dutch, French, and English.

18 You can collaborate in a group to create a joint coherent paper in which you analyze and evaluate a scientific publication.

19 You know how historical research can be socially relevant.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Seminar, Excursion, Lecture, Practical, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

The lectures are supported by PowerPoint and the digital learning platform. Participation and interaction is encouraged by using interactive, digital tools. Lessons are recorded, but only the lesson sections in which explanations or feedback on assignments are given, are made available to all students. Working students and students who cannot attend classes for valid reasons will have access to all lesson recordings.

During the in-class workshops and practical sessions, students carry out assignments on or via their laptops, under the guidance of the lecturer, educational supervisor and/or assistants.

Lectures and seminars may be preceded or followed by additional assignments that students must complete independently (e.g., completing digital learning paths independently).

In addition, students complete larger individual and group assignments in which the core skills, including language skills, of this course are practiced.

Excursions are provided to an archive and to the university library.

Study material

Type: Syllabus

Name: Introduction to Historical Research

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : Dutch
Available on Ufora : Yes

Type: Slides

Name: Powerpoints used in class
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Language : Dutch
Oldest Usable Edition : 2024-2025
Available on Ufora : Yes

Type: Other

Name: Citation guide Department of History
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Language : Dutch
Oldest Usable Edition : 2024-2025
Available on Ufora : Yes
Additional information: Guide with a citation style based on the Chicago Manual of Style. The guide has to be followed by students for all assignments in this course and is recommended for use also in the later years of the curriculum.

References

All necessary references and learning materials are provided via the electronic learning platform.

Course content-related study coaching

Intensive supervision by the educational supervisor and (teaching) assistants.

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Written assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Written assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation, Peer and/or self assessment, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible in modified form

Extra information on the examination methods

Non-periodic

Papers: discussion and analysis of scientific articles and reporting in the form of a paper. The report is evaluated using a rubric. In group assignments, group members also evaluate each other's efforts in contributing to the result. This assessment is considered by the responsible lecturer and his team and may lead to an adjustment of the score

There will be 1 individual assignment and 2 group assignments. In case of failure to pass group assignments in the first term, they will be replaced by one individual assignment.

Passing the individual assignment is required for passing the course. In case of failure to pass the individual assignment, the final score will be reduced to 9/20.

Participation

Participation in the in-class workshops, with submission of work at the end of class; submission of mid-term assignments; participation in group assignments.

Periodic:

Written exam with open-ended questions, probing knowledge, understanding and skills, including writing skills (expressing in full sentences, non-ambiguity, correct vocabulary, grammar and spelling). In case of failure, this examination can be retaken during the resits.

Calculation of the examination mark

40% papers, 10% participation, 50% periodical

Facilities for Working Students

- Possibility of exemption from attendance with substitute assignment in consultation with the instructor
- Possibility of examination at another moment in the academic year
- Possibility of feedback by appointment during and after office hours

For more information regarding flexible study:<http://www.flw.ugent.be/flexibelstuderen>