HNRS 240.009  
The History of Normal: Monsters, Freaks, and Crips  
Fall 2018

Class Schedule:
Tuesday and Thursday, 3:00 pm - 4:15 pm TR Peterson Hall 1111

Instructor: Professor Michals  
E-mail: tmichals@gmu.edu  
Office Hours: Robinson B 475E TR 10:00-11:00, and by appointment (please email me to schedule).

"The distant past inspires the sense and the respect of differences between men, at the same time as it refines our sensitiveness to the poetry of human destinies."
– Marc Bloch, 1944

Before 1840 or so, the word "normal" commonly meant "perpendicular." This meaning derived from the carpenter's square, called a "norm." Today we rely heavily on a very different idea of "normal." How did people make sense of themselves and each other without this sense of "normal," and how did this idea come to have the power it holds today? This course will look at the field of disability studies as a place where social history intersects with political activism. It will consider the rise of statistics, medicine, and the state in nineteenth-century Britain, arguing that these developments created new ways of seeing ourselves and others that now feel natural. In addition to medical and statistical models, we will consider wonder, the monstrous, cruelty, pain, laughter, sentiment, and the freak as categories that eighteenth and nineteenth-century writers use to frame the very different behaviors, minds, and bodies they try to describe. Course work will include a class presentation, short papers, quizzes, and a 7-page research project (in discussion with me, you are free to research any topic of your choice, as long as it is relevant to the intellectual framework of the class). This class demands a good deal of discussion and interaction. In order to help us focus on this task, I do not allow the use of cell phones or laptops during class time.

Required Texts:
Marc Bloch, The Historian’s Craft  
William Hay, Deformity  
Articles found through our library’s databases. Start at http://library.gmu.edu/ Then click on “Search.”  
Other reading will be posted on Blackboard

COURSE POLICIES:
Missed quizzes or other in-class work cannot be made up, except in cases of personal tragedy. You are strongly advised to come to every class, on time, having read the assigned text more than once. Make marginal notes to yourself rather than merely underlining passages; underlining is better than nothing, but often weirdly enigmatic the morning after. Ask the text about its claims, evidence, and connections to other things you have read or know about.

Devices  
I do not allow students without a documented need for accommodation to use laptops or smartphones in the classroom. For my reasons, please see Jennifer Senior, “The Case Against Laptops in the Classroom,” Science of Us, July 9, 2015.
Help
I like writing, and I like talking to students about what they are writing. Please come to my office hours or make an appointment to discuss your draft (best case scenario) or (worst case scenario) to share your unhappiness at being unable to write anything you like. **Everyone is required to come see me about their writing at least once before October 9.** This individual writing conference will count as much as one quiz. If you’re having trouble getting started with an assignment, I advise you to get help from me or the Writing Center rather than clicking through a random and possibly overwhelming selection of electronic or print sources. If you do choose to start browsing, you must cite all the articles, books, or electronic sources that your own final work quotes or draws on, however indirectly, using a standard citation format, including a bibliography. The Writing Center is in Robinson A116: call 993-1200 to make an appointment in advance.

Things Go Wrong
At some point or other, our printers, alarm clocks, cars, smart phones, laptops, servers, highways, and immune systems all fail. These failures are miserable, but they are not reasons to request a chance to make up missed quizzes, other in-class work, or Blackboard posts. I’ve built enough flexibility into these requirements so that the normal miseries of life will not torpedo your grade, if you get the work in on those days when everything and everyone you depend on functions more or less as you hope they will. On the other hand, if a life-changing tragedy should come your way this semester, then please let me know as soon as you can. We’ll figure out whether withdrawing from the class or re-scheduling some deadlines is the best option for you.

Essays are due by the deadline on Blackboard. It’s best not to leave submitting an essay to the last minute. If you do leave it to the last minute and Blackboard does not work properly, do not despair. Please send the essay to me as an e-mail attachment as a time-stamp and keep trying to submit that version of it on Blackboard. Never skip class to try to finish an essay! Late submission may be possible if you discuss it with me ahead of time and I’ve seen work in progress. Except in cases of personal tragedy, unless I have approved a late submission, I will deduct one grade increment for each class period that the assignment is late: for example, and A- essay would become a B+ if it is late one class. After two classes, it would be a B. Always keep a copy of the work you hand in.

Plagiarism
It Can Happen Without Evil Intent. Plagiarism is a question of the words on the page, not what is in your heart. Taking words, phrases, ideas, or any other elements from another person's work and using them as if they were yours is plagiarism. Be sure to document any source you use, including introductions to editions of a text, anything you find on the internet, and study aids such as Spark Notes, following a standard citation format. We will discuss plagiarism in class. If you are ever unsure about this issue please discuss the work in question with me immediately, before you hand it in, because if someone else's words or ideas end up in your writing without being cited you have committed plagiarism, whether or not you intended to deceive.

Blackboard Responses
You must post ten responses in all – the first five before October 8, then five more before the last class, no more than one response for each class, posted before that class meets. Pace your responses prudently – do them early so you won’t be swamped by busy times and malfunctioning technology. Please post on the reading for the upcoming class. You are also welcome to refer to earlier readings and classmates’ comments. In fact, I will be delighted when you do. Synthesizing as you go along will be helpful for exams. These responses will help you to begin to analyze the readings so that you can more profitably participate when we talk about them in class; they also let me see what you’re thinking, so the earlier you post them, the more grateful I will be. Express yourself as clearly as possible. You can address the
response prompt listed for that day on the syllabus, or take another direction entirely, including those listed below -- some good general ways to start reading as a historian:

- identify the best (or worst, or most personally interesting) use of evidence in the text. What else could you do with this evidence?
- identify the thesis, ask a question about it, or explain why you think it matters for the time period under examination. Does it still matter now?
- disagree with something in the text. Just how wrong is it? Why?
- take a classmate’s Blackboard response to the reading one step farther. Even ground-breaking scholars are part of some ongoing conversation in their field.

If your response does not rise beyond arbitrarily-chosen paraphrase, then you won’t get credit for it. Each response must be at least 200 words; please try not to go over 400. I will not accept late responses – that is, responses posted after the class in which we discussed that particular reading.

**Grading Breakdown**

- **Essay 1** (900 words): 10%
- **Research Project:**
  1. Topic Submission (600 words): 5%.
  2. Preliminary Bibliography and 2-Page Update on your topic’s growth into a thesis: 5%.
  3. Annotated Bibliography (8 sources): 10%
  4. Working Draft (5 pages minimum): 5%
  5. Panel Presentation on one remarkable thing you learned through your research: 5%
  6. Final Draft 7 pages (1800 words): 20%
- **10 Blackboard postings.** Postings on readings must appear before the class in which we discuss the reading the posting is about. Half of your postings must be completed before break, the second half must be completed by our last class, and each one must be at least 200 words: 10%
- **Quizzes and other in-class work:** 10%
- **Exams:** 10% each, 20% total

**A Note on Grading Standards for Essays**

An "F" paper does not satisfy the purposes of the assignment. A "D" paper makes a visible effort to satisfy the purposes of the assignment, but still reads like a draft because of difficulty with writing clear sentences, developing thesis, organizing an argument, and / or using textual support. A "C" paper shows fairly consistent mastery of the mechanics of organization and grammar, and uses some textual evidence to support a thesis. A "B" paper shows consistent mastery of mechanics, and a more thoughtful use of textual evidence to support its thesis. An "A" paper makes me smile as I read it: in many subtle ways, it announces that someone has come into their own. The writer has developed a compelling voice, and has something to say.

MASON E-MAIL ACCOUNTS:
I will contact you only through your official GMU e-mail account.

OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES:
If you are a student with a disability and you would like to take advantage of appropriate accommodations, then please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474, http://ods.gmu.edu Please get your paperwork in order well before you think you may need any accommodation, even if you are not sure that you will decide to use one this semester. I am happy to work with ODS, but cannot offer any accommodations outside of the ODS process.

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS): College is often stressful. CAPS  http://caps.gmu.edu/ offers a variety of services free of charge, a great resource for stressful times.

Schedule

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Required Reading and Topics for Discussion</th>
<th>Assignments and Recommended Reading</th>
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<tr>
<td>T Aug 28</td>
<td><strong>History, Political History, Social History, Politics:</strong> “The good historian is like the giant of the fairy tale. He knows that wherever he catches the scent of human flesh, there his quarry lies.” —Marc Bloch</td>
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<td>R Aug 30</td>
<td><strong>Wartime, Peacetime, Historical Time; the Certain v. the “Infinitely Probable”:</strong> Bloch, “To Lucien Febvre by Way of a Dedication”; “Introduction” (the introduction by Bloch himself, which begins “Tell me, Daddy.” Stop at “the most difficult of all the sciences.”)</td>
<td><strong>Blackboard prompt:</strong> “Tell me, Daddy. What is the use of history?” How many answers does Bloch give to this question? Which is your favorite? Do you disagree with any? <strong>OR,</strong> “Unlike others, our civilization has always been extremely attentive to its past.” What evidence does Bloch give for this claim? What does he omit? <strong>Recommended:</strong> “Why History Matters: An Interview with John Tosh” Historically Speaking, Vol. 10, Number 5, November 2009 (Project Muse) Lucien Febvre, “Marc Bloch Fusille . . . “Mélanges d'histoire sociale Vol. 6 (1944), pp. 5-8 (Jstor)</td>
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<td>T Sept 4</td>
<td>Contemporary Disability Activism: “Nothing About Us Without Us”&lt;br&gt;Tom Shakespeare, BBC interview&lt;br&gt;Laura Hershey, “From Poster Child to Protestor”&lt;br&gt;Echolocation:&lt;br&gt;Last day to add classes</td>
<td>Blackboard prompt:&lt;br&gt;Does anything in these first-person accounts surprise you? Why or why not? <strong>OR</strong>, How do you think the professional historian’s commitment to the “infinitely probable” relates to the commitment of nations and other groups to a “usable past”?&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Recommended:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Paul Longmore and Lauri Unmaski, <em>The New Disability History: American Perspectives</em> (NYU Press, 2001)</td>
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<td>R Sept 6</td>
<td>Paul Longmore, “Why I Burned My Book” (excerpt on Blackboard)&lt;br&gt;Sept. 9 is the last day to drop classes with no tuition penalty</td>
<td>“Introduction to the ADA: Information and Technical Assistance on the Americans with Disabilities Act” (1990)&lt;br&gt;<a href="https://www.ada.gov/ada_intro.htm">https://www.ada.gov/ada_intro.htm</a></td>
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<td>T Sept 11</td>
<td>Tom Shakespeare, “The Social Model of Disability” (Blackboard)&lt;br&gt;Tobin Seibers, “My Withered Limb”</td>
<td>Blackboard prompt:&lt;br&gt;What does Shakespeare object to most about the social model of disability? Do you agree or disagree? <strong>OR</strong>, What does Shakespeare find most valuable about the social model of disability? Do you agree or disagree? <strong>OR</strong>, Does Seibers describe his experience in terms of the social model of disability?&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Recommended:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Alison Kafer, <em>Introduction to Feminist, Queer, and Crip</em> (Blackboard).&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;David Gerber, <em>Disabled Veterans in History, from Ancient Greece to the Conflict in Afghanistan</em>. (Michigan University Press, Revised ed. 2012)</td>
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*Oxford English Dictionary* entry for “monster” (To find the OED, start at [http://library.gmu.edu/](http://library.gmu.edu/) Then click on “Search.”)  
Michel de Montaigne, “Monsters”  
Bloch, “Historical Time.”  
Blackboard prompt:  
Why does Bloch insist that “the historian does not think of the human in the abstract”? OR,  
Compare these two English translations of the same line from Montaigne’s essay:  
“It was, as to all the rest, of a common form, and could stand upon its feet; could go and gabble much like other children of the same age. . .” – Charles Cotton, 1685-6  
“At first glance, the boy seemed normal: he could stand, walk, and talk like any child his age.”—Wyatt Mason, 2004  
Recommended:  
| T Sept 18 | Francis Bacon, “Of Deformity”  
Discuss Essay 1 assignment.  
Blackboard prompt:  
How many different contexts does Bacon use to explain the relation between a person’s outside and inside, between body and character? OR, Which words did you look up in the OED? (for example, for Bacon, “election touching the frame of his mind” means “choice,” not “contest for public office”). OR, What do you think of Ott’s point about the bodies and mannerisms of Disney villains, or the “idealized” bodies in historical exhibits?  
Recommended:  
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| R Sept 20 | Simon Dickie, “Hilarity and Pitilessness in the Mid-Eighteenth Century: English Jestbook Humor.” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* Vol. 37, No. 1, Exploring Sentiment (Fall, 2003), pp. 1-22. (Jstor) | **Blackboard:** Which piece of Dickie’s evidence do you find most convincing? Why? **OR,** Have you ever argued with someone about whether or not a joke was funny? Why?  
**Recommended:** Simon Dickie, *Cruelty and Laughter: Forgotten Comic Literature and the Unsentimental 18th Century* (Chicago UP, 2011)  
Adam Smith on human sympathy (Blackboard)  
[Historic England: Inclusive Heritage 1660-1832](#) |
Bloch, Bloch, “Understanding the Present by the Past” | **Blackboard:** What does Bloch mean by this claim: “Man spends his time devising techniques of which he afterwards remains a more or less willing prisoner.” Do you agree or disagree? Why? **OR,** What do you think of Bloch’s claim that “Neither in outer space, nor in time, can the potency of a force be measured by the single dimension of distance”? **OR,** What do you think is Hay’s most effective response to Bacon? Why?  
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<td>T Oct 2</td>
<td><strong>Review for Exam 1</strong></td>
<td>Blackboard: Come up with three terms we have used that you do not think you can define well (give defining them your best shot), and/or two texts we have read that you would like to compare and contrast.</td>
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<td>R Oct 4</td>
<td><strong>Exam 1</strong></td>
<td>Bring a blue book and a scantron form.</td>
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<td>**T Oct 9</td>
<td><strong>Oct. 9 is a holiday for this class. This week, Monday classes and labs meet on Tuesday and Tuesday classes do not meet (aka “University Monday”).</strong></td>
<td>Attend any Fall for the Book event with a visiting writer of history or historical biography, and write a one-page response. Post it on Blackboard by Oct. 14.</td>
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| Oct 10-13 | **Fall for the Book!** Attend a history-themed Fall for the Book event and submit your response to it on Blackboard by Oct. 14. We will discuss these in class on Oct. 16.** | Recommended Fall for the Book Events:  
**Wednesday, October 10** • 12:00pm - 1:15pm  
**Inhaling the History of the World**  
**Wednesday, October 10** • 2:15pm - 3:40pm  
**The Tragedy of Benedict Arnold**  
**Wednesday, October 10** • 3:00pm - 4:15pm  
**Letters from the Boys: Wisconsin World War I Soldiers Write Home**  
**Wednesday, October 10** • 7:00pm - 8:15pm  
**Women in WWII**  
**Thursday, October 11** • 3:00pm - 4:15pm  
**Hard to Do: The Surprising Feminist History of Breaking Up**  
**Thursday, October 11** • 2:15pm - 3:40pm  
**The Spy Who Changed the World**  
**Thursday, October 11** • 12:00pm - 1:15pm  
**When You Gotta Go: How Public Toilets Fail our Private Needs**  
**Thursday, October 11** • 1:30pm - 2:45pm  
**The Converted States of America**  
**Thursday, October 11** • 4:30pm - 5:45pm  
**The Secret History of A Modern Suburb**  
**Thursday, October 11** • 7:30pm - 8:45pm  
**March for Freedom with Congressman John Lewis and Andrew Aydin** |
<p>|           | <strong>Visit to the FDR Memorial by Thursday, Oct. 16</strong> <a href="https://freetoursbyfoot.com/visitors-guide-fdr-memorial/#11">https://freetoursbyfoot.com/visitors-guide-fdr-memorial/#11</a> |  |</p>
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<td>R Oct 11</td>
<td><strong>19th Century: Growth of the State, Science, and Medicine. Norms and Freaks, Institutions, Eugenics.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Blackboard:</strong></td>
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<td>Douglas C. Baynton, “‘These Pushful Days’: Time and Disability in the Age of Eugenics.” <em>Health and History</em>, Vol. 13, No. 2, Special Feature: Health and Disability (2011), pp. 43-64 (Jstor)</td>
<td>What difference between medicine, the medical profession, the state, the body, health, or disability in the 18th and 19th centuries interests you the most? Why?</td>
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<td><strong>Recommended:</strong></td>
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<td>Sayantani DasGupta, “Medicalization” <em>Keywords for Disability Studies</em> (Jstor).</td>
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<td>R Oct 18</td>
<td>Lenard Davis, “Constructing Normalcy”&lt;br&gt;(pages 1-12 only, available on blackboard)</td>
<td><strong>Blackboard:</strong> How does Davis define “norm,” “average, “mean,” and “ideal”? What evidence does he provide for his claims? Do you agree or disagree? Why? Keywords for Disability Studies: <a href="https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt15nmhws">https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt15nmhws</a></td>
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| T Oct 23 | Susan Lazoni, “The Asylum in Context” (Jstor)  
Bloch, “General Characteristics of Historical Observation” | **Blackboard:** Find an important claim in Lazoni. How does it relate to one of these claims by Bloch about knowledge in general or history in particular: “A good half of all we see is seen through the eyes of others”; “Knowledge of the past is something progressive which is constantly transforming and perfecting itself.”  
**Recommended:**  
| R Oct 25 | “Freak,” Leonard Casuto, *Keywords for Disability Studies* (Blackboard)  
Elizabeth Grieve, “How an ‘Ugly Law’ Stayed on Chicago’s Books for 93 Years,” *Chicago Tribune*  
Bloch, “Evidence”  
“As an old medievalist, I know nothing which is better reading than a *cartulary*.” | **Recommended:**  
**Blackboard:** What do you think is Bloch’s most important point about historical evidence? Why? OR, What should historians consider when using laws as evidence of social values? OR, compare the Ugly Laws to Turner & Withey’s claims about 18th century politeness. |
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Conan Doyle, “The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter” | **Recommended:**  
Jennifer Ruth, "Gross Humbug" or "The Language of Truth"? The Case of the "Zoist." *Victorian Periodicals Review.* Vol. 32, No. 4 (Winter, 1999), pp. 299-323  
Henry Mayhew at 200 – the ‘Other’ Victorian Bicentenary  
Sarah Roddy, Julie-Marie Strange & Bertrand Taithe.  
*Journal of Victorian Culture* Vol. 19, Iss. 4, 2014  
**Blackboard:** Compare Holmes’s way of seeing people to the medical model of disability, or to the emerging 19th and 20th-century social sciences. |
| R Nov 1   | Charles Dickens, Laura Bridgeman  
(excerpt on Blackboard)  
Bloch, “The Transmission of Evidence”  
(Unless you want to cultivate your gratitude for electronic databases, start with “Such guides, however well made, however abundant . . . “) | **Blackboard:** Consider Bloch’s statement that “during the rout, I saw the order book of an army intentionally burnt.” Why does he include this particular anecdote?  
**OR,** What particular challenges about evidence do you think people writing disability history may face?  
**Recommended:**  
Rosemary Mahoney, “The Education of Laura Bridgman” *Slate;* Ernest Freeberg, *The Education of Laura Bridgeman: the First Deaf and Blind Person to Learn Language.* . . with brief accounts of three other blind mutes in the same institution (1843). E-book available through Gallaudet  
**Research Project Topic Submission Due by midnight on Blackboard** |
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| T Nov 6  | Block, “Judging or Understanding?”  
Harriet McBryde Johnson, “Unspeakable Conversations” (Blackboard)                                            | **Blackboard:**  
What does Bloch mean in claiming that “understanding . . . is a word pregnant with difficulties, but also with hope”? Do you agree or disagree?  
OR, What would McBryde Johnson think of Bloch’s claim that “understanding . . . is a word pregnant with difficulties, but also with hope”?  
OR, Compare and contrast Singer’s ideas about deciding who has a right to live to those of Galton.                                                                                                                   |
| R Nov 8  | **Review for Exam 2**                                                                                   | **Blackboard:**  
List three terms we have used that you do not think you can define well (give defining them your best shot), and/or two texts we have read that you would like to compare and contrast.  

**Preliminary Bibliography (5-10 sources) and 2-Page Update on your topic’s growth towards a thesis due on Blackboard by Midnight.**                                                                                     |
| T Nov 13 | 2nd Exam                                                                                               | Bring a blue book and a scantron form.                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| R Nov 15 | Student Panels on Research  
Drafting your final project: Have you moved from a description of a topic to a debatable claim yet? What are your most important sources? What’s missing?                                                                 | **Annotated Bibliography (8 sources) due on Blackboard by Midnight.**  
**Bring a draft to class to get advice.**                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| T Nov 20 | No class meeting today, in recompense for attending a Fall for the Book event and visiting the FDR Memorial |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| R Nov 21 | **Thanksgiving Holiday**  
Thanksgiving Break: November 21-25                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Required Reading and Topics for Discussion</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T Nov 27</td>
<td>Drafting your final project: How can you foreground your best evidence? What is your best source? Who will care about this thesis, and why?</td>
<td>3-page Working Draft of your research project due in class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>R Nov 29</td>
<td>Revision of your final project: Do you argue yet, or do you still just list interesting pieces of information?</td>
<td>5-page Working Draft of your research project due in class.</td>
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<td>T Dec 4</td>
<td>Revision of your final project: Do you have actual paragraphs? What do your citations and bibliography look like?</td>
<td>Working Draft of your research project due in class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>R Dec 6</td>
<td>Revision of your final project: Do your introduction and conclusion chime harmoniously?</td>
<td>Working Draft of your research project due in class.</td>
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<td>Final Draft of Research Project Due by Midnight on Blackboard.</td>
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<td>Good luck on your finals and have a great break!</td>
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