

Research Paper

Length: 2000-2500 words (8-10 pages, typed, double spaced, 1-inch margins)

Format: Follow a standard format as laid out in the Chicago Manual of Style. Footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical references are acceptable. Write in a style suitable for a university research paper (correct grammar, no colloquialisms, no contractions or abbreviations).

Documentation: Give documentation (page numbers for modern works; chapter, verse, or line numbers for pre-modern works; chapter or section numbers or titles for internet works without page numbers) for **all** information, not just direct quotations. Distinguish between your opinions and those of your sources. Indicate whether you agree with your sources or not. For most topics, you should have at least one note per paragraph and often as much as one note per sentence. **FULL AND ACCURATE DOCUMENTATION IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL!**

Primary sources: Refer to primary sources (first-hand accounts composed at the time) or contemporary sources (those written at the time, but not by eye-witnesses) whenever possible. How heavily you depend on primary sources depends on your topic. As in your source analysis, take into account the strengths and weaknesses of the source and communicate these to the reader. (Footnotes or endnotes are usually the best place to discuss sources unless the reliability of the source is central to your thesis.) You may use sources assigned in class.

Secondary literature: Consult enough recent secondary literature (scholarly works written in the last 50 years) so that you have a good feel for what we already know and for what scholars agree and disagree on. You do not have to agree with everything written, but you should indicate that you know what other people think and make clear why you agree or disagree with them. If you are working on a topic that has not been covered thoroughly, indicate this and discuss, briefly, why this is so. Secondary literature should normally comprise 50% of your references.

Tertiary literature: These include survey texts, encyclopedia articles, etc. Use these only if you absolutely have to check a MINOR point (a name or date). For information that is essential to your argument (historical narrative, explanation of Early Modern phenomena, etc.), you need to find more detailed scholarly sources. If you cite basic reference works more than once or twice in your paper, expect to be marked down.

Topic: Your topic can be any aspect of the period covered in the course that interests you, and for which adequate primary and secondary literature exists. Ideally, you will have done background reading for your topic in your book review and in your source analysis.

Content: Content will depend on the topic, but all papers should include:

- **Thesis**: Explain it in the introductory paragraphs, prove it in the body of the paper, and summarize it in the conclusion.
- **Bibliography**: You should include **at least** 10 items in your bibliography, with a roughly even division between primary sources, scholarly books, and articles in scholarly journals. Bibliography items should include the most recent scholarship that is available. Every item in your bibliography must be cited at least once in your notes. General reference works (dictionaries, encyclopedias, web sites for survey classes, etc.) are NOT acceptable, nor are references from non-scholarly treatments. As a rule of thumb, any secondary source you use should have extensive footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical documentation.
- **Examples**: For each assertion you make, refer to specific examples from your sources (primary or secondary). You must use either footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical references to indicate where the examples come from. If you have many examples that support a single point, give one in detail and then combine others in a summary (with full citations in notes).

- **Logical arguments:** Your arguments should be clear and logical. DO NOT generalize about all of society from a single example, leave out steps in your reasoning, or impose twentieth century standards on events or ideas of the past.
- **Balanced discussion:** A good topic will be one in which there is some potential for scholarly disagreement. You should present more than one possible solution to the historical problems presented by your topic. Narrative without argument will result in lost points.
- **Clear organization:** Indicate your organization in the opening paragraphs and then stick to your plan. If you are examining something which changed over many years, organize chronologically. Otherwise, organize by topic. You should start by stating and explaining your thesis. Every paragraph should include a strong topic sentence and a series of specific examples (with citations) to support that statement. Include only relevant information. If it doesn't relate to your thesis, don't include it in the paper.
- **Grammar, spelling, punctuation:** This should go without saying in a 4000-level course in a writing-oriented subject such as history. If you are unsure of your abilities, I recommend Elements of Style by Strunk and White.