

## REQUIREMENTS FOR RESEARCH PAPERS

**The following information is the criteria upon which your papers will be graded. It is not a series of suggestions. This document should be followed explicitly. For example, if you do not have a thesis and support it, your paper will lose at least one letter grade. If you plagiarize, you will receive a "0". If you have questions, ask before you turn in your paper.**

1. Choose a topic of interest to you and then narrow it so you can completely cover your subject within the page requirement of ten pages. (Do not exceed the page requirements because you will lose points. Your skill at conforming to exact requirements is a vital one. In real life your work often must comply with requirements of length, often an exact number of words and format.) If you need help with this, just ask.
2. As a general rule you should consult twice as many sources as the number of pages required for the paper. More or less is acceptable as long as the topic is covered thoroughly, the sources selected are the best ones available to you, or you have not been assigned a specific number of sources.
3. You are responsible for knowing the accuracy and reliability of your sources this is true whether the information comes from a printed source, an interview or the internet. In other words, find out whether the author is qualified to write an accurate account. Whenever possible use primary sources – firsthand or eyewitness documents – rather than secondary sources – scholarly works written by reputable historians after the event. Regardless of whether it is a primary or secondary source you must evaluate the information and interpretations presented for veracity and appropriateness. You may find information about an author in the introduction of his work or in reference works like Contemporary Authors. **(Do not use textbooks, popular magazines, dictionaries, or encyclopedias.)**
4. Prepare a bibliography according to the approved style manual for the course. The standard manual for use in History is The Chicago Manual of Style but for undergraduate papers Kate L. Turabian's A Manual for Writers is a more accessible and an acceptable substitute.

### **For note-taking:**

1. You may use a computer, 3x5" or 4x6" note cards. If you choose to use your computer, please follow the instructions for note-taking as if you were using cards. Each card should contain only one main idea, with brief supporting information, from the source. The idea should be stated in your own words, not the author's. The note card system enables you to organize your material for the paper by topic or subheading. You can move your material around. For each card, one must have the author, title of the work, and the EXACT page number(s). The information you present on the card should come from no more than 1 or 2 pages in your source.

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2. Take notes by paraphrasing, which means putting everything in your own words. If you do use a quotation, you must put quotation marks around the information in your notes, in addition to providing the citation information.
3. Do not make the mistake of assuming that something you read in three or four sources about your topic is "common knowledge" and that you do not have to put your sources for that information. If you did not know the information yourself before you began this project, document it properly.
4. Put the author, title, and exact page number of the information on every card or entry. Use separate cards for the complete bibliographical information for each of your sources. If you use the computer, begin to create your bibliography right away by putting the information in the format required.

### **In writing the paper:**

1. Develop a thesis (an idea you want to prove) for your paper in the first paragraph; prove it in the body of your paper by providing all the supporting evidence you can obtain; and draw your conclusions at the end. (This is the most important rule for writing anything, not just research papers.)
2. Write unified paragraphs with topic sentences, support, and transition to the next paragraph. Avoid one-sentence paragraphs!
3. Unless you are an experienced writer, choose chronological instead of topical organization for your paper and stick to it. By following the flow of time and providing dates often, you are helping yourself write the paper and your reader follow your ideas.
4. Do not make references to yourself in the paper. You are not the subject of your paper but its author. The opinions and conclusions are presumed to be yours unless they are properly cited (if they are not yours and not cited it is plagiarism) therefore it is neither necessary nor appropriate to precede them with phrases such as "I believe" or "In my opinion."
5. Avoid making the assumption that the reader knows anything about your topic. As you write, do so for your classmates or someone entirely ignorant about your subject but perfectly capable of understanding it if it is described and explained well. This helps you keep your information clear, concise, and logical.
6. Attempt to be objective about your subject and information. Strive to present a balanced account. Do not make your subject into a hero or heroine or present only one perspective

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- about an event. Examine sources that present a variety of perspectives and draw your own conclusions.
7. Proof your paper carefully to correct organizational, grammatical, syntactical, spelling and/or typing errors before submitting it to the instructor. A large number of errors will lower your grade.
  8. Follow the approved style manual (Turabian or Strunk and White) for rules of grammar, spelling, punctuation, citations, and bibliographical format.
  9. In particular, watch for the following common errors: an "s" for the plural rather than the possessive form (or an "s" without an apostrophe for the possessive); the difference between "its" and "it's", "there" and "their", "woman" and "women"; references to people as "that" instead of "who".
  10. Avoid colloquialisms such as "a lot", "kind of", "sort of", "like", "got", and all contractions of verbs (such as "wasn't", "isn't", "doesn't", "haven't").
  11. Do not use technical language or "jargon" in your paper. Use simple easily understood language that will not confuse your readers. If you are uncertain about how to use a particular word or phrase, find a substitute.
  12. **Avoid plagiarizing.** Use notes (citations of your sources) and quotation marks appropriately.

### What is Plagiarism?

In short plagiarism is the theft of another persons wording or original ideas and interpretations.

The AHA's (American Historical Association) Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct defines plagiarism as the appropriation of "the exact wording of another author without attribution," and the borrowing of "distinctive and significant research findings or interpretations" without proper citation. Most cases of plagiarism represent a failure to properly paraphrase, quote, and cite sources.<sup>1</sup>

It is not necessary to intend to deceive in order to commit plagiarism. Sloppy research and

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Rawson, Plagiarism: Curricular Materials for History Instructors 2004, <[http://www.historians.org/governance/pd/Curriculum/plagiarism\\_defining.htm](http://www.historians.org/governance/pd/Curriculum/plagiarism_defining.htm)> (6 January 2006).

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writing often leads to unintentional plagiarism. Several well known historians have fallen prey to this very phenomenon of unintentional plagiarism. To insist on proof of intent is to set an impossible standard of proof since no one can really know what another person intended and provides easy cover for the guilty.

### **For the finished product:**

1. Type, double space, and indent 1 inch for all margins. Use only Times New Roman 12 point print.
2. Put PAGE NUMBERS on each page in the upper right corner. Exceptions: the cover sheet gets no number; page 1 is either not marked at all or at the bottom center.
3. For every quotation, paraphrase or reference to an idea found in a book or article, include proper ANNOTATION. Following the punctuation ending the material needing such annotation, provide a raised reference number with either a footnote (at the bottom of the page) or end note (at the end of the paper) following the directions and examples for the Chicago style given in Turabian. On average, a ten-page research paper has at least fifteen to twenty notes.
4. Use direct quotations only when absolutely essential, either to make a point or because the author's wording is so much better than your own. Short quotations should be incorporated within double quotation marks directly in the body of the essay; long quotations (used rarely) should be indented (on both right and left sides) and single spaced without any quotation marks around them.
5. List sources used in writing the paper in a BIBLIOGRAPHY on a separate sheet at the end of the essay; arrange books and articles used in the paper in alphabetical order following the directions and examples for the Chicago style given in Turabian. Do NOT include texts, dictionary entries or encyclopedia articles in any bibliography. Remember to attach the bibliography even if you have presented it in an earlier assignment.
6. Attach a separate COVER SHEET indicating a title for your paper (something more original than Essay Assignment or Book Review) – do NOT enclose this title in quotation marks; also list on the cover sheet your name, the number and title of the course, the instructor's name and the submission date. Place the title of your paper and your name on the first page of the paper as well as on the cover sheet.
7. STAPLE the paper together using a single staple in the top left-hand corner. Do NOT turn down the corner of the pages or use paper clips to hold the essay together; do NOT use report covers, plastic or paper.

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8. PROOFREAD your final draft before submission. Writing a research paper is a formal academic exercise; presentation and appearance form an integral part of the final product. Neatness counts.
9. Submit two ORIGINAL copies of your typed or printed paper to the instructor. It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy (photocopied or on disk) of any completed paper submitted for instructor evaluation. Also retain all notes, outlines or preliminary drafts used in writing the paper; instructors reserve the right to examine any or all of this material prior to assigning a grade to the submitted work.

**Your grade is based on thesis, content, organization, grammar, style, proper citations, and the use of these research and writing guidelines.** Follow them closely.