

The Department of History and Philosophy
York College of the City University of New York

A Handbook on
History Writing at York College



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Topic 1: History Writing at York College

Since York College's founding in 1966, the historical discipline has played a major role in the liberal arts education of its students. The Department of History and Philosophy offers a broad range of courses in a number of different historical fields, from topics in ancient and early modern history to modern American and world history. In addition to providing students with a greater appreciation of historical events and their importance to understanding the world today, the methods and techniques students encounter in their programs of study will serve them well in whatever career they choose to pursue. The Department of History and Philosophy is committed to the overall intellectual development of its students and endeavors to impart all the skills and knowledge necessary to earn a college degree and pursue a successful and fulfilling career.

Writing is an integral component of all history courses at York College. In fulfillment of York's General Education and Writing Intensive requirements, all history courses are designated either Writing Enhanced or Writing Intensive. More than simply a requirement, writing is one of the most important forms of expression. It is how we communicate our thoughts and ideas to others. Much of what you will learn in history is through reading the words of individuals who lived in the past and wrote down their experiences. The writing assignments in the history courses you take at York College will teach you how to articulate your thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively. History writing will also help you think critically and analyze information, skills that are essential across the college curriculum.

This guide will walk you through the writing process, introducing techniques and methodologies specific to the historical discipline. It will discuss typical assignments that you may be given in your history classes and provide you with strategies for completing these assignments. The goal of this handbook is to provide you with a practical guide to help you have a successful and rewarding experience in your program of study in history.

Topic 2: History Assignments

This section provides general guidelines on how to approach writing assignments in history.

Assignment Objectives

Writing is a fundamental part of the learning process and integral to the overall objectives of a history course. Professors design writing assignments with clear learning goals or objectives in mind. Every writing assignment has one or more objectives, including the tasks you are expected to accomplish, the overall purpose of the assignment, and what you are intended to learn from completing the assignment. Feel free to ask your professor for the reasons behind the assignment and what he or she hopes students will learn from it. This will give you a much better sense of how to approach the assignment and what to include in it.

Understanding an Assignment

When your professor hands out an assignment, read it over very carefully. Discuss the assignment with your professor. Clarify any words or phrases that you do not fully understand. Make sure that you understand the assignment's objectives and know the criteria that the professor will use to evaluate your work. When you read over your assignment, highlight or underline these objectives. While you are working on the assignment, refer back to them in order to make sure that you are doing what is expected of you.

If at any time you are unclear about an assignment, its objectives, or your instructor's grading criteria, you should ask your professor for clarification, either in class or during his or her office hours. Professors try their best to make assignments as clear as possible. No one wants to see students do poorly because they failed to understand what was expected of them.

Writing in History

Typical Assignments

Students in history courses at York College encounter a wide range of assignments. Typical writing assignments include, but are not limited to:

- *research papers*, which require you to construct an argument/thesis based on multiple sources related to an historical topic
- *reaction papers*, which require you to state your own informed viewpoint on a topic
- *book reviews*, which ask you to critically evaluate a reading
- *comparative essays*, which ask you to compare two or more sources
- *book summaries*, in which you must provide a synopsis or synthesis of a reading's main ideas.

There are, of course, many variations to these assignments and professors are free to assign alternatives not listed here.

Topic 3: How to Conduct Historical Research

This topic introduces you to the various types of research that you will be asked to do, as well as provides guidelines on how (and how not) to conduct research for an assignment in history.

Types of Sources You Will Be Asked to Find

Historians draw on a wide variety of sources when conducting research. Your history assignments at York will often require you to use a combination of *primary* and *secondary sources*. *Primary sources* are sources written during the historical period under examination. *Secondary sources* are written after the historical period and rely upon primary sources for their information. To learn more about how to distinguish between primary and secondary sources, please see Topic 6.

Identifying Appropriate Sources

Unless otherwise indicated, most assignments will require you to find full-length historical documents, historical monographs, and/or scholarly articles. On the college level it is not appropriate to rely only on textbooks and encyclopedias as your sole source of information for research assignments. These books provide only general knowledge on a given topic; they may be used as a starting point and for background information on your topic, but they are generally not considered a sufficient source of information for an assignment.

In addition to avoiding texts that restrict their scope to general knowledge, you need to scrutinize the sources you use to make sure they are of appropriate quality for research. When deciding whether to include a source in your research, it is a good idea to ask three questions:

Writing in History

1. Who is the author?

Though there are certainly exceptions, anonymous sources tend to be less reliable than authored sources. If a text is not credited to a particular person or organization, it is difficult to verify whether the information provided is valid.

2. What are his/her credentials?

While ascertaining a source's qualifications has always been an important part of scholarly research, the rise of the Internet has made doing so more necessary than ever. Because anyone can post information online, Internet sources may not be subject to any type of peer review. Peer review is a process in which other professionals in the field examine an author's findings and verify the information. An Internet source commonly used by college students is the online encyclopedia *Wikipedia*. In addition to being too general for college-level research, the articles on *Wikipedia* are authored by anonymous sources who may or may not be qualified. In addition, *Wikipedia* does not have a formal peer review process, which means that the information may be (and often is) incorrect.

3. Does the author offer appropriate evidence to support his/her argument?

An important standard for assessing the quality of a source is whether the author's claims are supported with evidence. For example, if a historian were to claim that John Adams had significant influence on the wording of the First Amendment, he/she would have to provide evidence (in this case, in the form of historical documents) to support his/her assertions. If an author does not provide sources for his/her research, his/her text may not be credible.

Print Research

If your assignment requires you to use published print sources, the first place to start is the York College library's Web site, <http://york.cuny.edu/library>. From any library computer or from home, click on "Books and More" to access the CUNY+ Library Catalog. You can use this catalog to search for books on your topic available at York College as well as all the other CUNY libraries. You should not limit your research to just what is available at York. If the book you are looking for is at another CUNY campus, it can easily be requested by using the CLICS system or by going to that campus to take out the book. If you cannot find what you are looking for here, you should also consult the New York Public Library branch and research catalogs. Just about any book you may need is available for consultation at the main branch of the New York Public Library located in Manhattan on 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue. Another option is to search for a book on WorldCat, an online catalog linked to libraries worldwide. You can request the book that you have found on WorldCat by filling out an interlibrary loan request (ILL). Be sure to put in requests for interlibrary loans early; they often take three to six weeks to arrive. For more information on how to find books, consult the York College library website or ask a reference librarian.

Online Databases

Many sources can also be obtained through the library's online databases. If you go to the library Web site and click on "Articles/Statistics/Images," and then "Articles and more," you will find a number of databases with full-text journal and newspaper articles, along with references and abstracts of additional articles. Census and statistical data can also be found on some of these databases. Please see Appendix A for a complete list of history-related databases that can be accessed through York College. Making use of academic databases is the best way to be certain that the material that you have found is from a reliable source.

Internet Research

The World Wide Web can also be an invaluable source of information for a given topic. Thanks to modern technology, many books, journals, and even primary source documents are now available online. Unlike the databases discussed above, there are risks involved when doing a general search over the internet. Anyone and everyone posts information on the Internet; much of this information is inaccurate, unreliable, and/or inappropriate for the historical research you will be asked to conduct. Since information on the Internet is not filtered or reviewed, it is often difficult to determine the veracity of the information that is being provided. When searching the Web, always make sure that you can identify the source of the information. If the website that you have found is from a government agency, or from an archive or university, its information is probably more reliable than if it came from a commercial website or someone's private page. Even if the Web site seems legitimate, you should still be sure to identify the author, check his or her credentials, and identify the sources that he or she cites. If the Web site that you have found does not identify the author or the source of the information being provided, then you should not rely on this information. If you are ever in doubt about a source that you have found, show it to your professor and make sure that it is appropriate for his/her assignment. Remember that it is always possible that you have found a legitimate source that is not relevant to the assignment that you have been given.

Topic 4: Note-Taking in History

Note-taking is one of the most important types of writing that you will be asked to do. Even though you will probably not be graded on your notes, how well you take notes will have a direct impact on your ability to study for exams and the quality of your writing assignments. This topic introduces you to the three principle types of notes you will be asked to take and provides useful tips and strategies.

Note-Taking for Weekly Reading Assignments

When taking notes on a weekly reading assignment, always identify and concentrate on the main themes of the reading. Even textbook chapters that include a tremendous amount of information usually have one or two main themes that tie the chapter together. One strategy that will help you focus on what is important is to read through an entire section or chapter first without taking notes. Close the book and write down what you remember as most important from what you just read. Then, review the reading and add any significant points you may have missed. In addition to writing down important information also make note of any part of the text that you do not understand. Your professor will be more than happy to clarify in class anything that was unclear in the reading.

Classroom Note-Taking

Your professor will often cover what may seem like an overwhelming amount of information during a class lecture. When taking notes in class, do not attempt to write verbatim your professor's every word. Try to be selective and only jot down the most important ideas. Make sure you understand all the names and concepts that your professor puts on the board. These words are on the board because the professor considers them to be especially important. Be prepared. Before the lecture begins, write down all of the key terms and ideas that you know will be covered during that lecture.

Writing in History

Note-taking is an informal style of writing. You should not worry about complete sentences and proper punctuation; bullet points and short phrases are fine. You should also use shorthand abbreviations wherever possible. A simple trick to save time is to cut out as many letters (especially vowels) from a word as possible, so long as the word is identifiable. If you have already identified the name of the person being discussed, using their initial the next time will also work: Napoleon becomes “N,” and Mussolini, “M.” Refer to any standard writing handbook for symbolic abbreviations and for additional shorthand devices.

After class, make sure you read over your notes while the lecture is still fresh in your mind. This way you can fill in any missing details that you did not have time to write and clarify any phrases in your notes that are illegible or unclear. If after reading over your notes there is still something that is missing or that you do not understand, ask your professor to clarify these points. On the first day of class, it is also always a good idea to find a friend in class and exchange contact information in case you are ever absent and should need the notes.

Common Shorthand Symbols in History

with	w/
without	w/o
btw.	between
C.	century
W.	war
ppl.	people
sit.	situation
v.	versus
pop.	population
smthg.	something
trnsfr.	transfer
nt'lsm.	nationalism
pwr.	power
cont.	continent

Note-Taking for Writing Assignments

When you are taking notes from sources for a formal writing assignment, always be an active reader. Interrogate your sources and focus on what is relevant to your topic. The following questions are important to ask yourself as you read:

What are the main points/ideas?

What is the author's point of view?

What evidence does he/she use to support his/her argument?

If I am using more than one source, how does what I am reading compare to the other sources that I am using?

Do they share themes in common?

Can I tie them together?

How can I use what I am reading for my own paper?

Which information do I need to focus on?

What arguments can I make?

How does what I am reading add to or change my thesis?

What conclusions can I draw from this work?

What other information do I need to understand this source?

Topic 5: The Writing Process in History

This section will provide a series of steps that should help you navigate through the writing process. Remember that the following are only guidelines. Every writer has his or her own way of approaching the writing process. You should use whatever strategy works well for you. If you still have not found your own personal style and are looking for a new approach, it may be helpful to follow these steps. They should also help you get started writing and resolve any writing blocks you may encounter along the way. Always remember that writing is much more than the finished product that you turn in. Writing is a way to think through our thoughts and ideas.

Organize Your Notes

Before beginning to write a draft you must first organize your notes. Group similar themes and ideas together; decide how you want to organize the topics you are planning cover. You might find it helpful to draw a “cluster” or a “web,” a visual map of key ideas. Remember that you will ultimately need to have a clear thesis that is supported by your evidence.

Pre-Write

Pre-writing is a “writing to learn” strategy. The goal is to use writing as a device to think more deeply on your topic and to generate new ideas. Without worrying too much about style and grammar, write down any points or ideas that you think you will want to make. Read over what you have written and see if it changes the way in which you view your topic. Just the process of transferring your thoughts to words on paper will help you think about your topic in new ways and help you come up with new and better ideas.

Develop a Thesis

Unless you are specifically asked write a summary, most history assignments require you to take a position on what you read and support that position rather than write a neutral synopsis or retelling of a reading. Assignments in the historical discipline will often require you to come up with your own thesis. Your thesis is the argument that you intend to make based on the evidence that you have collected. While your thesis does not have to be a groundbreaking or controversial take on the subject, it does have to express an opinion that can be contested. It is important that you state your own point of view and that that point of view is an informed one that is supported by the material that you have read. To develop a thesis, read over your notes and prewriting pages. As you read, keep possible ideas for your thesis in mind. Ask yourself:

How should I approach this topic?

What position can I support with these notes?

What angle can I take?

What aspects of the topic should I focus on?

What conclusions can I draw from what I have read?

Outline

Once you have developed your thesis, you can begin writing an outline. Outlines help you organize your thoughts and ideas. There are many different outline styles and formats. If you are required to hand in an outline, check with your professor to see what style he or she prefers. Whatever format you employ, your outline should begin by clearly stating your the argument or point you intend to make (thesis), the scope and approach of your research, and the types of evidence or methodology are you using and how you plan to sup-

port your thesis. All of the subsequent divisions of your outline must directly relate to your topic and support your stated thesis. If you do not seem to have enough evidence to support your thesis, or you have too much information, you should consider rethinking your topic.

Write a Rough Draft

The goal of the rough draft is to put your ideas into words and on paper. At this stage you should not worry about grammar and style. Feel free to be sloppy and make mistakes. Just be sure that you note where you are getting your information from as you go along. While writing, keep an open mind; often new ideas will come to you as you are putting your thoughts down. Do not be afraid to rethink your argument after you begin writing. Print out and read over your rough draft. Focus especially on your ideas and organization. Move things around, re-write, delete, and/or add sections.

Write a First Draft

Using the rough draft as a guide, begin writing your first draft. The first draft is your first attempt at writing what will ultimately become your final draft. At this stage pay more attention to clarity, and make sure to use proper Chicago style citations (see Appendix C for style guidelines).

Revise

Once you finish writing your first draft, you become its first reader. Read over the draft making sure that the argument makes sense and that its organization is coherent. Be critical of your own work and try to find weak spots in your argument. Do not be afraid to mark any mistakes or make changes.

Peer Review

Remember that a key goal in any writing task is to communicate your thoughts and ideas to others. What makes sense or seems clear to you may not make sense to other readers. It is therefore important to have

other people read over your draft, especially a friend and/or family member who is not in your class and has no background knowledge in the paper's subject matter. A good strategy for review is to ask your reader to repeat your essay's central argument and main points. If your reader's understanding of your essay is different from what you intended to convey, that is an indication that your ideas need further clarification.

Edit

Input your corrections and the suggestions made by others. Read over and change your work, focusing on content. Make sure you have a clear thesis, and that the body paragraphs of your paper all support that thesis. It is still not too late to rethink your argument, rewrite sentences, move paragraphs around, or add or delete sections.

Proofread

Once you are confident that your ideas are clear and that your organization is logical, print out and read over your paper one final time, focusing on grammar and style. Check for spelling, word choice, and sentence-level errors. Make sure all of your citations are accurate, and that your sentences are clear and concise. After you put in those corrections, your paper should be ready to hand in. If you are still not happy with your work, repeat any of these steps as necessary. While you cannot control what grade you receive on a paper, you can make certain that the work you produce reflects your best effort.

Topic 6: Skills Important for Completing Assignments

This section identifies some of the special skills required to do well on history writing assignments, including the ability to distinguish between primary and secondary sources, critical analysis, summarizing and synthesizing material, and knowing when to quote and when to paraphrase. Each section discusses strategies for developing these skills.

Distinguishing between Primary and Secondary Sources

Primary sources are the raw material upon which historians conduct their investigations and build an argument. *Primary sources are sources written during the historical period under examination.* The authors of these sources were alive and in some cases eyewitnesses to the events they described. Any written record from an historical period can be considered a primary source for that historical period. A few examples of the many types of primary sources are: diaries, journals, speeches, newspaper articles, tax records, court testimonies, last will and testaments, baptismal records, census data, telegrams, personal correspondence, essays, and even novels from the period.

Given this great variety of sources, how do you determine whether a source is a primary source? Always ask yourself if this source was written during the historical period that you are studying. For example, Julius Caesar's account of the Gallic War is a primary source because it was written by Caesar himself, an eyewitness to the events he described. Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar* is not a primary source if you are studying ancient Rome, because though it was written a long time ago, Shakespeare did not live in ancient Rome and was not a contemporary of the events he described. However, Shakespeare's play could be a primary source if you are studying theatre during Elizabethan England in the sixteenth century, since this was the period in which Shakespeare lived and wrote.

Secondary sources are sources written after the historical period under examination. A secondary source relies on primary source accounts as well as other secondary sources to construct an argument about the past.

There are many different types of materials that can be considered secondary sources. Historical monographs and peer-reviewed journal articles are the two major types of secondary sources students are expected to consult. Historical monographs and journal articles are written by historians in the field and make an original contribution to the historical discipline. In these works, historians focus on a specific topic or period in history and construct a thesis or argument based on the evidence that they have collected.

Critically Analyzing Your Sources

If you are asked to use primary sources, always identify the type of source you are examining and find out the context in which the document was written. Learn what you can about the author and his or her perspective on the events or ideas discussed, taking into account the author's motivations and possible biases. Always keep in mind that someone writing in the past may have a very different understanding of the world and a different set of values from someone living in the twenty-first century.

When using secondary sources for your own paper, it is always helpful to identify the argument the author is making and the types of evidence he/she uses to support his/her claims. You should read secondary sources critically. Identify the author's point of view. Consider how persuasive the author's argument is. Evaluate the sources the author uses. Be aware of when the secondary source was written; if it was written a long time ago, some of the author's ideas may be outdated.

Summarizing and Synthesizing Your Material

When writing a summary or synthesis of a reading, focus on the most important information you have read. Before giving your own critique of the source or stating your own opinion, make sure that you identify and state clearly what the author of the piece is trying to say. What is his/her main point or argument and how does he/she support it? When summarizing a reading, the objective is to be as concise and direct as possible. Do not get off track by trying to summarize every piece of information. Only include what you have identified as relevant and important to the author's main points.

There is often a tremendous amount of information and detail included in a work of history, so as the saying goes, "Do not lose the forest for the trees." Ask yourself what information the professor or reader needs to know about the book you are reading and what information is not helpful in conveying these main points. Think of a summary as a filter that eliminates any bits of information that are not fundamental to an argument.

Knowing When to Quote and When to Paraphrase

Part of writing a good paper in history is to know which passages to quote and which to paraphrase. Be very selective in order to quote effectively and maximize the effect a quote will have on your reader. Only quote sentences that are either especially important to your thesis or are particularly well-written and memorable. Most of what you read in a typical work of history is written in ordinary prose and can be paraphrased. Paraphrasing is when you put someone else's ideas into your own words. You should paraphrase a sentence whenever the meaning of that sentence is more important than the way in which it is written. Whether you choose to quote an author directly or paraphrase you must always cite the source of your information. For more information on when to cite sources and tips on how to avoid plagiarism while paraphrasing, see Topic 8.

Topic 7: Writing Conventions in the Historical Discipline

Each discipline has its own approach to writing. You will discover that in college, there is more than one correct way to write. Although good writing is always good writing and there are many rules that apply across the curriculum, there are also certain styles or conventions that members of a discipline prefer. Do not be confused if your English professor tells you something different from your Sociology professor; what is right for one discipline may not be appropriate for another. What follows is a discussion of a few of these conventions in the historical discipline.

Clear and Direct Writing

In some disciplines, you are asked to find creative ways of expressing your thoughts and ideas. While historians do not wish to discourage your creativity, we place more emphasis on clear and concise writing. Be as direct as possible, and avoid unnecessary phrases that may complicate the point you are trying to make. Students are often under the impression that they need to use complex phrases and fancy expressions to write well in their history courses; in reality, your professors are looking for clarity above all else.

Use of the Past Tense

A common grammatical error in many writing assignments is tense shifting. Regardless of the discipline, you should never move from past to present (or any other tense). If what you are describing is occurs in the present, stick to the present. Always be consistent. When writing a history paper, you should generally stick to the past tense. Since all the events you will be asked to write about have already occurred in the past, you should describe them using the past tense. Literature professors have probably asked you to use the present tense when writing about novels, explaining that a work of fiction is a living piece of art in which the actions of fictional characters occur all over again each time you read the story. What is true in literature is

not true in history. Real-life people have already done the actions that you are writing about, so the most appropriate tense to use is the past tense.

Avoid the Passive Voice

As do writers in many disciplines, historians avoid whenever possible the passive voice. A sentence in the passive voice uses a subject that passively receives an action committed by the object of a sentence. The following is an example of a sentence in the passive voice: “Poland was invaded by Adolf Hitler.” It is better to use an active sentence in which the subject causes the action: “Adolf Hitler invaded Poland.” Although the passive voice is not grammatically incorrect, it renders a sentence less comprehensible. It also tends to add unneeded words to your writing.

Use of the Third Person

Though in some disciplines it may be acceptable to write in the personal, first-person “I” voice or the less-formal, second-person “you” voice, historians prefer to maintain a certain degree of scholarly distance from their subject matter. With the exception of stating your own thesis/argument or providing your own reaction to a work, you should make use of the third person. Since you were not directly involved with the people and events you are writing about it, is generally not seen as appropriate to use either the first or second person in historical writing.

The Chicago Manual of Style

There are three major styles of citations used in academia. In other disciplines, you will be asked to use the APA and MLA style of citations, whereas historians prefer to use the Chicago style. Each style of citations has its own merits and drawbacks, depending on the types of sources you are using. Historians need to provide a relatively large amount of information in their citations because the types of evidence they use and where that material comes from is all important to supporting their argument. It is therefore difficult to present historical

citations in a parenthetical format without disrupting the flow of the text. For this reason, historians prefer to use the Chicago style because it makes use of footnotes (at the end of a page) or endnotes (at the end of the essay). An abbreviated guide produced by the York College Writing Across the Curriculum program is provided in Appendix C. For a more complete discussion of how to cite sources, consult The Bedford Handbook or pick up a copy of the latest version of The Chicago Manual of Style. The Chicago Manual of Style also provides a comprehensive guide to the rules of style used by historians in the field. It is an invaluable reference and wise investment for any aspiring historian.

Topic 8: Plagiarism

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the passing off as one's own the words or ideas of another. Plagiarism is academically dishonest and is expressly prohibited. In the academic world, our thoughts and ideas are our own intellectual property. Therefore, stealing some else's words or ideas is a serious offense. If a professional historian were caught plagiarizing it would ruin his or her reputation and potentially end his or her career. Should a student get caught plagiarizing it will result in disciplinary action and possible expulsion from the university.

York College/CUNY Statement on Plagiarism

“Section R” on “Policies” in the York College Bulletin provides an official definition of plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the act of presenting another person's ideas, research or writing as your own. The following are some examples of plagiarism but are by no means exhaustive: Copying another person's actual words without the use of quotation marks and foot notes attributing words to a source; Presenting another person's ideas or theories in your own words without acknowledging a source; using information that is not common knowledge without acknowledging the source; Failing to acknowledge collaborators on homework and laboratory assignments. Internet Plagiarism includes submitting downloaded term papers or parts of term papers, paraphrasing or copying information without citing the source, and “cutting and pasting” from various sources without proper attribution.¹

For more information on York's policies on plagiarism, as well as the penalties and academic sanctions imposed on students who plagiarize, please consult the latest edition of the York College Bulletin.

¹York College City University of New York, Bulletin 2005-2006, pp. 205-206.

How to Avoid Plagiarism

To avoid plagiarism, always make sure that you use quotation marks and provide a citation whenever you use the exact words or phrases of another. If you decide not to quote the author directly, you can paraphrase by putting the author's ideas into your own words. In order to correctly paraphrase, it is not enough to simply change a few words or reorder the sentence. The sentence structure and summation of the ideas must be your own composition. A good approach to paraphrasing is to read over a section, put it away, and then write down notes on what you remember as the author's main ideas. Use these notes rather than the actual text when you begin writing. This should help you avoid using the same words or phrases as the author. *Even if you paraphrase someone else's ideas you still need to cite the author in order to avoid plagiarism.* Remember, if you did not come up with the thought or idea on your own, you have to give credit to the person who did. For a more thorough discussion on how to avoid plagiarism, please see Part X of The Bedford Handbook by Diana Hacker.

Appendix **A**: Resources for History Students

What follows is a list of useful resources for York students of history. Listed here are catalogs and databases that should help you conduct historical research, as well as a bibliography of writing guides that will provide you with a more thorough and comprehensive elaboration of many of the issues that this handbook has touched upon.

Library Catalogs

(Available online through the York College Library Website)

CUNY+ Online Catalog

New York Public Library- Branches

New York Public Library- Research Libraries

Queens Borough Public Library

WorldCat

Full-Text Databases on the York College Library Website

Academic Search Premier (EBSCO)

JSTOR

Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970

In the First Person: Index to Letters, Diaries, Oral Histories, and Personal Narratives

InfoTrac: New York State Newspapers

ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2003)

Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1600-2000

Writing Guides for History Students

Benjamin, Jules R. A Student's Guide to History, 9th Edition, Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004.

The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th Edition, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Howell, Martha and Walter Prevenier, From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.

Marius, Richard, A Short Guide to Writing About History, 2nd Edition, New York: Longman, 2001.

Rampolla, Mary Lynn, A Pocket Guide to Writing in History, 4th Edition, Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004.

Storey, William Kelleher, Writing History: A Guide for Students, 2nd Edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

York College Writing Center

The York College Writing Center is a wonderful resource for students working at any stage of the writing process. One-on-one consultations with writing tutors are available on a walk-in basis anytime during Writing Center hours. You may also schedule regular meetings with a writing tutor for ongoing work.

The Writing Center is located on the first floor of the Academic Core Building in AC-1C18. Their telephone number is 718-262-2494.

Appendix B: Requirements for History Majors and Minors

Major Discipline Requirements (36 Credits)*

At least 6 credits in each of the following:

United States History

European History

Asian/African/Latin American History

An additional 18 credits, at least 12 of which must be in History, and 6 of which may be in related disciplines at the 200 level or above, with the approval of the department.

The History faculty strongly advises all History majors to take a broad range of courses in History and to attain competency in a foreign language at the 106 level, especially if graduate school is anticipated. History majors who plan to pursue graduate studies should be aware that the following are probable admission requirements they would encounter: at least 24 undergraduate credits in history, a reading knowledge of at least one foreign language, satisfactory Graduate Record Examination scores, and a bachelor's degree. Specific language requirements for the doctorate should be carefully checked prior to application to graduate schools. For further information on graduate studies in History, students are advised to consult the Faculty Advisor, Dr. Robert Parmet.

B.A. with Honors in History

Juniors and seniors who hold a 3.6 average, have taken a minimum of 24 credits in elective History courses, and either a 400-level History seminar or History 490, Senior Research in History, should apply for graduation with a B.A. with Honors in History.

Minor Discipline Requirements (15 Credits)

United States History 3

European History 3

Asian/African/Latin American History 3

Other History 6

All courses must be at the 200 level or above.

College Writing Requirements

In addition to the discipline-specific requirements for the major and minor in History, all students, regardless of their major, must complete college-wide writing requirements.

Foundational Writing Courses

All students must take English 125: Introduction to Writing, and a junior-level writing course. The recommended junior-level writing course for History Majors is Writing 301: Research and Writing for the Major.

Writing Intensive Courses

In addition to English 125 and a junior-level writing course, students must complete a minimum of three WI courses, two in the lower division, and one in the upper division within the major.

Appendix C: Chicago Style

You are probably aware that when you borrow words or ideas from other sources that you need to use citations, or give credit to your sources. Each academic discipline has its own way of preparing those citations, or citation style. Historians use the Chicago Manual of Style.

Step One: Determining whether you need a citation.

How do you know if you need a citation? You need a citation when:

You borrow someone else's writing.

Whether you borrow full sentences or just a short phrase, you need to give credit to your source by encasing the borrowed words in quotation marks and providing a citation.

You borrow someone else's ideas.

Even if you put someone else's ideas into your own words, you need to provide a citation that lets your reader know that these ideas aren't your own.

You present information that isn't common knowledge.

Determining what is and isn't common knowledge can be difficult. In general, information is considered common knowledge if it isn't controversial, is available through a variety of sources, and is something a reasonably educated person is likely to know. For example, you wouldn't need a source to document that the World Trade Center was attacked by terrorists on 9/11/01. You would need a citation if you wanted to quantify the financial impact of the attacks on the businesses of Lower Manhattan.

Step Two: Formatting your citation.

In Chicago style, citations are formatted as endnotes or footnotes (and sometimes both). Ask your professor whether he/she prefers endnotes, footnotes, or a combination. Footnotes and endnotes

include the author's name, the title, publication information, and usually the page number where the information can be found. Depending on the type of source (book, article, Web site, DVD, etc.), the citation may be formatted differently. This appendix includes guidelines for citing different kinds of sources. Below are examples of footnotes/endnotes for books with a single author.

Example:

During the colonial period, these wealthy patrons not only authorized and often underwrote the productions, but also constituted the bulk of the audience both in terms of box-office receipts and actual attendance. ¹The size, quality, and privacy of the boxes were, of course, a constant subject of concern for the writers at the time.²

¹Richard Butsch, The Making of American Audiences: 1750-1990 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 23.

²Brooks McNamara, The American Playhouse in the Eighteenth Century (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969) 48.

If you are referencing the same source more than once, you may use a shortened form of the citation in additional footnotes/endnotes:

³Butsch, 45.

Consecutive notes from the same source can be referenced by the abbreviation "Ibid." (from *ibidem* meaning "in the same place").

⁴Heather Nathans, Early American Theatre from the Revolution to Thomas Jefferson: Into the Hands of the People (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 113.

⁵Ibid., 45.

Step Three: Preparing the Bibliography

Though endnotes and footnotes contain complete publication information for your sources, it is also necessary to include a bibliography with your paper. If your readers want to know more about any of the sources in your paper, a bibliography allows them to easily find the publication information without having to cull through your paper.

In Chicago Style, a list of bibliographical information may be titled either “Bibliography” or “Works Cited,” though “Bibliography” is usually preferred, as it may include influential works that were not directly cited, but that may still be useful for readers seeking further information.

Although in endnotes and footnotes you list the author’s name beginning with his/her first name, in the bibliography you list the author’s name beginning with his/her last name, and the bibliography is ordered alphabetically beginning with the author’s last name. In the instance that there is no author, the title serves as the beginning of the entry, and is alphabetized along with the authored sources.

Just as endnotes and footnotes are formulated differently depending on the type of source, there is a specific way to format entries in a bibliography depending on the type of source that is used.

All bibliographical entries are double-spaced, with no extra spaces between the entries. The first line of the entry is aligned with the left margin, and all subsequent lines of the entry are indented 1.25 cm (the same as a paragraph indentation).

In order to prevent formatting errors, long URLs should be “hard returned” after the slash closest to the end of a line.

A sample bibliography appears on the following page.

This is a sample bibliography. Notice that the entries are ordered alphabetically. There are different formats for different types of sources.

Bibliography

Adams, Beaufort. Alternate Sources of Health Care. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996.

Brown, M. and Jane Ashton. Being and Growing Older: A Guide Book for the Elderly and the Soon to be Elderly in 12 Parts. London: Methuen, 2003.

Downey, Pearl, Lon Harris, Esther Williams, W. B. Yeats, O. Murray, James M. Cherry, et al. Working in Teams: The First Week, 2nd ed. Toronto: Canadian Presses, 1986.

Entry without author
alphabetized by title

Extra Short Title Entry Systems and Their Uses. San Francisco: Bloomfield Publishers, 2000.

Franklin, B. F. "Xerox Invents the Mouse." Popular Mechanics 246 (July 1973): 23-27.

Gardiner, Ian. "Animal Therapy and the Elderly: A Comparative Study of the Effects of Three Classes of Small Pets on the Elderly." The Journal of Gerontology 43(3): 32-53.

Hildy, R., and Mary Krakauer. "Visiting Patterns of Friends and Relatives at the Yorkshire Home for the Aged." Advanced Studies in Elder-Care 98 (1998): 1154-1182.

Immerman, Harold. "Who's Looking after Grandma?" Association for the Protection of the Elderly. <http://www.absentgrandma.org/specialtopics/advocacy/family/Dec2007/feature/columns/Himmerman/new>.

Working with Different Types of Sources

The Chicago Manual of Style (2003) contains dozens of examples of different reference types (pp. 642-754). Below are a few examples of commonly used formats. The first example under each category is an endnote or footnote; the second is a bibliographic citation.

Notice that the notation begins with the author's first name; the bibliographic entry begins with the author's last name.

Books with one author

¹Dick Francis, Come to Grief (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1994).

Francis, Dick. Come to Grief. New York: Putnam's Sons, 1994.

Books with two authors

²Liam P. Unwin and Joseph Galloway, Peace in Ireland (Boston: Stronghope Press, 1990).

Unwin, Liam P., and Joseph Galloway, Peace in Ireland. Boston: Stronghope Press, 1990

An important difference between the notation and the bibliographic entry is that the notation gives the page number of the cited passage, whereas the bibliographic entry gives the range of pages on which the article appears.

Journal Article with one author

³Rush Limbaugh, "The Best of the Reagan Years," National Review 29 (1990): 24.

Limbaugh, Rush. "The Best of the Reagan Years." National Review 29 (1990): 22-25.

Journal Article from a database

⁴Michael C. Ryan, "Teaching Reading to Students with Developmental Disabilities," Exceptional Education 88, no. 4 (2000): 201, <http://search.epnet.com>.

Ryan, Michael C. "Teaching Reading to Students with Developmental Disabilities." Exceptional Education 88, no. 4 (2000): 191-215. <http://search.epnet.com>.

Newspaper Article

⁵Williams Robbins, "Big Wheels: The Rotary Club at 75," New York Times, February 17, 1980, sec. 3.

Robbins, Williams. "Big Wheels: The Rotary Club at 75." New York Times, sec. 3, February 17, 1980.

Interviews

⁶George Bush, interview by Dan Rather, CBS Evening News, Columbia Broadcasting System, February 8, 1989.

Bush, George. Interview by Dan Rather. CBS Evening News. Columbia Broadcasting System. February 8, 1989.

Web sites

⁷Rob Winsor, New York Graffiti in the 1970s, <http://www.urbanartifacfinder.com/~winrob/nygraf.html>.

Winsor, Rob. New York Graffiti in the 1970s. <http://www.urbanartifacfinder.com/~winrob/nygraf.html>.

Because Web sites can be authored by virtually anyone, citing Web sites can be problematic. Include as much as you have of the following: author, title, sponsor and URL. Chicago Style does not require that you give the date of access to the site (other formats do), but if the information is time-sensitive, you will want to make to indicate when you got the information from the site.

Additional Resources

This handout is intended only as a brief introduction to using Chicago Style. For further help formatting citations and for examples of manuscript style, consult these additional resources.

www.dianahacker.com/resdoc

On this companion Web site for Diana Hacker's series of writing guides, you can access guidelines for citing different types of sources, including formats for both endnotes/footnotes and bibliographic entries. You can also view sample papers formatted in Chicago style.

www.chicagomanualofstyle.org

The companion site for The Chicago Manual of Style, this site offers a variety of resources for its users, including personalized databases and style sheets. Many of these features require a subscription. York College does not hold an institutional subscription. However, individual subscriptions for an annual membership may be purchased for a cost comparable to the print edition of The Chicago Manual of Style.

RefWorks

This service is available to students free of charge through York College's subscription. You first create an account while on campus at www.refworks.com. Thereafter, you can access the resource from home. You can import reference directly into your own database from a variety of online databases, or you can manually enter reference information into your RefWorks database.

RefWorks will create a bibliography in Chicago style for you from your database. Using the companion utility Write-N-Cite, you can also use your RefWorks database to easily insert references into the body of your paper (footnotes and endnotes). To begin using RefWorks, log on to www.refworks.com while on campus, go to "Login," and follow the links to create an account. Then, follow the three "Getting Started" steps on the Web page, or view the "Quick Start Guide," or view the online "Tutorial."

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