

# **A Guide to Success in History Courses: Research, Writing, Argumentation**

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## ***Introduction and Purpose***

Most of us have experienced the middle or high school stereotypical history teacher whose teaching methods never extend beyond basic factual recall. These teachers were experts at drilling us on dates, locations, and the names of historically significant people and events. While such facts are important to the study of history, they are really a very small piece of what history is about as an academic discipline. And the dirty little secret is this: the sooner you leave such strategies behind, the sooner your minds will be able to adapt and absorb the college-level, more professional way of writing history. Obviously, facts are important: you're not going to get far in a course if you stipulate that Columbus embarked on his first discovery to the west in 1518; or if you identify Bolivia on a map where France belongs; or if you recite verses learned from the Flat Earth Society, such as "slavery in Latin America was better than in Anglo-America." The facts are an important part of the larger process of contributing to the historical debate.

When writing for a history course you become part of existing historical debates. As a participant in historical debates you will ask questions about historical subjects, search for answers to those questions in historical sources, and come to your own unique conclusions. The writing assignments given by your professors will require you to construct arguments on specific topics and provide ample support for your conclusions. As you progress in your studies -- and subsequently in your chosen profession -- you will learn that developing these skills will enhance your success both in academia and beyond. This guide will provide you with a strong foundation on which to build these skills. The following sections represent a collection of the knowledge and experience of the Department of History's most successful recent graduates: people who were in your shoes not so long ago! We, too, have written numerous academic papers. We have spent many hours doing historical research. And, yes, we've learned a few things painfully from making mistakes. From these experiences, we have learned invaluable lessons that we would like to pass on to the next generation of students.

## **Argumentation**

Your academic career thus far has most likely exposed you to a variety of essay types. You may or may not have some experience authoring the compare and contrast essay, the general essay, the personal essay, or the persuasive essay. No doubt you have also undertaken the arduous task of compiling information to create some sort of research project along the way. These experiences combined are good training for the college-level skill of developing argumentation. As you undertake the assigned reading for your college classes, it will become apparent that, text books aside, authors who write for academic purposes do so with a specific argument in mind. Assigned readings in your history courses will be the end product of exhaustive research and critical analysis that will ultimately have one singular message, or argument for the reader to take away. The historian who writes a book on “The Mayflower” will do not only to present the gritty details he or she discovers about the event, time period, or people involved. The goal will be to prove an idea, a hypothesis, or to answer a question. History is, after all, constantly changing and transforming. The very nature of history is perpetually examined and re-examined by new generations of scholars, each of which contributes new insight, and discovers new truths revealing the challenging nature of understanding the past. Posing questions, challenging past interpretations, and digging up previously unknown material contributes to the overall understanding of our field. After all, to understand the present, we have to understand our past. Everything in our immediate world right now is the result of ideas, innovations, actions, and contributions from the generations before us. Without the efforts, advancements and improvements of others, life as we know it right now would simply not exist. All that we know, the very world that we live in, is the result of historical processes. The study of history is the examination of those historical processes through questioning, analyzing and interpreting the conclusions of others. To achieve this it is necessary to apply reasoning that proceeds methodically from a statement to a conclusion. Ask yourself questions about the material you are studying in order to develop your point of view. This main point of view expressed in your academic writing becomes the argumentation. From the argumentation the history writer progresses to a premise that provides evidence and a conclusion. It is the journey from argument to conclusion that makes the world of academia go around!

## **Understanding the Learning Process**

History courses are typically designed to incorporate several useful modes of learning. Professors will normally use a combination of the techniques below:

- Lecture (often using audio and visual technology to complement the lectures).
- Assign reading in the form of books, articles and online data for class discussion and historical writing.
- Require participation in group projects.

All three activities oblige the student to exercise different learning styles and techniques. It is important as a student to understand your own learning styles. To do so we recommend the following techniques:

- Take notes while the lecture is going on. Later that same day, or the next morning, sit down and rewrite your notes in full hand. This will help collect and organize what you have learned earlier.

- If you record lectures, take notes and compare them with your lecture notes. Did you miss anything the first time around? What themes are often repeated? Is there anything you did not understand, or that needs further explanation? If so, you should jot these questions and concerns down and either consult your text or ask the instructor during the next class meeting. Remember to obtain your Professor's permission before recording, as some no longer allow recording devices in the classroom.
- When reading, write out short summaries at the end of each chapter highlighting the author's main points. Again you should jot down any questions or concerns and comments on the readings.

## ***Taking Notes***

There are several important reasons to take lecture notes. Taking notes in class forces you to listen and pay attention. When you take notes and review them later, those notes help you to remember what was covered in class. In class professors usually give clues to what is important. Some of the common clues are: material written on the blackboard, repetition, emphasis (by voice and gesture), word signals, summaries at the end of class, and reviews at the beginning of class.

1. Students over the course of their academic career will develop their own methods. Here are some suggestions:  
Make notes brief: never use a sentence when you can use a phrase, never use a phrase where you can use a word. Don't write down everything you hear or read. Pay attention to the key terms and main points in the lecture. If the professor gets sidetracked it is often possible to go back and add further information.
2. Use abbreviations and symbols; you can develop your own. However, be consistent. If necessary develop a key in one corner of the page to remember your abbreviations.
3. Don't take notes just to take notes, be an active note-taker. Take notes that will be of real value to you later for an exam or essay. Take notes on dates of events, names of people, theories, definitions, arguments, debates, images, exercises, questions (raised by students and that you remember) and other stuff (readings addressed by the professor, examples, etc).
4. Omit full descriptions and full explanations. Condense notes so that you can grasp them quickly later on.
5. Put notes into your own words. However, formulas, definitions and specific facts should be noted exactly.
6. Indenting, outlining and/or numbering your lecture notes helps you in distinguishing major and minor points.
7. If you miss a definition, leave some space and get the information later from either the readings, professor, or teaching assistant.
8. Don't try to use the entire page, leave room for organizing your notes and adding notes from your readings. You may want to list key terms or make a summary of the contents

of the page.

9. Always date your notes.
10. Don't keep notes on oddly shaped pieces of paper; keep notes organized in one place. Use a laptop, notebook or binder to keep them organized.

**The following websites provide further details on note-taking:**

Taking Lecture and Class Notes:

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/%7Eacskills/success/notes.html>

Taking Notes for a Research Paper -

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/ResearchW/notes.html>

Some students find the Cornell System of note-taking as helpful. The following website describes the [Modified Cornell System of Note-taking](#).

## ***Tackling Writing Assignments***

No matter the topic, length, or restrictions of the writing assignment, a good academic paper is always composed of three main things:

1. Thesis
2. Supporting Paragraphs
3. Conclusion

Most of the writing you will do as an undergraduate will be on topics assigned by your professor. When developing a thesis for an assigned topic, you are in essence turning the assignment into a question. No matter how broad or complex a topic, the thesis defines the question your essay will answer. Whether the assigned topic asks a specific question or not the thesis is "the central idea of your paper around which all your evidence and claims are organized. It's your answer to the professors' writing assignment that addresses the assignment requirements by conveying your knowledge of the material. In your essay, the thesis should be stated as clearly as possible. In fact, many teachers will expect your thesis statement to appear in the last sentence of your essay's first paragraph. A clear thesis statement will announce the steps of its argument, not just provide a flat statement of the essay's ultimate goal. Think of the thesis as a roadmap that gives directions to your reader rather than as a picture of your final destination" (Turn-it-in.com).

A good thesis contains a strong argument. A good thesis expresses one main concept that outlines a subject matter capable of prompting debate and communicates your conclusions about the subject. It will assert your position on the topic with clearly supported ideas and specific language. It does not have to be written in one sentence. Consider the thesis statements below:

**Here is an example of an unacceptable thesis:**

*The North and South fought the Civil War for many reasons, some of which were the same, and some that were different.*

**Here is an example of a single-sentence acceptable thesis:**

*The South Manchurian Railway acted as the provisional government for the Japanese colony of Manchuria well before the colony was administered by the army.*

**Here is a more complex example:**

*The American Revolution was not a radical revolution as some historians, such as Gordon Wood, have argued. When comparing the American Revolution with the French Revolution, for example, one can argue that the American Revolution was mild and conservative; it consisted of a simple change of government rather than a complete alteration of politics, religion, and society as in late eighteenth-century France.*

The paragraphs that you will develop following any of the statements above have one purpose only: to support and defend your thesis. Detours, digressions, personal anecdotes—anything you write that is NOT in direct support of the initial thesis—wastes effort and risks the good grade. So, stay focused on your thesis as you write to develop it.

**Supporting Paragraph**

The first thing read, an introduction presents your argument and structure. Proper introductory paragraphs mirror the rest of the essay. An introductory paragraph can be broken down into three basic parts: historical background about the problem, a 'road map' to your evidence, and your thesis statement.

**1. Background.** All essays answer a question. The question posed will be either selected by the professor or created by the student. This question will relate to a historic event or problem in the field. The answer is intended to display proficiency in critical thought and language. The best critical thought will suffer if the problem is not presented with clarity. Always include a clear mention of the time (dates are better than vague use of 'periods' or 'eras') relating to the problem. It is important to note this in historical essays since the problem is based on history. Also important is to note any authors, theorists, or historical figures which are central to the analysis. If the essay is about Napoleon Bonaparte, then he should be mentioned in relation to the nature and scope of the problem.

**2. Road map.** A road map comes after the problem is introduced, presenting how you will defend your argument. This will detail what evidence you will use, similar to the introductory sentences used in the body paragraphs. This shows that you have both thought about your thesis in an analytical way and keeps things organized. Again, check your road map after you finish the paper to make sure you haven't deviated from it, or neglected to explain something. It's easier to edit this than to change/add entire paragraphs.

**3. Thesis.** Your thesis is the most basic statement summarizing your argument. Everything in the paper should reflect this thought. The thesis is ideally within the last part of the first paragraph, but should present within the first two paragraphs. There are of course exceptions depending on what you are writing. Some professors prefer the thesis statement

to be underlined, which helps them grade and lets them know that you know both what a thesis is and where it should be. A thesis statement must be presented in a simple and direct manner that clearly defines what you're arguing. You can—and should—expand on what you are arguing later on in your work, but the thesis statement is not the time for expanded argumentation.

### **Body Paragraphs**

Body paragraphs support and defend your thesis. These paragraphs contain evidence and analysis, framed by an introductory topic sentence. This sentence is the first sentence of the paragraph. Each body paragraph **MUST** relate to the thesis and road map. Also, each body paragraph **MUST** contain evidence from either a primary or secondary source that supports the thesis.

Every paragraph in a paper should be:

- **Unified**—all of the sentences in a single paragraph should be related to a single main idea (often expressed in the topic sentence of the paragraph).
- **Clearly related to the thesis**—the sentences should all refer to the central idea, or thesis, of the paper.
- **Coherent**—the sentences should be arranged in a logical manner and should follow a definite plan for development.
- **Well-developed**—Every idea discussed in the paragraph should be adequately explained and supported through evidence and details that work together to explain the paragraph's controlling idea.

### **Conclusions**

The content of your conclusion will depend upon the audience you are writing for, the specifics of the assignments, and the academic discipline your paper relates to. Different academic disciplines have distinct styles. The advice presented below relates specifically to the study of History, but can be beneficially applied to other courses. The conclusion or purpose for the paper is spelled out in the beginning. Many students will abruptly end a paper, falsely secure that the main idea has been stated. Your paper should not abruptly stop, but do not conclude by summarizing all that you have already said. As you bring your paper to a close, the reader will want to know "so what?" "Why is this important?" The final paragraph of your paper should answer these two questions by stating the most important conclusions you have reached about your subject and the reasons you think those conclusions are significant.

**The following are examples of effective and ineffective conclusions:**

#### **Ineffective**

*The Jesuits missionaries were sent to China in the Ming Period. Some had good relationships with the emperor, but others didn't. Some learned Mandarin Chinese and dressed in court robes. The people wouldn't let the Chinese worship their ancestors, but some Jesuits thought that Confucianism and Christianity were compatible. Another interesting aspect of Chinese Culture at the time was the practice of foot binding.*

This paragraph is ineffective because it does not provide verbal clues to indicate that this is, in fact, the conclusion. In addition, it is too general and vague; which missionaries had good relationships with the emperor, and which didn't? Moreover while it lists some of the

key elements of the paper, it fails to indicate how these ideas are connected. Most important perhaps, this conclusion does not present why the various ideas presented in the paper are important; it fails to answer the questions "So what? Why is this important?" Finally, a new topic is introduced in the last sentence. In the paragraph below, these problems have been corrected.

### Effective

*Thus, it is clear that the success or failure of the Jesuits' missionary activity in China depended largely on the degree to which they were able to adapt to Chinese culture. The most successful missionaries learned Mandarin, adopted Chinese court dress, and looked for parallels between Christianity and the teachings of Confucius. It was only when the church became more conservative—forbidding Chinese Christians, for example, to venerate their ancestor—that the Christian missionary effort in China began to fail. The Jesuit missionary experience in China then, provides an important clue about what determined the success or failure of missionary activity: ultimately cultural flexibility may have been a more effective religious ambassador than a sophisticated theological argument.*

This conclusion has been improved in several ways. In the first place, it includes key transitional words (thus, then) that indicate that the writer is drawing conclusions. It reiterates important elements of the paper's argument but leaves out information that is either very general or too vague. It is explicit how the key topics in the paper are related. It does not add any new topics and clearly outlines the significance of the conclusions that the writer has reached:

*The Jesuit experience in China tells us something about the relationship between cultural and religious belief. (Rampola, Mary Lynn, A Pocket Guide to Writing in History, Bedford/St Martins, Boston, New York 2004 63)*

### Common Mistakes

- Writing in the past tense.
- Using the phrase "in conclusion".
- Overstating findings.
- Introducing additional evidence to support your thesis: support should always be contained in the supporting paragraphs.
- Introducing a new idea or topic.
- Making emotional appeals that are out of sync with the rest of the paper.
- Simply restating the original thesis.
- Contradicting your thesis.
- Using a passive voice to sum up what you have said.

For examples of well-written papers, follow the link below:

<http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/rules6e/Player/pages/Main.aspx>

### Book Reviews

A book review is an analysis of a work and the evidence used by the author to support his

or her argument. When writing a book review, remember to take notes while reading the book. You may also base your review on one particular aspect of the author's argument and just go from there. A BOOK REVIEW IS NOT A SUMMARY.

The following serves as a guideline to writing successful book reviews:

- 1) The title of the book should appear at the start.
- 2) What is the author's argument? What are the argument's strengths and weaknesses?
- 3) What sources does the author use? What evidence does the author use: primary and secondary sources? Are there more primary than secondary or vice versa? What is the significance of using such sources? Did the author visit museums, archives, historical societies or universities? This information can usually be found in the preface and acknowledgement. The book's bibliographic resources, represented by the bibliography and footnotes, provide an essential key to assess the author's strategies and approaches to the subject area. EVERY PAGE IN THE BOOK COUNTS!!!!
- 4) What is the current state of previous studies in this subject area? What contributions does the author make to the field? What areas in the research have/have not been addressed in the context of the research field's development?
- 5) What did the author find in his work? DO NOT WRITE A BOOK REPORT. PROVIDE A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE AUTHOR'S FINDINGS. REMEMBER THE PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW IS TO ANALYZE THE AUTHOR'S ARGUMENT.
- 6) Are the findings of the author reliable? How does the author frame the argument and is it supported by the evidence?
- 7) Analyze the author's argument. What are its flaws? Does the author ignore something that needs to be addressed in the argument? Is the evidence appropriate? What did the author forget to do and how would addressing this improve the argument?
- 8) Identify the type of study undertaken by the author. Is it political history? Does it take a biographical approach? Is it economic history? Does it study elites, or does it use a "bottom-up" strategy to develop the thesis?
- 9) Citations: You may cite from the work. Do not overdo citations. It is difficult to set boundaries dealing with the number of citations, but use common sense. For example, quoted passages require citations, as do references to specific ideas or events expressed by the author. Remember that citations strengthen and legitimate your points and arguments.
- 10) Images: Does the author use them in the work? Are they solely for decoration or do they serve a purpose by giving support to argument?
- 11) Footnotes / Endnotes: Are they useful to the reader? Is the information provided needed in order to understand the work? Are they located in the text or in the back of the book? How are the citations organized?
- 12) Recommendations: Who should read this book? Is the book relevant only to specialists in a field, or can specialists in other fields read and benefit from the work?

The following sites provide some information on the structure of a book review:

<http://www.lavc.edu/Library/bookreview.htm>

<http://library.queensu.ca/research/guide/book-reviews/how-write>

## ***Language, Style, and Grammar***

### **Common Grammar Problems**

**Fragments:** Fragments often occur when the writer is distracted from writing an otherwise complete sentence. A fragment is an incomplete clause, containing either a subject or a predicate, but not the two.

Example: *Unlike other Russian Universities.*

Solution: *Unlike other Russian Universities, Odessa University features a large chemistry department. Odessa University's chemistry department employs a large number of professors, unlike other Russian Universities.*

**Run-ons:** Run-on sentences consist of two or more sentences presented as one. Sometimes, they are excessively long, but not always, or contain too many subjects and/or predicates. A period is a natural pause. Run-ons lack that pause and confuse the reader. Often complicated sentences can be identified by length, excessive commas, and/or many clauses.

Example: *The sunny beach as beautiful as it was, encompassed the whole of her view with sunny sand and an azure ocean, featured a long bar filled with many different drinks and foods collected from the local ocean to entertain the tourists.*

Solution: *The sunny beach featured a long bar. Sunny sand and an azure ocean encompassed her view. Many different drinks filled the bar. The bartender served local foods collected from the ocean. The atmosphere entertained the tourists.*

Note how the whole scene becomes less complicated when it is divided into multiple sentences. The run-on portrays the scene in a hectic fashion, and it is not clear if the drinks are from the local ocean, or just the food is. Semi-colons also serve to clarify a complicated sentence. [Click here for more information on how to use semi-colons.](#)

**Subject-verb agreement:** Improper subject-verb agreement remains a major problem in student writing. A plural subject does not agree with a singular verb. This often occurs if the writer changes the subject or uses a pronoun improperly.

Example: *There is two reasons for change in the colony.*

Solution: *There are two reasons for change in the colony.*

**Punctuation:** Students often misuse punctuation. The two most misused punctuation marks are apostrophes and semicolons. Apostrophes mark possession in some cases, but not in all cases. The greatest error regarding improper apostrophe use involves “its.” “It's”

represents the contraction “it is.” “Its” is the possessive pronoun.

Improper use of semicolons produces similar errors linking clauses. Semicolons should only be used to link clauses, which are topically related into a single sentence, or the minor use to indicate a list. Colons are used more often to list items.

Punctuation placement in the context of quotations presents a challenge, especially for immigrants. For example, in countries where Romance languages prevail, periods are placed outside the quotation marks. However, in the United States, periods and commas are placed inside the quotation marks.

Example: *It's development marked a change in American history.*

Solution: *Its development marked a change in American history.*

Example: *He made the speech in the autumn; it took some time for the Indians to respond after protracted internal debates.*

Solution: *He made the speech in the autumn; the reaction would take some time.*

Example: *He responded assertively, “ this lands belongs to my people”.*

Solution: *He responded assertively, “this land belongs to my people.”*

**Word usage:** An author's misuse of words reduces a paper's validity. It is the student's responsibility to ensure correct word usage. The dictionary and the thesaurus serve as valuable writing tools. Modern Internet technology puts such tools at only a mouse-click away.

Example: *There are many reasons for the Empire abandoning Rome, significantly, the encroaching barbarian armies.*

Solution: *There are many reasons for the Empire abandoning Rome, in particular, the encroaching barbarian armies took on significant importance.*

**Colloquialisms:** A colloquialism is a figure of speech not used in formal writing. Colloquialisms are vague and distract from the essay's main subject. For example, a colloquial phrase such as “fighting like cats and dogs” indicates conflict. Yet, presenting conflicts in a research paper requires the type of context and depth that “fighting like cats and dogs” cannot convey. A colloquialism is slang, and should not be used in formal writing.

Example: *In the world we live in today, Marco Polo looms way off in the distance.*

Solution: *Marco Polo remains an enigmatic figure in history.*

**Subject Identification:** Proper identification keeps a paper clear and understandable. Often, it is easy to overuse pronouns and vague titles to describe someone or something. Some people are very recognizable, but others need more precise identification.

Example: *He performed great in the senate. His views on government were not shared by the party. He often voted against current party lines.*

Solution: *Lincoln Chaffee, the senator from Ohio, performed well in the senate. His views on government were not shared by his party. The Senator often voted against current party lines.*

Example: *Rousseau changed the world.*

Solution: *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the Enlightenment figure, changed the world with his philosophies on government and the individual.*

## **Verb: tense and voice**

**Use the simple past tense when writing essays for history.** The simple past tense is used to express an action that started and finished at specific time in the past. It's possible that your first language uses different rules; for example, it's not unusual in Spanish to use the present tense sometimes to express events in the past. This is not the rule for English. See the following examples.

I saw the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie last night.  
I wrote the essay last night.  
Did you call Becky?

For a full list of simple past forms see the following website:

<http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/simplepastforms.htm>

**Avoid using the passive voice.** Active voice sentences are stronger and maintain the reader's interest. The passive voice uses the forms of "be" (e.g. be, am, is, are, was, were, being, and been). In sentences using the active voice, the subject performs the action. In the passive voice the subject is acted upon.

Active Voice: The dog bit the boy.  
Passive Voice: The boy was bitten by the dog.

Avoid shifting from the active to the passive and vice versa. The following sentence shifts from the active voice and then to the passive. Notice the change from the original to the revised. Try to maintain the essay entirely in the active voice.

Original Sentence: He tried to act cool when he slipped in GC, but he was still laughed at by the girls.

Revised Sentence: He tried to act cool when he slipped in GC, but the girls still laughed at him.

## **Person**

Using the first person weakens your argument.

Some professors don't like to see the use of the second person in academic papers. Make sure to check with your professor about the use of pronouns such as "we," "you," and "I."

Writing in the third person is perfectly acceptable.

**For additional guidance on writing and grammar visit the FIU**

undergraduate writing program at: <http://w3.fiu.edu/enc/>

## ***Using Primary and Secondary Sources***

### **Primary vs. Secondary sources**

Primary sources include diaries, newspaper articles, photos, government documents, speeches, maps, and personal letters. Primary sources are documents produced by individuals in the time period you are researching. "Primary sources are the basic stuff of history. They are found among and within the following locations: Public records (e.g. censuses, court and church records), Official records (e.g. laws and treaties), Personal documents (diaries, letters and other documents which give insight into the daily lives and thoughts of individuals in a certain time period), Artifacts/relics (music, paintings and other objects produced and owned by individuals from the period researched), Business/ Other Organizations' documents (documents produced by organizations that document their activities such as meeting minutes and registration records), Images (photographs, videos and paintings) , Architecture/City Plans/Maps (building styles and neighborhood maps), Media/Other public communication (magazines, news and radio broadcasts and newspapers), Literary texts (novel, poems, short stories).

Secondary sources are documents from the time period which you are studying. Secondary sources are written on past events and include scholarly articles and books, biographies, films. It is usually an assessment or analysis of, or commentary on, events or people of the past.

The following links are good starting points for both primary and secondary sources and are available on the web and through the FIU library site:

- FIU Library--<http://library.fiu.edu/>
- Library of Congress site-- <http://www.loc.gov/index.html> --This site can be accessed through any Internet browser and is free to all.
- <http://www.jstor.org/>-- This site provides and huge digital database on many topics.
- Humanities and Social Sciences on line--<http://h-net.org/>-- With H-net, you can subscribe to different discussion boards (H-Spain, H-Portugal, etc). Under each H-net section, make sure you check 'links' for more information on your area of interest.
- World Cat--  
<http://firstsearch.oclc.org/WebZ/FSPrefs?entityjsdetect=:javascript=true:screensize=large:sessionid=fsapp2-39093-fhakcxy3-cphy8t:entitypagenum=1:0>—World Cat is the largest online academic database to date. This database can be accessed through the FIU Library page. FIU students enjoy free access to this database.
- Project Muse--<http://muse.jhu.edu/>--This website can be accessed through the FIU library page. FIU students enjoy free access to this database.

Primary sources can also be found in museums, libraries, universities, county record offices, public and personal archives.

The FIU library has a Special Collections area on the fourth floor of the Green Library. There are also historical societies such as the South Florida Historical Museum that has

great digitized sources. The link for the South Florida Historical Museum is:  
<http://www.hmsf.org/>

A list is available from the University's library website with the names of archives, organized by area and region of study: <http://www.uidaho.edu/special-collections/latam.html>

For more information on primary sources, please check:  
<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/instruct/guides/primarysources.html>

## **Annotated Bibliography**

Annotated bibliographies are a good way of maintaining an organized reading list in your area of specialty for present and future use. The format of annotated bibliographies is similar to the well known bibliography forms except that beneath the bibliographical entrance there is a short paragraph discussing the argument of the book in addition to a brief summary.

**Below are examples of entries from an annotated bibliography summarizing the book and stating the purpose or goal of the author:**

Example #1:

**Graham, Helen and Jo Labanyi, eds, *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction (New York: Oxford University Press 1995)*.** *This study looks at the influence of culture in bringing forth the modernization movement in 20th century Spain. Foreign influences, such as foreign capital and investment, in addition to the increase of tourism, changed culture in Spain, resulting in the conflicts plaguing Franco's fascist regime. There was an influx in foreign influences in the 1960s hence pushing forth Spain's modernization. The entrance of foreign influence into Spain conflicted with Franco's government whose goal was to control Spanish culture and society without interference from other groups, both inside and outside of Spain.*

Example #2:

**Preston, Paul, *Franco: Caudillo de Espana (Barcelona: Grupo Editorial Random House Mondadori, S.L. 1993)*.** *Preston analyzes the human psyche of the dictator to show how Franco maintained a firm grip on power for almost forty years. Franco is portrayed as a man who desired solitude, both personally and professionally. Examples provided by Preston to show the desire for solitude by Franco in the personal realm are demonstrated in his favorite past times of fishing and golfing. Preston's study provides an analysis of Franco which ultimately shows and allows readers to understand how and why Franco's regime passed specific policies / laws.*

*For more information on annotated bibliography see the link below:*

<http://lib.trinity.edu/research/citing/annobibs.shtml>

## Quoting

Writing a History essay requires using sufficient evidence from primary and secondary sources. Above all, evidence taken from text must be relevant to the issue being argued. The writer must not include superfluous information from text. Essays should provide sufficient information or evidence in your own words. When using a quote, use it to reinforce and support your argument. Follow quotes with an analysis. All direct quotes must be accurately reproduced and cited.

If quotes are short (three lines or less) they can be incorporated into the text and enclosed with double quotations marks. Below is an example of a quote that is properly introduced into a paragraph.

*Arlene J. Díaz's Female Citizens, Patriarchs, and the Law in Venezuela, 1786-1904*

provides a detailed analysis of patriarchy in terms of women in Venezuela. Focusing on the "gendered nature of the Venezuelan state" and how patriarchy was imposed and "reproduced during the process of nation-building," she divides her work into three separate parts (the late colonial period, the early republic, and the late nineteenth century) (13). Using this periodization allows Díaz to provide a complex analysis on how patriarchy evolved during the late colonial period, early republics and late nineteenth century.

For a quotation within a quotation, single quotation marks are used. Always place periods and commas inside the quotation marks; semicolons and colons go on the outside. Below is an example.

"I'm not convinced," said the student, "that he really meant 'nothing.' "

Quotes longer than three lines (also known as block quotes) should be indented and single-spaced (the rest of the essay would be double spaced). Indented quotations do not need quotation marks.

Do not use ellipsis points (three dots) before or after a quotation. If you omit words or phrases within a quotation then you should indicate that something was omitted by using the three ellipsis points at the point of omission within the quote.

Footnotes are to be inserted at the end of the sentence outside of the period.

## Citations

History essays normally use the Chicago Manual of Style. For more details see the website for the Chicago Manual of Style:

[http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html).

For excellent examples on a variety of citation styles visit [www.dianahacker.com](http://www.dianahacker.com)

## DISCLAIMER

*We have tried to present a basic glimpse into the field of History and provide you with some basic guidelines on which to build and develop writing and research skills. Our work with undergraduates has revealed a pattern of common undergraduate mistakes. We have done our best to present the most frequent occurrences to our reader. This is by no means a complete and comprehensive guide to writing. It is the basics for students studying History. While the sources recommended in this document are tried and true, we **HIGHLY** recommend that you purchase a membership to a noted writing guide web site or get the Chicago Manual Style or the Turabian Manual for Writers as soon as possible. These resources will help to ensure your academic success and help you to become a proficient writer for both personal and professional purposes.*

## Recommended Readings:

Berkin, Carol and Anderson, Betty S. *The History Handbook*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003.

Grafton, Antony. *The Footnote: A Curious History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Presnell, Jenny L. *The Information-Literate Historian: A Guide to Research for History Students*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007.

Weiner, Tracy. "Phrases and Clauses: A Ten Minute Tour." *University of Chicago Writing Program*.

<http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/complex-sentences.htm> (accessed May 9, 2007)

<http://www.dianahacker.com/student.html> (accessed May 12, 2008). Student information for writing style, rules for writers, etc.

## Special thanks to:

Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide To Writing In History*, Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007.

University of North Carolina Writing Lab Web Site.

Presnell, Jenny. *The Information-Literate Historian: A Guide to Research for History Students*.

*Literate Historian: A Guide to Research for History Students*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Road State Community College Writing Lab Web Site

Rosen and Behrens Writing Guide

Turnitin.com

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