



Research Project Guidelines

You will design and carry out a research project over several weeks in the middle of the semester, on a topic related to the history of citizenship. This involves a lot of planning ahead and **COUNTS FOR A THIRD (32.5%)** of your course grade. It is **NOT** something you can cobble together the week it is due. For that reason, I am grading the project in stages: you'll separately submit a topic, a draft and bibliography, a final draft, an abstract, and a short oral presentation. Since this is an upper-level seminar, the research project is an essential piece of your learning in the course and should demonstrate your adeptness in the realms of critical thinking, information literacy and written/oral communication (all three are core outcomes of the Liberal Arts and Sciences Curriculum). The criteria for each of those are on the three attached rubrics from the AAC&U – we'll use these rubrics for self-assessment and for project grading.

PLEASE NOTE: If conducting research in the humanities & social sciences is unfamiliar to you or writing is not your strength, then please make use of my office hours, the library's reference desk assistance, and the University Writing Center early and often. Recommended reading: Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, available at the Writing Center (Sullivan 306); Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, available on course reserve at the library circulation desk.

SCOPE AND STRATEGY: I previously gave you a list of possible topics, so you have a sense of the level of analysis I'm looking for. You might begin with a particular scholar (perhaps one of the course readings), and revisit or revise one of his/her claims through your own research. Alternatively, you might begin with an interesting question of your own and search out scholars and sources that can help you answer it. Another good strategy is to identify where scholars disagree, and see if you can contribute to their debate by bringing in new or different evidence. However you decide to proceed, you will need a command of relevant secondary sources and you'll need to involve primary sources in a way that's integral to your argument.¹ Don't take on too much – in general, deeper is better than wider. Your paper should identify and clearly address a core problem or question. It should be persuasive but not one-sided – you should acknowledge any relevant counter-argument, counter-evidence, or controversy. You don't have to solve or resolve all the troublesome issues related to your topic, but your paper should draw an evidence-based conclusion that represents the findings of your own original research.

| Schedule of Project Due Dates | 65 pts |
|---|--------------|
| Topic – due 3/7 | 5 |
| Draft + Bibliography – due 3/28 (8+ pages) | 15 |
| Final Draft – due 4/4 (14-16 pages + Works) | 30 |
| Abstract – due 4/18 (150-200 words) | 10 |
| Lightning Round Presentation – due 4/25 | 5 |
| Total of your Course Grade | 32.5% |

TOPIC - Due 3/7/12

Phrase your paper's topic as a question, and accompany it with a brief (1-2 paragraph) identification of the core problem or question. If you have a sense of what sources you plan to use, feel free to mention them. In total, this shouldn't take more up than one side of a page.

¹ If you're at all unclear on "primary v. secondary," see me for clarification before you begin research.

THE RESEARCH PHASE (Now until March 28)

What is research? It involves:

- locating and evaluating reliable sources
- chasing footnotes from one source to another (this is one reason historians write footnotes)
- developing, through time and study, a framework for understanding your chosen topic
- identifying where you can make an original contribution, and participating in that ongoing scholarly conversation, using your findings to give you authority to enter that conversation
- acknowledging and keeping track of your sources
- clearly distinguishing what parts are your own ideas, words, and conclusions
- making an argument and supporting it by allowing your sources to “speak” in your paper
- deciding how to present and organize your findings
- being selective about what you put in your paper and what you leave out

Self-assess your research process with the “Critical Thinking” rubric

DRAFT AND BIBLIOGRAPHY – Due 3/28/12

At this point, your research should be completed and you should be well into your writing. The draft should be at least 8 double-spaced pages long, and should be accompanied by a complete bibliography. Each entry in the bibliography should contain the complete information for the source (see the chart at right for what “complete” means).

Attach a statement that explains anything that’s still unresolved, difficult, or “under construction” in the draft. The draft and bibliography will get a quick glance by me and a peer review during class on 3/28. If you want or need more than this quick check-off, I can read and comment on drafts during the week of 3/26-3/30. Paper conferences are HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. I am unable to read or comment on a draft after 3/30.

| Complete Bibliographic Information is |
|---|
| Author’s Full Name |
| Full Title of the Work |
| City of Publication |
| Name of the Publisher |
| Date of Publication |
| The url if you accessed it online, enclosed in angle brackets < > |

You may ask, “how many sources should my bibliography contain”? There’s no magic number, but you should consult both primary and secondary sources as needed to address your question. A mix of print and internet sources is best. Wikipedia is not a source you should cite in your paper, although consulting Wikipedia might lead you to reliable sources, especially if you use the Notes, References and External Links at the bottom of the article. *Then again, it might not.*

Self-assess your bibliography with the “Information Literacy” rubric

FINAL DRAFT – Due 4/4/12

Your final paper should be beautifully polished and represent your best effort. Length will be 14-16 double-spaced pages, plus bibliography or Works Cited. Number your pages. Provide a title page. Internal section divisions are fine, if it makes sense for your particular paper structure.

As you incorporate quotations from your sources, remember the following: quotations should be properly “framed” or introduced so the reader knows whose quote this is, and how it contributes to your argument. If a quotation is longer than 4 lines, set it off as a block quote. *Every* quotation needs a citation (parenthetical or footnote, depending on your chosen style). Format your citations in either Chicago Style or APA, whichever you are more used to. If any of these instructions are confusing, consult me or the Writing Center.

Once again, I recommend Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, available at the Writing Center (Sullivan 306) and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say/ I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, available on course reserve at the library circulation desk.

Self-assess your final draft with the “Written Communication” rubric

REVISION - If Needed

The deadline is early in the term so it won’t conflict with final papers and projects in other classes. But it also allows a couple of weeks for possible revision before the end of the course. Sometimes successful papers take more than one try. Although I hope it will be rare, revision may be an option if we both agree the final draft has fatal flaws. In such cases, you’ll work with me to craft a solution and a timetable for revision.

ABSTRACT - Due 4/18

An abstract is a 150-200 word description of the main ideas, sources, and findings of your paper. It is a concise statement of the problem and how you solved it. I’ll provide some links to help with writing an abstract as that date gets closer. The abstract will be published, along with the title of your paper and your name or initials, on our course website in a virtual “gallery” of student research from this semester. Just like the abstracts in a scholarly journal – which are a permanent record – yours should contain keywords that would help a researcher trying to find your paper and be a reliable, neutral brief version of your overall argument.

LIGHTNING ROUND PRESENTATION - Due 4/25

On April 25th, we will have a “Lightning Round” presentation day for your research projects, possibly in front of a small audience of interested scholars from across the university. Each presenter will have precisely 2 minutes (120 seconds) – so you’ll need to be engaging and concise.

You have two options:

- A 120-second oral presentation. PRACTICE to make sure you can do it in exactly 2 minutes!
- A 6-slide mini-*Pecha Kucha* presentation. Pecha Kucha is a Japanese word, originally coined for a stylized presentation method of 20 slides, each shown for 20 seconds. To do this option, prepare 6 slides and create a timed Powerpoint slideshow in which each one appears on the screen for exactly 20 seconds. Your talk presenting your research should flow from slide to slide, ending as the last slide fades. PRACTICE AHEAD.

Your lightning round presentation will be assessed on 1) the quality and clarity of your presentation’s content; 2) how polished & practiced it seems; and 3) whether you present for 2 minutes – no more, no less.

CRITICAL THINKING VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org



Definition

Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

| | Capstone 4 | Milestones | | Benchmark 1 |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| | | 3 | 2 | |
| Explanation of issues | Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding. | Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions. | Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown. | Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description. |
| Evidence <i>Selecting and using information to investigate a point of view or conclusion</i> | Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly. | Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are subject to questioning. | Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning. | Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question. |
| Influence of context and assumptions | Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position. | Identifies own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position. | Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa). | Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position. |
| Student's position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) | Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of an issue. Limits of position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) are acknowledged. Others' points of view are synthesized within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis). | Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) takes into account the complexities of an issue. Others' points of view are acknowledged within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis). | Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) acknowledges different sides of an issue. | Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is stated, but is simplistic and obvious. |
| Conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences) | Conclusions and related outcomes (consequences and implications) are logical and reflect student's informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order. | Conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly. | Conclusion is logically tied to information (because information is chosen to fit the desired conclusion); some related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly. | Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are oversimplified. |

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org



Definition

Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

| | Capstone 4 | Milestones | | Benchmark 1 |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| | | 3 | 2 | |
| Context of and Purpose for Writing <i>Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s).</i> | Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses all elements of the work. | Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context). | Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions). | Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., expectation of instructor or self as audience). |
| Content Development | Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work. | Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shape the whole work. | Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work. | Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work. |
| Genre and Disciplinary Conventions <i>Formal and informal rules inherent in the expectations for writing in particular forms and/or academic fields (please see glossary).</i> | Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task (s) including organization, content, presentation, formatting, and stylistic choices | Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s), including organization, content, presentation, and stylistic choices | Follows expectations appropriate to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) for basic organization, content, and presentation | Attempts to use a consistent system for basic organization and presentation. |
| Sources and Evidence | Demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing | Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre of the writing. | Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing. | Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing. |
| Control of Syntax and Mechanics | Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free. | Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language in the portfolio has few errors. | Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors. | Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage. |