

TERM PAPERS

A good paper should have a thesis (a major question or line of inquiry it seeks to answer) and the logical, sequential, clear presentation of historical evidence to support the thesis. A thesis statement appears at the beginning of a short introductory passage and is reasserted in a conclusions section found at the end of the paper. The body of the paper reveals and develops the evidence which supports (or 'proves') the thesis statement. The thesis topic must be precise enough to be discussed in a short paper but not so narrow as to be trivial. "The Reign of Henry II" is inappropriate as a thesis of a term paper because it is too wide and inclusive. "The Development of the Jury System in the Reign of Henry II" could be adequately discussed in a short paper. Each paragraph in the body of the paper usually begins with a topic sentence which alerts the reader to content of that paragraph. Sometimes research will lead a writer to conclude that the original thesis was flawed; this is a laudable recognition, not a failure. An amended thesis results.

Papers employ only the format and forms of THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE, found in print or electronic documents. For most students, the requirements are most clearly operative in citations and a listing of the sources consulted. There are specific, inflexible forms for citations (of direct quotations, paraphrases, or pivotal ideas) and a listing of all sources consulted even if the text is not quoted or directly paraphrased. There should be footnotes (not endnotes or in-text citations) and an alphabetized bibliography (not a Works Cited list.) Historians insist upon this formulary because it enables a reader to find and verify any quoted words or pivotal ideas to the exact authenticated source of origin; it is one guarantee that history be rooted in fact, not fiction.

The paper should be based on at least one primary source, though more may be necessary, and secondary sources. A primary source is derived from an historical participant and may include items ranging from written texts of letters, laws, and financial records to memorial engravings, audio/video materials and coins. A primary source always dates from the historical era being examined, recorded by the participant or a recording agent. A secondary source is one produced at a later period recounting and explaining the original era. Secondary sources should include at least one or more books or articles of recent vintage, published in the last decade. Whenever possible, compare older sources with newer ones. If you do not find the works you need in the Doherty Library or through electronic sources, you can get them on inter-library loan.

If a topic does not suggest itself to you, see the professor.

Papers will be graded on the following:

- Thesis and argument, including statement, scope, development and evidence presented.
- Clarity of presentation through facile writing.

Organization, with clear 'Introduction' and 'Conclusion' sections to put the information in the body of the paper into proper context.

- Grammar and syntax, including punctuation, spelling and sentence structure.
- Handling quotations and paraphrases in conformity with the Chicago Style.
- Bibliography and footnotes.

Writing is improved by careful editing and rewriting. Vital and expert assistance is available at the UST Tutoring Center through workshops and individual appointments. Papers should be double-spaced, with 12 point font on plain white paper. Folders are not needed, but a cover-sheet should be used.

CONTENT – Check for the following:

- Write without bias, avoiding language which improperly generalizes about groups.
- State the thesis clearly
- Develop the body of narrative to support the thesis
- State your ideas in a clear and concise manner
- Avoid plagiarism by citing quotation, paraphrases, and unique pivotal ideas
- Verify sources and validate the citation formularies
- In a 'conclusions' section of the paper, restate the thesis and ensure you have proved your contention
- Provide an alphabetical Bibliography listing every source consulted even if you have not cited the source in a footnote
- Avoid lengthy quotations (usually more than 3 or 4 lines)

GRAMMAR AND USAGE – Check for the following:

- No sentence fragments; no run-on sentences
- Other errors involving the comma
- Agreement of subjects and nouns
- Agreement of pronouns and antecedents
- Consistent tense use
- Correct spelling
- Use of third person
- Avoid ending a sentence with a preposition
- Parallel structure employed
- Avoid the passive voice in verbs
- Correct use of apostrophes
- Correct use of quotation marks.
- Employ acronyms only after the full phrase has been employed
- Avoid jargon, slang, and colloquial language

RESOURCES FOR STUDENT WRITERS –

A POCKET GUIDE TO WRITING HISTORY by Rampola

A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO HISTORY by Benjamin

THE LITTLE, BROWN HANDBOOK WITH EXERCISES by Little and Brown