**Biography Guidelines**

LENGTH – The **body** of the paper (**not** counting the title page or bibliography, and taking into account the amount of space the footnotes take up on each page) is 5 to 7 pages.

TOPIC – Topic can be any person, group/organization, creation, or invention who/which made a significant contribution to Western Civilization’s history between 10,000 BCE and 1700 CE. The topic can be in the area of politics, economics, military history, social history, cultural history, art history, sports or leisure-time history, science or social science history, inventions and technology history, and/or women’s history, so long as it puts the story of the topic into the broader context of what was happening at the time. For example, if you chose to write on the history of the Origins of the Crusades, make sure you put that story within the context of what was happening in 1000s to 1200s in the Middle East, Eastern Roman Empire, and Europe. Since the length of the paper is short, “biographies” may be more effective if they focus on a particular portion of your topic’s “life.” Examples: Origin of the Crusades: Eastern Roman Empire’s Plea to the West for Help, or Origin of the Crusades: Pope Urban’s Recruiting Speech, etc. **Find a subject that has some meaning to you, either personally or professionally, and that captures your interest, while still reflecting your course’s era in history.**

FORMAT – The paper should use a reasonably-sized font (**no larger than the font in these guidelines, which are Times New Roman 12**), double-spaced, with appropriate margins, and insert page numbers. Both you and I will know if you are using larger font and/or margins to “pad” your paper. Both footnotes (or endnotes) and a bibliography need to be included, using the **CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE**, which is the formatting style for the field of History. Guidelines for this citation style are readily available on-line, and/or use the sample paper on Blackboard to help guide you. Please note: the Chicago Manual of Style is NOT MLA or APA, so do not use these formats for your assignments in this class. **Use of any citation format other than Chicago Manual of Style WILL result in a lowered grade**. Also note that “Works Cited” is NOT Chicago Manual of Style. Chicago Manual of Style uses a Bibliography, which is a full list of all the sources that you used, whether or not you specifically cited them. In the Chicago Manual of Style, the footnotes are where you actually cite specific pages of a source. Again, carefully study the sample paper on Blackboard. This is a paper which a NOVA student wrote which received an A.

PLAGIARISM – **Plagiarism is a form of lying and cheating,** and therefore is **expressly against the honor code of Virginia Community Colleges.** Review the guidelines in your school catalog (paper copy or on-line) and in your class syllabus on what constitutes plagiarism. Remember that all exact quotes will need to be footnoted, but so will any use of other authors’ ideas, whether or not you use their exact words. Plagiarism can and has resulted in a failing grade for those students in my classes who have plagiarized their assignments, so be particularly careful to give credit to others for the work they have done. When in doubt, footnote.

SOURCES – Use a ***minimum*** of 5 sources, not counting your textbook. Most of your sources will probably be secondary sources (books and articles written about an era but not written in that era). For example, a biography of Christine de Pizan, a medieval female author, is a good secondary source. Secondary sources may include books and scholarly journals or articles, and .edu, .org, or .gov websites. But if you can also use any primary sources, that will be impressive to me. Primary sources include such items as original newspapers, diaries, letters, documents, speeches, laws, government reports, original advertisements and other sources created about your person, group, invention, or other topic during your subject’s era in history. For example, a paper written about Christine de Pizan could use some of her writings, including her most famous one, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, as primary sources that would strengthen your paper.

PLEASE NOTE that internet sources are limited to Google books, and .edu, .gov, and .org websites. Websites that are .com are **not** eligible for use for this paper **except** by permission from the instructor **or** when using a primary document located on that website. The reason behind this is that .com websites are trying to sell you something, so they often have little concern with being historically accurate. When in doubt, ask me or a librarian for clarification. College librarians can help you locate some of these sources and can help you differentiate primary and secondary sources. Please note**: WIKIPEDIA IS NOT AN ACCEPTABLE SOURCE FOR A COLLEGE LEVEL PAPER.**

BALANCE – History papers differ from mere opinion essays by careful analysis of your topic, even if you are expressing a particular view or opinion. **If** you are writing a paper supporting one perspective or argument over others, make sure you **present all sides**, and **then** support why you believe one side of an argument is stronger than others.