

Directions and Guidelines for All Writing Assignments

Organization: College-level essays are to be carefully constructed and presented as finished products. They are not just journal entries or stream-of-consciousness. This means they must have a thesis of some sort, and present reasoned arguments through the examination of evidence. There should be an introductory thesis statement and a conclusion.

Paragraphs should be used as a way to structure the argument so a reader can follow your thinking. An interesting or informative title is necessary. A funny title is fine. ?Paper #1? is not.

Mechanics: All papers must be typed and double-spaced, using a standard font in 11 or 12-point size. Please stick to plain old white paper and standard fonts. Handwriting is not OK. Quadruple-spacing is not OK. Writing the whole thing in italics or Olde English is not OK. (Why not? Because italics are to be used for specific reasons: emphasis and foreign terms. Because Olde English on perfumed blue paper is too-too high school). Pictures cannot be a substitute for writing. A nice presentation is always welcome, but please be clear that adding pictures will not affect your grade unless they are explicitly part of the assignment.

Spelling and grammar are expected to be excruciatingly correct. Use the spell-checker. I will mark down work for sloppy spelling and grammar. If the writing is really awful?ungrammatical, no evidence of proofreading, horrible spelling, or laughably short?I will not read it. I will return it as unacceptable, with an "F."

Early in the semester, I will allow a rewrite (for a maximum of ?C,? which is the average of ?F? and ?A?). Late in the semester, there will be no time for a rewrite.

Page limits should be observed, and should be your guide to the depth of writing: a one-to-two page paper is pretty much a quick observation, with thesis and conclusion. Three-to-five pages means there is time to develop a thesis and argue it through several paragraphs, considering several different questions, angles or pieces of evidence. An eight-to-ten page paper usually includes research (this will be made clear in the assignment), and anything over ten pages is probably expected to include a great deal of research.

Citations. Any time you use a source of information you should consider citing it, to avoid the appearance of plagiarism. Generally-known facts are not normally cited. Anything else is, including a long recitation of facts from one source that you are paraphrasing, a single opinion stated by another author, and any direct quote.

- Example 1: ?George Washington lived at Mount Vernon.? We know that. No citation needed. Even if you did not happen to know that, it is the sort of information that is so widely available that no specific citation is expected.
- Example 2: ?The cathedral was begun in the 1890's, and not completed until the 1950's after several design changes.? This is specialized information, and it must have come from somewhere unless you just made it up. So please cite your source of information! If you are paraphrasing a large amount of information, put a citation at the end of the paragraph. Give a separate citation to each separate source.
- Example 3: ?The cathedral looks as if it was begun in the 1890's and not completed until the 1950's with some design changes along the way.? Clearly, your own opinion (we hope) based on your own observations (we hope). If this is the case, then no citation is necessary. However, if you only say it because you read it somewhere, please cite the source. This is the honor system.
- Example 4: ?This is the finest example of Romanesque-revival style in the country.? Oh, says whom? If this is your opinion, please back it up by explaining your assertion. If you are just quoting from someone else, you need to cite the information.
- ?Example 5: ?According to Encarta, this is the finest example of Romanesque-revival style in the country.? That is nice?but you still need to add a footnote or parenthetical reference giving the details, in a standard citation format.

Citation style: In history and art-history, we usually use the Chicago style, which uses footnotes. Take the necessary time to learn the standard rules, and follow them carefully. The rules are easily found in any writing manual. Don't remember the rules?

<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>

Submission. All papers are to be submitted in hard copy in class on the due date. I cannot accept email submissions?sorry, but they cause too many problems. Papers will not be considered ?on time? unless I receive them in hard copy.

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. Plagiarism encompasses the following:

- Presenting as one's own the works, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgement.
- Borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgement. That means you must acknowledge your source, even if it is an anonymous museum pamphlet or long museum label. Those, too, are reasoned writing. I get very unhappy when I read something that sounds like it was copied from a website, even if a word is changed here or there.

The good news: Plagiarism is easily avoided. Just acknowledge all your sources, using footnotes or other acceptable forms of reference. That is really all there is to it.

The bad news: Plagiarism on tests and papers is CHEATING and will be reported to the department chair.