

Capstone Paper Guidelines

Your History capstone research paper comes together out of a series of scaffolded assignments over the course of the semester, each designed to move you towards the final product without procrastination. While this may be different than your previous workflow in working on long-term and large projects, bear with me: I promise you, you will be grateful that I have organized your semester to facilitate early research, early writing, and opportunities for revision. The paper is worth more than a third of your course grade (36.5% to be exact) at 55 points.

Grade breakdown is: 10 points for Skeleton Draft + 15 points for Final Draft + 25 points for Revised Draft + 5 points for staying on track with deadlines, coming to conferences, and general teachability & receptivity to feedback.

DECIDING ON A TOPIC - Due February 17 as your J4

Resources for identifying and honing a topic can be found, in addition to the "Research Topic Ideas" tab above, in Storey, *Writing History* Ch 1 and Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History* Chapter 5. By this date you should have a well-defined topic or a guiding research question clearly spelled out as your Journal entry #4.

THE RESEARCH PHASE

The last week of February is the time to get DEEP into your research and to identify (and request, in case lead time is needed) any books, articles, or other sources. Use Storey Chapters 1-3 as a handbook for locating, analyzing, interpreting and making inferences from your sources. We will have at two library sessions with a member of the reference staff, and they are happy to help you during the research phase on your own time if needed; also I do have office hours three days a week. Ask for help!

THE SKELETON DRAFT - Due March 9

The best advice I can give is to begin writing *while* you're researching. Personally, one technique I use is to create two documents: one that is the paper itself and the other a low-stakes document where I write ideas and compose random bits of the paper in no particular order (I call this the "compost pile"). Pieces from the compost pile may or may not ever see the light of day, but it sometimes helps to get words on paper without worrying about where they fit into the larger final version. It's also a handy place to dump text you've cut from the real paper but can't bring yourself to delete. **I recommend writing every day**, even for 10 or 15 minutes. Or set yourself a word limit: 750 new words is a good rule of thumb for daily writing on a substantial project.

By March 9th, submit a "skeleton draft" meaning: the "bones" of your future essay, some parts of which have flesh hanging off. Writing is kind of like resurrecting a zombie, but that's a good thing.

Your skeleton draft should contain ALL of these to get full credit (10 points):

- A working title
- Solid, well-crafted introduction OR conclusion
- Historiography section
- An outline, with at least one internal section written
- At least some footnotes, so I can see that you are comfortable with doing this

- Bibliography, correctly and completely formatted, with as many sources as you have so far, even if some of them aren't yet cited in the paper

WRITING CONFERENCES - Weeks of March 14th and 28th

During the weeks of March 14th and 28th, I will schedule an individual writing conference with each of you to discuss your skeleton draft and provide feedback on the paper so far. You'll be writing at a brisk pace, and taking that feedback into consideration, as you prepare to submit the final draft on March 30th.

FINAL DRAFT - Due March 30

Your final draft is due on this day, using the downloadable Word template provided online as a guideline. The paper should be between 4,000 and 5,000 words (not including footnotes and bibliography). Stylistic conventions and paper mechanics include: a title page, pages numbered, double-spaced, font = Times 12 or Courier 10, Chicago Style footnotes, bibliography, meticulously proofread for grammar/spelling, and something to hold it together (staple, report cover, binder clip, or the like). Internal section breaks are optional; use them only if they make sense for your particular project. If you need to look at a short sample student paper as a formatting model for working with Chicago style quotes and citations, check the course website "Guidelines" tab.

REVISING AND RESUBMITTING - March 30 to April 25

I'll need some time with your final draft to prepare comments and suggestions, but in the meantime you should also be thinking about how you can improve your own paper and what you might need to re-write, re-visit, or re-examine. During the **week of April 11, we'll have a second individual writing conference** meeting to discuss the final draft and plans for revision. You have 26 days between submission of final draft and the revised version, so use that time wisely. The revised draft is due back on April 25.

WRITING AN ABSTRACT / PROPOSAL TO PRESENT - Due May 2

Well-crafted scholarship deserves a wide audience, and here in the department we want to give you opportunities to present your senior-level work to the broader campus community or in another suitable venue. To that end, the last part of your research project will be to write an abstract and proposal as if you were going to submit your paper for an undergraduate research conference. Unfortunately we'll miss the submission deadlines for the campus Celebration of Scholarship and Creativity and the UMass Statewide Undergraduate Research Conference, but we still want you to have the experience of crafting a proposal for a similar event, and to consider venues where your paper could be published or presented in some way. I will distribute the proposal guidelines closer to this deadline, but **your proposal should be turned in to me by the last day of class, Monday May 2nd.**