

Historical Papers

For this assignment, you will be investigating an aspect for one of our revolutions. You should look for either a way the revolution was influenced by outside factors **or** a way that the revolution influenced the broader world.

For the first option, you could consider how a specific political or social structure (which perhaps had changed recently) may have influenced the revolution. An example could be the role of patronage on a specific person or a small group of scientists or some recent technological innovation that allowed new discoveries. Another approach could be to look at the arts and how they might have influenced the particular revolution. (Example: how might have recent advances in perspective drawing have affected Galileo?)

The converse approach would be to examine the way science influences history and culture. How did the changing view of the universe affect religious perspectives? Political systems? Art? (Example: Newton appears in several poems and paintings. Why Newton? Or perhaps what role did Newton play in developing political thought over the next few centuries?)

Your goal here is to come up with a thesis that can be expressed as, "Without development X, revolution in physics Y would not have happened/would have happened very differently," **OR** "Without revolution in physics Y, change in arts/humanities/political thought/etc. X would not have happened/would have happened very differently." Your goal will be to convince your reader that the connection you make in that thesis is an important one and not mere coincidence.

The field of possible topics is being kept deliberately wide open. I hope you will pick topics you are really, personally interested in. I look forward to reading novel and interesting views that I wouldn't otherwise see, so please feel free to explore! If you are having trouble with coming up with a topic, come talk to me sooner rather than later. I'd be happy to help and I'd much rather you not spend a lot of time struggling.

The Paper

Your paper will be **5 pages (max), 1.5-spaced**. You can add more onto this for references and any figures you wish to add¹, but the main text is capped at 5 pages. If you can say what you want to say in less space than this, I encourage you to do so

A few notes about papers in the sciences:

- Lengthy quotes are discouraged strongly, although there are exceptions. In general, I'm more interested in your own words than a quotation.
- The best sources are either scholarly papers or books written by acknowledged experts in the field. Sources like encyclopedias (including Wikipedia) are reasonable starting points for understanding a topic, but are not good sources of academic papers.
- When reading sources, consider carefully the value of each. Every writer has biases and opinions. Try to see if the opinions you read are widely shared by colleagues or (if that's difficult to determine) if the arguments used to support the case seem complete and convincing. Feel free to include sources you find questionable as

¹ Although to be clear: you don't *need* figures by any means. I would expect figures to be the exception rather than the rule.

long as you explain your reservations. It's OK to let the reader decide how much to believe.

- You're writing for your peers, not me. They'll be providing feedback on your paper, so think about them as you write.
- Give your paper a good title: one that tells the potential reader what you're going to tell them in the paper, but something that is interesting, too.
- Citation style and bibliography format can be anything you're used to, provide it lets me track down the source. (So I need author, title, and year of publication, at a minimum. Pages and volumes are also need for periodicals.)

Picking a Topic

You'll want to pick a topic a week before each paper is due. **On the Wednesday before your papers are due**, you will have to submit a short (~1 paragraph) summary of your thesis and what sources you have found. Your paper may end up with a somewhat different thesis as you do more research and you may find other, better resources, but show me that you've gotten something interesting and viable.

Peer Feedback

Before you turn in your paper to me, you will need to have a classmate peer-review it. There will be forms posted to Moodle for them to fill out. After getting feedback, **revise your paper**, and indicate on the form what types of changes you made (apart from fixing minor technical errors) based on the feedback. **Plan ahead**. You'll want to get the peer-review done at least a day ahead the due date so you can revise. This is for your benefit more than my own; revised papers are much better papers and score much better.

Revisions

You will have the chance to re-submit your paper after I grade it. Your final grade will then be a weighted average of your two grades. (That is, 1/3 will be from your original score and 2/3 will be from the final version I grade. That first 1/3 makes it smart to turn in the best paper you can the first time, but I also believe strongly in revising and improvements in writing, so I like to reward revision.) I'll be grading you based on the rubric on the last page. Grammatical and spelling errors will be indicated by highlighting the line or paragraph in which they occur; it's up to you to find where in that line (or paragraph) the error is. Thoughts I have on broader aspects of the paper, like style, flow, and use of evidence, will naturally receive comments from me.

Resources

You have three excellent resources² to help you with your papers:

1. Me. I'm available to chat about topics, sources, writing, etc.
2. Librarian Kirsti Thomas. She can help you find materials about your topic. If you're trying to find some evidence to support a claim, she's the ideal person to ask. And don't forget that you can talk to her while you're selecting your topic if you want to know if there's enough material readily available to research.

² Weeeell, two excellent resources and me.

3. The Writing Center. They're there to help. And asking for help, especially a review, from them in no way implies you're a bad writer. All good writers have editors and solicit feedback. That's why their writing looks so good when it gets published.

Writing a Good Paper

Some thoughts about what makes a good research paper.

- Your goal here is to make a point, not to present a biography or a history of a general topic. Make a clear statement of your main argument at some point early in the paper so your reader knows where you're going through the rest of the paper. From then on, remember to stay focused on that point. Your thesis should be the thread that runs through the whole paper and holds it together. Material not directly in support of that thread (or presented as possible counter-argument; be honest in the case your present!) is probably best left out or at least kept to a minimum.
- Your audience will be your classmates. I'll be reading them with that mindset, not my professor-mindset. So don't assume I'm aware of more than your classmate would be.
- Remember to provide examples and data where possible. The more specific your examples are, the better your reader will be able to understand what you're saying. If you can find data or statistics to support a point (How much money did Galileo receive from wealthy patrons? Do we know if Jefferson had read Newton? etc.), that's even stronger support. But also remember to contextualize data! ("How much was Galileo's income in today's dollars?" for example. His pay in 1620 lire means next to nothing to me.)
- What makes a good source? A scholarly book or article is ideal. If you present data, make sure to consider where it comes from: a peer-reviewed source is best, but government data are also generally fairly reliable. Data on the Web is, in general, a bit dodgy. Wikipedia, for example, is not as reliable as we'd like. University and government sites (the ones that are officially connected, not personal pages) are usually considered pretty respectable, as are mainstream news outlets. (But, again: peer-reviewed sources are better if applicable.)

Uploading Papers

Finally, papers will be uploaded to Moodle. I'll create upload functions for this. They'll be returned digitally the same way, with my comments. Please save your papers as PDFs before uploading. If you don't know how to do this, please talk to me or the ITS help desk. Title your paper "lastnameFirstnameHistoricalPaperX.pdf", where X is the paper number and you should use your first and last names. This helps me keep my folders tidy with all of your papers!

Rubric

Aspect	Points	Poor	Good	Excellent
Thesis	5	No thesis is readily apparent or thesis is vague	Thesis is apparent, but paper may wander from thesis	A clear thesis exists and is specific and reasonable; writing stays on the thesis
Supporting evidence or examples	15	Little specific, relevant evidence is given	Some specific evidence is given which may not be entirely relevant	Ample evidence is given and it is relevant
Clarity and Flow of Argument	20	Argument fails to support thesis or is unclear; parts of argument fail to flow logically from one to the next	Argument supports thesis somewhat and is generally clear, but may wander a bit or get confusing	Argument is clear and supports thesis well; parts of argument flow naturally with smooth transitions
Writing Style	10	Style is weak or generally not at a college-level	Writing style is college-level in most places, but shows significant room for improvement	Writing style meets or exceeds expectations for college-level

Grammar

May be added to or deducted from total:

+2 0 -2 -4 -6 -8 -10 -12 -15

Distracts from the paper →

Factual Accuracy

May be added to or deducted from total:

+2 0 -2 -4 -6 -8 -10 -12 -15

Factual errors undercut the credibility of the paper

Deadlines

May be added to or deducted from total:

0 -1 -2 -3 -4 -5

Missed deadlines show in the paper →