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Fourth Section Assignment: Declining?
Due Tuesday, July 3, at 11:59 p.m.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE PAPER:

This assignment determines how effectively you can analyze and interpret primary source evidence with the goal of building a larger argument. You will use these skills throughout the semester and throughout your college career. This **paper** requires that you use at least six primary documents from the assigned PDFs. Using the prompt below, write a **three to five page** (900-1500 words) typed, double-spaced essay, standard one-inch margins, 12 point font, Times New Roman. Put page numbers on your document. Late submissions will be penalized: A- is the maximum for a paper one day late, B+ for a paper two days late, B for a paper three days late, and so on including weekends.

As you are developing your answer, use the question to establish your planning outline in preparation to writing your **paper**. This is not an assignment that can be completed with the **five-paragraph paper** with introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion that you probably learned in high school.

The best **papers** will use the primary documents to develop your answer. Please note that for each body paragraph there should be at least two or three substantive points developed.

All **quotes must be placed in quotation marks and cited** using the parenthetical method, i.e. the following example. According to the People's Party Platform of July 24, 1896: "We recognize that, through the connivance of the present and preceding Administrations, the country has reached a crisis in its national life" (1/29 doc. readings). All other material must be rendered completely in your own words.

See the following two examples of acceptable and unacceptable paraphrasing from the e-book:

- Passage rendered word for word from the text: "Work-sharing festivals such as house raisings, log rollings, and quiltings gave isolated farm folk the chance to break their daily routine, to socialize, and to work for a common good" (p. 359).
 - Unacceptable paraphrase: Work-sharing opportunities including house construction, log gathering, and sewing gave detached farmers an opportunity to change their routine, to party, and to work for each other.
 - Acceptable paraphrase: Farmers merged their social lives with their work lives to gain relief from the monotony of an agrarian existence. Examples of entertainment included communal endeavors such as home construction and quilting.

The major difference between the two paraphrasings is sentence structure and word choice. It is not sufficient to change a few words and retain the original sentence structure when paraphrasing. Writers must take the idea and put it in their own words, which means new sentence structure and significantly different word choices.

Note that simply quoting a primary document is not necessarily making effective use of it. You also need to explain what the document means and how that meaning works toward advancing your argument. Doing this requires that you draw inferences and synthesize information from multiple sources. In other words, be selective in quoting from the primary documents, and only quote when the language is so colorful that a paraphrase would weaken the impact.

One final point on quoting: **the wise student will not quote from the textbook**. Save your quotes for the most provocative concepts contained within the original documents! As a rule, the language in the textbook is not worthy of being quoted.

- Since it is the documents you are analyzing to make your argument, you are better off spending time with them.

- Use the text and the lectures to make sure you understand the larger historical context.

Completion of the **paper** assignment requires consultation of **no additional** sources. You **must not** use Wikipedia or any other Internet source. Use **only** your assigned materials: the e-book, lecture notes, and the primary document readings available on Blackboard for topics 7 and 8.

You **must** submit your **paper** to the **Turnitin.com link** on the course Blackboard page (the link will be in your Blackboard folder for Topic 8).

QUESTION:

Some prominent historians have argued that the United States entered into a period of decline in the years after the Vietnam War. Write an essay in which you assess the merits of this finding. Did either the crises of the 1970s pertaining to the environment and energy or the crises of the early 21st century pertaining to globalization and terrorism contribute to American decline? Defend your answer. (Hint: To prove your argument you will have to discuss both eras.)

Be sure to draw on the documents assigned as well as lecture notes and textbook readings in developing your answer. Remember that the majority of your examples need to come from the documents and that they need to be the basis for your argument.

GRADE RUBRIC:

- Uniformly excellent work will receive an “A.” Such work includes an *original and insightful argument*, substantial evidence derived from all assigned sources—*especially the primary document PDFs*—thoughtful organization, clear connections among the different pieces of evidence, and cleanly written prose. (Here substantial evidence means approximately 2-3 specific examples drawn from the primary document PDFs for each component of the question.)
- Work that is above average will receive a “B.” Such work includes all or most elements of “A” work but is not fully developed and perhaps has minor grammatical/stylistic errors. Students cannot earn Bs or As without substantive incorporation of the *primary document PDFs*, meaning quoting from and interpreting multiple primary documents.
- Work that is average will receive a “C.” Such work includes a weak or inadequate thesis, a summary of evidence without interpretation, and possibly significant errors of grammar and/or organization. Work with simple summaries of the *primary document PDFs* that do not engage the meaning of those documents will score C range. Additionally, for digital stories, work that includes nothing more than your recorded voice in “talking head” format will earn no higher than a C. There is a two-letter grade reduction for failing to incorporate visuals in the digital story. This reduction comes after the assessment of the quality of the narration.
- Work that is below average will receive a “D.” Such work includes no attempt at a thesis, weak generalizations in lieu of specific evidence, is off-topic, and possibly significant grammatical and/or mechanical problems. Work that does not engage the *primary document PDFs* will score D range only if it otherwise addresses the topic in a generalized fashion.
- Work that is failing will receive an “F.” Such work includes little or no understanding of the material and significant mechanical problems. “F” work typically does not make any mention of the *primary document PDFs*.



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