**HIS 103 Final Project Help Sheet**

**Choose two empires discussed in the course, and analyze three strategies that each of the two empires attempted to pursue in order to create, expand, maintain, or defend their rule. As part of your analysis, explain the consequences of these efforts, and provide specific examples drawn from the scholarly sources you are using to support your assertions and/or claims.**

**HIS103 Library Resources and Primary Sources** (accessible through the online class)

**Remember:** Your project must incorporate clearly-defined references to at least two *different* empires, as they developed in two *different* world culture areas. World culture areas include Europe, the Near East (also called the Middle East), India, Africa, the Americas, and Asia.

You do not need to consider three different strategies for each empire, or all four possible applications. For example, you could look at three strategies that were common to both empires, but only look at one of the following:

* creation of empire
* maintenance of empire
* expansion of empire
* defending the empire

As you think about how you will complete this assignment, you can consider the issues listed below to help you gain some focus. You do not have to respond to all of these points in your project; these are just prompts to get you thinking.

• Identify the central features of empire-formation present in the political systems you are considering. You do not need to identify all features that can be compared or contrasted in order to give your work coherence.

• Consider the geographic, political, religious, social, economic, or social setting in which each empire developed.

**How is a specific political tradition reflected in the society for which it holds meaning?**

* + Expressions of propaganda in art and architecture
  + Effect on gender roles or gender relationships (e.g., think about marriage laws and/or customs,

inheritance practices, laws or customs affecting property ownership, expectations about women’s roles in

society, expectations about men’s roles in society, etc.)

* + Effect of imperial policies on religion (e.g., tolerance, intolerance, efforts to dictate religious belief or

practice, use of religious beliefs to legitimize rule, ideas about divinity of rulers, etc.)

* + Relationship between religious belief and political system.
  + Expression of religious belief in law or codes of behavior.
  + Attitudes toward warfare (including ethics of warfare)
  + Attitudes toward other cultures and civilizations
* Institutional structures that maintain the political and military system
* Structure of military forces

**No matter the approach you take in your essay, you must keep in mind the following:**

How would you explain the effects, manifestations, or significance of imperial traditions within the context you are considering?

How do the sources that historians use affect the conclusions they draw?

Pay attention to both the strengths and weaknesses of the variety of primary sources examined by historians and yourself, along with the ways these documents can be interpreted.

Think about the strengths and limitations of prescriptive sources. Prescriptive sources are writings or other expressions of attitudes that represent an ideal form of behavior or thought. So, prescriptive writings give us information about ideals, but not necessarily how people actually behaved or thought. Law codes are a good example of prescriptive sources, for instance.

How will you include specific examples found in your sources to support your main points?

How will you explain the significance of the examples you choose? How do your examples support your main points?

**Here are some specific questions about efforts to create, expand, maintain or defend empire:**

How did the warring city-states of Mesopotamia merge into the world’s first military dictatorship under Sargon of Akkad?

How did Minoan Crete develop its vast sea-based empire (thalassocracy)? What event undermined its influence and paved the way for the Mycenaean rise?

What role did geography play in the formation and consolidation of pharaonic Egypt? Explain the conditions for the rapid growth of the Mauryan Empire (ca. 323-185 BCE). How and why did Athens, the world’s first democracy, develop into an empire?

How and when did the Roman Republic become an empire? How and when did the Roman Empire fall?  
How did Qin unify China? What did he do to keep it unified?

Explain the rise of Islam and its establishment in the Levant, North Africa, and Mesopotamia.

Analyze the fall of the Umayyad Dynasty and the transfer to Baghdad of the caliphate under the Abbasids. What were the cultural implications of this move?

Analyze the rise of the Mongol Empire. Why do some historians think it was a praiseworthy experiment?

Describe the meteoric rise and fall of the Inca Empire? How did a handful of conquistadors overcome vastly superior numbers?

The Italian city-states were not empires but some of them tried to be. Which ones? Why didn’t they succeed?