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American Military University
HIST102 – United States History since 1877
Prof. Brian Mark Weber, M.A.
Updated August 2015

Writing Assignment 1 and 2

This document contains important information regarding the **Writing Assignment 1** and **Writing Assignment 2**. The papers will be submitted through the “Assignments” area of the classroom (upload the paper as a Word document and submit). Please contact me immediately if you are unclear about these requirements.

The purpose of this assignment is to choose three important people or events in American history through the readings of weeks 1-4 (writing assignment 1) or weeks 5-8 (writing assignment 2.) You have some flexibility with this assignment. For example, you can write about three important acts that the British imposed which caused the colonists to seek independence against the mother country. Or, you could write about three important events during the presidency of Thomas Jefferson. Contact your instructor if you need guidance regarding a topic.

The assignment asks you to find a minimum of two academically credible sources (one may be your textbook), develop a clear, focused thesis statement, and to support your thesis with clear, insightful, consistent writing. This assignment will enhance your research and writing skills, both of which are applicable not only to this course but to many different careers.

You may include your own opinions and ideas as long as they reflect a solid understanding of the reading material. For example, if you write about the presidency of Thomas Jefferson, feel free to include your opinion as to how his ideas made the country stronger, freer, or more prosperous, but your primary focus should be an analysis of the factual information that you have utilized to support your thesis and main ideas.

Your ideas must be supported by information from your sources since you are using these sources to prove your thesis. After all, the purpose of a research paper is to make a case and to convince the reader that your writing and research supports your thesis. Whether you quote information directly from your sources, or paraphrase, you must cite your sources generously to give credit to the sources and to avoid plagiarism.

You may utilize one of two citation methods in your essay (depending on which method you are most familiar): MLA or Chicago/Turabian. Your instructor will post links to web sites that contain more specific information about utilizing these methods.

Your paper must contain a cover page, an introduction paragraph, three body paragraphs (one paragraph for each of your three people/events) and a conclusion paragraph. The paper length is about 3 pages, double-spaced. A separate document in the Resources section of the classroom is a **sample student essay**. Please refer to this document to get a visual representation of what your essay should look like.

During the two weeks before each writing assignment is due, your primary goal should be to read carefully, to collect additional source material, and to start thinking about ideas for your paper. Compose an outline or rough draft (not required) in order to begin the process of getting your ideas down on paper.

As far as your writing is concerned, here are the important components of a college-level paper which I will be grading along with your ideas (these and other components are found in the writing rubric and general writing guidelines found in your course documents):

1. Develop a clear, strong thesis statement letting the reader know your plan for the paper. Never use “I” or “you” in a history or English paper. Here is an example:

Unacceptable: *I am going to tell you about three important events in American history in this paper which I have written for you.*

Better: *An analysis of three important events in American history reveals how each was critical in the development of the nation.*

2. Develop sentences that are more complex. A sentence does not have to be five lines, but avoid a sentence with less than ten words.

3. Each paragraph should contain a topic sentence. The topic sentence introduces the main idea which will be explored in the paragraph. For example, if your second paragraph will focus on the presidency of George Washington, your topic sentence may look like this:

A second important person who had a major impact on the development of the American nation is George Washington whose presidency was characterized by many challenges.

4. Each paragraph should contain a closing sentence. The closing sentence briefly summarizes the main idea which you have just explored in the paragraph. For example, in the same paragraph about George Washington, your closing sentence may look like this:

The overall impact of Washington’s contributions to the young republic cannot be diminished, for the country emerged from his presidency more unified, more stable, and more prosperous.

5. Quotations in a short paper should not be more than three lines. The majority of your paper should contain your writing and your ideas. In a short paper there should only be one quote per body paragraph. Whenever you include a quotation, make sure the quote is fully integrated into the text of your paper. Below I have an example of a quote that stands alone (unacceptable) and a quote that is fully integrated (required):

“A group of Separatists in Holland, after negotiating with the Virginia Company, at length secured rights to settle under its jurisdiction.”

The future of North America changed forever when a “group of Separatists in Holland, after negotiating with the Virginia Company, at length secured rights to settle under its jurisdiction.”

Your final paper will be penalized for each quote which is not integrated, or for quotations which are not integrated properly.

6. Each quotation must be followed by a certain degree of analysis. After all, the reader does not know why your quote is important. As the historian/researcher/writer it is your responsibility to present evidence and then analyze this information clearly. This will become very important as you prepare for the research paper.

7. Avoid sentence fragments, run-on sentences, spelling mistakes, and grammar errors.

Your work reflects strongly upon you as a scholar, so please make sure your paper represents the very best you can offer to the academic community! I respect your experiences and your ideas and I want to be able to reward you with the grade you deserve. For additional information, you are strongly encouraged to read a document in the “Resources” area of the classroom entitled “Writing Papers: Twelve keys to writing a great paper.”

Please contact me if you are uncertain about my expectations, or if you need me to clarify one or more aspects of this particular assignment.

I am looking forward to reading your work!

Sincerely,
Prof. Weber

AMERICAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

THREE IMPORTANT PEOPLE AND EVENTS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

A SHORT PAPER
SUBMITTED TO
PROF. BRIAN MARK WEBER, M.A.

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND MILITARY STUDIES

BY

GEORGE WASHINGTON

CITY, STATE

SEPTEMBER 28, 2009

NOTE: THIS PAGE IS ONLY REQUIRED IF YOU ARE CITING SOURCES IN CHICAGO STYLE. OTHERWISE, USE AN MLA HEADING IN THE UPPER-LEFT HAND CORNER OF THE FIRST PAGE.

Here are some questions that the professor will consider when reviewing your essays in this course:

- 1) Has the student used Chicago/Turabian or MLA sources properly? Are sources cited in the text as well as in the bibliography?
- 2) Is the student's writing free of sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and other major grammatical errors?
- 3) Has the student integrated all quotations and followed each quotation with adequate reflection and analysis, and do the quotations offer insight into the topic?
- 4) Has the student balanced historical, factual information with writing that is insightful, reflective, and analytical, or does the student's writing merely state the obvious or paraphrase the factual information?
- 5) Is the thesis statement clear, focused, and well-developed?
- 6) Does each paragraph begin with a topic sentence that introduces the content of the paragraph to the reader and connects to the thesis?
- 7) Is the student's writing clear, fluid, consistent, insightful, and reflective?
- 8) Did the student cite all sources and include a bibliography page?
- 9) Did the student use academic sources from the APUS library? Academic sources include books, journals, articles, and magazines. Web sites cannot be used as sources.



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