

## **Term Paper Guidelines**

Our class discussions and presentations aim at broad coverage of witchcraft, magic, and science in medieval and early modern Europe. The term paper requirement complements this approach by giving you the opportunity to pursue a specific subject in depth. For the term paper, you will conduct individual research over the course of the semester and write a 15-25 page paper on the subject.<sup>1</sup>

### **Steps of the term paper, with due dates**

1. Spend the first few weeks of the course looking over the course books and thinking about a topic you would like to write your paper about. Once you have come up with a tentative topic, draw up a preliminary bibliography including the following: (a) primary sources, (b) scholarly books, and (c) scholarly journal articles from the last ten years (you may include older articles if you justify your choice—i.e., if an article has been particularly influential on later interpretations). The topic and preliminary bibliography are due, typed, on **Tuesday, March 11**, by 5 PM, in Herter 624. (Single-spaced printout is fine; otherwise, follow the history department style sheet.)
2. Continue reading and expanding your bibliography, and think about a thesis (a testable historical claim about the past) for your paper. Use this thesis to guide your reading in primary and secondary sources (you'll probably begin with secondary sources, but a lot of your reading should, in the end, be in primary sources). Continue to add to your bibliography, and keep it up to date. By early April, you should be ready to write a narrative outline of the paper—a kind of “skeleton” noting the claims you will make in your paper. This will help you make your thesis more precise; it will also show you where you still need to do more reading. Your narrative outline and revised bibliography are due, typed, on **Tuesday, April 15**, by 5 PM, in Herter 624.<sup>2</sup> (Single-spaced printout is fine; otherwise, follow the history department style sheet.) We will discuss narrative outlines in class.
3. As you continue reading, you should be drafting your paper. Like writing a narrative outline, drafting will help you refine your ideas and indicate the parts of the paper where you still need to do more reading. (Reading and writing are complementary; good researchers start writing from the beginning of a project, aware that they will revise heavily, or just throw away, what they wrote at the beginning.) A draft of the paper is due in class (note the change from steps 1 and 2) on **Thursday, May 1**. It should be double-spaced and follow the history department style sheet.
4. Having finished a draft by May 1, you will have plenty of time to revise and polish your paper. I will give you comments by May 8 (hopefully by May 6). You can also ask your classmates and friends for feedback. The final version of the paper is due a week after the last class meeting: **Tuesday, May 20**, at 5 PM in Herter 624.

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<sup>1</sup> The title page and bibliography do not count toward the fifteen-page minimum; however, footnotes do.

<sup>2</sup> This is also tax day. Plan accordingly!

## Grading

The term paper grade will combine process and product. About half of the grade will be based on the final product. The other half will be based on the process of research and revision that went into the paper. The *maximum* grade on the assignment will be reduced by one-half letter grade for each late part of the assignment (topic and sources, outline, drafts, and final draft). Each part must be handed in before I will accept the next part.

## Resources for writers at UMass

The History Department has a web page with writing resources, available from the course web page (<http://people.umass.edu/ogilvie/492H/>). The University Writing Center offers drop-in assistance with writing questions and problems; their locations and hours are available online (<http://writingprogram.hfa.umass.edu/>; follow the links for the Writing Center). Even if you are a pretty good writer, you might find it helpful to take a draft to the peer tutors at the Writing Center and get feedback from someone who is not in the course.

## Additional reading on term papers

If you have never written a term paper before—and even if you have—you may find the following books useful:

### Research methods

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The craft of research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. ISBN 0-226-06584-7. An excellent guide to research from the perspective of rhetoric. I urge you to skim this book before you start your project.

Mann, Thomas. *The Oxford guide to library research*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. ISBN 0-195-12313-1. User's manual for the academic library.

McCoy, F. N. *Researching and writing in history: A practical handbook for students*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974. ISBN 0-520-02621-7. A useful handbook for the beginning researcher. Some of the specific techniques are out of date (cf. Mann), but the book as a whole provides a good overview of what goes into research.

### Style and formatting

Turabian, Kate. *A manual for writers of term papers, theses, and dissertations*. 6th ed. Revised by John Grossman and Alice Bennett. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. The nuts and bolts of formatting papers, writing footnotes, using abbreviations, etc. If you have any questions about formatting that are not answered by the History Department style sheet, consult Turabian (use the footnote and bibliography style of reference, **not** the author-date style).

Williams, Joseph M. *Style: Toward clarity and grace*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990. ISBN 0-226-89915-2. The best guide to improving your writing style. Unlike Strunk and White and many other guides, Williams explains his principles carefully. The textbook edition, published by Longman, has useful exercises but omits the detailed discussion of coherence that the Chicago edition contains.