

Final Research Paper Guidelines

Deadlines:

3/30 Submit topic + sources via email
 4/23 Bring 2 Printed copies of draft to class
 5/7 Final Paper due + 50-word summary

Worth 20 % of final grade (20 points)

01 Section: Draft 7, Final 10, Oral 3
 HI Section: Draft 5, Final 12, Oral 3

For your final project, craft a 6-page biography of a single person, or a small (well-defined) non-famous¹ group of people, using a social history perspective. Remember that social history is “folk history,” and often seeks to challenge or undermine the chronology of political history, the assumptions of triumphant nationalism, or the dominant narratives of history written by and for an elite literate class. This paper is meant to be narrow, specific and deep, rather than wide, generic and surface-level. It should showcase your very best research and writing skills, and should demonstrate exemplary scholarly integrity in the use and citation of sources.

The evidence in your paper needs to include at least 2 primary sources (i.e. the raw, “original” material of the past), and 2 secondary sources (i.e. the reliable peer-reviewed scholarship of professional historians).

Sources:

Primary sources are from the time period you’re writing about. Examples are census records, radio programs, newspaper articles, government-issued certificates like birth/death/marriage records, photographs, diaries, memoirs, objects, buildings, or living people to interview. Some primary sources might be found in an online digital archive, but in general websites are not primary sources.

Secondary sources have been created later, by historians or other scholars. They might include books, scholarly journal articles, or documentary films. Your “obscure, non-famous” topic might not have anything previously written about it specifically, so the secondary sources are to help you establish *context, theory, or relevance*.

Wikipedia entries are not a reliable secondary source and should not be cited in your paper, although sometimes they provide links to references that can be useful in the initial stages of research. Likewise, websites are not an appropriate secondary source for this assignment.

Research:

I have provided a list of suggestions for getting started on the course website under the “Research Paper” tab. These links will point you to digital archives of appropriate primary sources, and help you access the scholarly works (= books and articles) to which our library has access for the secondary sources. You can, of course, use other materials, but **when in doubt check with me** to make sure your sources are appropriate.

¹ I recognize that “non-famous” is somewhat of a subjective determination – if in doubt about the suitability of your topic, check with me.

Writing:

Your paper should accomplish the following:

- Establish your topic / person's temporal, geographic, and historical context.
- Craft a compelling true account based on your sources and evidence.
- Address a historical question and/or establish the significance of your topic (i.e. why it matters). One way to think about it is: if your topic is the answer, what was the question?
- Conform to disciplinary writing conventions in history, including: Chicago Style referencing with footnotes and bibliography; scholarly writing voice; and elegant, expressive prose.

Paper should be NO LONGER THAN 6 pages, double-spaced with footnotes, plus a title page and bibliography (i.e. up to 8 pages total for the entire project). **Put a 50-word summary of the paper on the title page.**

Number your pages.

Citing your sources: use correct Chicago Style method (footnotes + bibliography). If you need instruction on this method, I have provided resources on the "Final Paper" tab on the website – **or** – consult the writing book you used in your freshman CompII class, check with the Writing Center, or stop in during office hours.

Be especially careful in citing online sources:

- just the <url> is NOT enough
- If using a WSU library resource make sure you've opened it in a new window (it should not start with <https://community.worcester.edu/webapps/portal/frameset>).

Use quotation marks AND CITATIONS for all quotes from your sources. If a quote is longer than 2 lines, put it in a block quote. Don't use a quote longer than 5 or 6 lines unless it's all really critical to your argument. When you're summarizing someone else's work, even if you're not directly quoting it, cite your source.

Phase I: Develop Your Topic, Locate Your Source Base – by March 30

Your topic consists of two interdependent parts: subject and sources.

Identify an appropriate subject for study, which will almost certainly mean narrowing your initial ideas. Examples that are way too broad: "African Americans," "homesteaders," "immigrants," "WWI soldiers." Think instead on the scale of a single person, family, small group, organization, or place – the smaller the better.

Identify a reliable collection of PRIMARY SOURCES which you can use to write about this topic. They might be part of a digital archive, or could be actual physical artifacts to which you have access, or could include a person you could interview.

Write a 1-2 page proposal that explains your topic and lists your source collection, and email it to me by midnight on March 30.

Phase 2: Research and Write a Draft – by April 23

Conduct a thorough research process, locating 2+ appropriate secondary source(s) to help you understand, theorize about and contextualize your 2+ primary sources. You cannot accomplish this by simply Googling; you must employ our library's print and electronic resources, and perhaps even expand beyond those if needed.

Write a full-length draft of your paper by April 23, when we will have an in-class peer review session. Bring 2 printed copies of your paper with you to class on that day – one to turn in, and one for your peer reviewer to read and mark up.

Students who supply 2 printed copies of the draft on the peer review day will receive a grade showing their progress toward achieving the assignment's stated standards. This grade will be emailed to each student by April 30, along with comments and feedback to help you revise the draft.

Phase 3: Revise, Refine and Re-Search – by May 7

Based on the feedback you will receive from peer & professor review, revise your paper. This may involve, for example, deepening or revisiting your research, radically re-shaping the paper's form or flow, or improving its argument, analysis, or prose quality.

Final Submission and Celebration – May 7

Turn in your final version electronically as a Word document by emailing it to me by classtime on Monday, May 7th the last day of class.* Our class that day will be about sharing our research with others; please bring a food to share that represents your (or your topic's, or another) cultural heritage and prepare a brief oral presentation on your research.

Note: Late work will be docked one letter grade per CALENDAR day until it is turned in.

* Papers from this project will be collected, anonymized, and used as part of Worcester State's ongoing assessment of LASC objectives for written communication.

HI 217 Social History Final Project Grading Rubric (20 points)

Make sure your title page also contains your 50-word project / paper summary!

	Exceeds Standard	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard
Assignment Purpose and Guidelines 3	(3) Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task and focuses all elements of the work. Exceeds or meets all stated guidelines.	(2) Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task. Meets a majority of stated guidelines.	(1) Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned task. Meets less than half of the stated guidelines.
Social History Approach 5	(4-5) Crafts a compelling, deep, and detailed biographical narrative about a person or group, situating the research within the context of reliable historical scholarship.	(2-3) Crafts a basic biographical narrative of a person or group, situating the research within an identifiable historical context.	(1) Topic is too broad or vaguely defined, or does not connect well to historical context or scholarship.
Scholarly Integrity and Information Literacy 5	(4-5) Uses at least 4 high-quality sources (2 primary, 2 secondary, or more), citing them in correct Chicago Style. Footnotes and bibliography are complete and accurate.	(2-3) Uses at least 4 acceptable sources (2 primary, 2 secondary), citing them in correct Chicago Style. Footnotes and bibliography are complete and accurate.	(1) Uses fewer than 4 appropriate sources, or sources are not cited correctly. Footnotes or bibliography are partial or missing.
Written Communication 4	(4) Is well-organized with elegant transitions throughout the paper. Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free.	(2-3) Uses a consistent and logical organizational structure. Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.	(1) Organizational structure is attempted but may be inconsistent. Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.
Oral Communication 3	(3) Conveys project research with a brief, well-prepared, coherent summary, including project's social history relevance.	(2) Conveys project research with a brief summary of methods and finding that demonstrates some preparation.	(1) Discusses project research in a partial or disorganized presentation.