

WESTERN CIVILIZATION IN WORLD PERSPECTIVE – STYLE GUIDE FOR PAPERS

Format

- Type your paper in a normal-sized font (Times New Roman 12, Courier New 10).
- Double-space your text (except for indented quotations).
- Do not skip lines between paragraphs.
- Set your margins at one inch all around (left and right, top and bottom).
- Staple your paper in the upper left corner (please do not use plastic covers).
- Number your pages (centered at the bottom of each page, or the in the top right corner).
- Proofread your paper to correct spelling, grammatical, and typographical errors.
- Make sure all your verb tenses agree. Basic past tense is usually the way to go.

Title Page

Your paper should have a title page on which you center your title vertically on the page. In a block on the right, list your name, the course name and number, instructor's name, and date of submission. Do not number the title page. Begin page numbering on the first page of text.

Bibliography

All papers must include a bibliography listing all the sources you used to write the paper. The bibliography is a separate page and gets a page number. See the next page for examples.

Citations

You must provide a citation (reference note) every time you do one of the following three things:

- Use a direct quotation
- Paraphrase the words or ideas of another writer (i.e. put something in your own words).
- Assert as fact any information that is not widely-known

Most students realize that they must cite direct quotations, but some do not know that they must also cite paraphrases. Anything you derive from the ideas of another writer must be cited. You must also use common sense to cite information that is not "widely-known." For example, you do not have to cite the fact that Trenton is the capital of New Jersey. If you wanted to mention the unemployment rate in Trenton in 2003, you must say where you got that information.

The Importance of Avoiding Plagiarism

Failure to provide a note in these circumstances constitutes plagiarism, a grave academic offense. It is extremely important that you document your work, both to give proper credit to other writers, and to provide a map for your reader to re-trace your research. Plagiarism is a form of cheating that can result in your dismissal from the University, so make sure that you cite anything you take from another source!

Citation Style

For papers in these courses, you may use the MLA style of in text citations. A note containing the author's last name(s) and the page from which you drew the reference should appear in parentheses at the end of a sentence, as in this example (Author, 6).

Quotations

A direct quotation is set in double quotation marks ("like this") unless it is longer than four lines. In this case single-space and indent the entire quotation (.5 inches on either side), and do not use quotation marks. Single quotation marks ('like these') are only used for quotes within quotes.

For more information

For tips on style and writing, see Kate L. Turabian's short guide, *A Manual for Writers* (6th edition).

Examples of how sources should appear in your bibliography

Note: bibliographical entries are arranged alphabetically. Therefore, you list the *first* author of an entry “last name, first.”

A book with one author

Foner, Eric. *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988.

Author's last name, First name. *Full Title*. Place(s) of Publication: Publisher, year of publication.

A book with two authors

Elkins, Stanley, and Eric McKittrick. *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788-1800*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Author Last, First, and Author First Last. *Full Title*. Place(s) of Publication: Publisher, year of publication.

An essay or article in a book

Westbrook, Robert B. “Fighting for the American Family: Private Interests and Political Obligation in World War II.” *The Power of Culture: Critical Essays in American History*. Edited by Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears. Chicago, Illinois and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Author. “Title of Piece.” *Title of Book*. Edited by Editor's Name. Place(s) of publication: Publisher, year of publication.

An article in a periodical

Weigley, Russell F. “The American Military and the Principle of Civilian Control from McClellan to Powell.” *The Journal of Military History* 57 (October 1993): 27-58.

Author. “Title of Piece.” *Name of Journal* and volume number (date of issue): page range.

An online item

Palast, Gregory. “Florida's Flawed ‘Voter-Cleansing’ Program.” *Salon.com*, December 4, 2000.
http://salon.com/politics/feature/2000/12/04/voter_file/index.html (accessed November 3, 2003).

Author. “Title of the Piece.” *Name of the Site* [if different from the URL], date piece written. URL (date you accessed the site).

Complicated Entries

It is likely that at some point you will have to cite material that does not fit one of the above examples. You can consult *The Chicago Manual of Style* (15th Edition) or Kate L. Turabian's shorter guide *A Manual for Writers* (6th Edition) to find examples of complicated citations. Even then, you may sometimes find that your source seems not to fit any correct format. In these cases, just remember to 1) credit your source, 2) give your reader a way to re-trace your steps, and 3) be as consistent as possible.

Writing Tips

Style

The language you use in your paper should be formal (do not use contractions or slang), but it does not have to be stilted. Write as directly as possible; do not use the first person or the passive voice. First-person qualifiers such as “in my opinion” or “I think” water down your arguments. Remember that your reader already knows it is your opinion, because your name is on the cover.

Weak 1st person writing: In my opinion, Roosevelt did the best he could.
Strong writing: Roosevelt took the only course available to him.

Use of the passive voice also makes your writing seem wishy-washy, because writers often employ it to disguise areas of ignorance. For example:

Passive: Roosevelt was criticized for his policy.
Active: House Republicans criticized Roosevelt’s policy.

The passive sentence makes it look as though the writer does not know who did the criticizing. Most word processing programs can check for passive voice. It often comes up when you use the verb *to be* (is, was, were, etc.).

Organization

The organization of your paper will vary according to the assignment and your instructor’s requirements. Here are a few hints that should be helpful in most cases.

Introduction

Think of your paper topic as a question you are trying to answer about some aspect of history. The answer you provide with your paper is your *argument*. You are offering an answer to your topic question, and saying why it is that the answer you have found is more persuasive than any other. Your reader should know, after reading the first paragraph, the argument your paper is going to make (again, avoid first person writing. Do not actually write out “my argument will be...”).

Body

In the body of your paper, you explain and justify the thesis you have posed. Each sentence in each paragraph should advance that argument. Bring your evidence to bear. Consider possible objections to your thesis; your paper will be stronger for it. You may view yourself as a lawyer trying to prove a case, or better yet, a judge weighing the merits of different arguments and coming to the best possible conclusion. Whatever you do, do not be a court stenographer, writing down what you have read without analyzing how it fits into your argument.

Conclusion

Once you have made your arguments, it is appropriate to close the paper with your conclusions. Do not use your concluding remarks merely to “sum up” what you have already written; that’s repetitious. You do not have to sum up a well-written paper, because you have made your points clearly the first time. Instead, use your conclusion to speculate on the larger implications of your argument. Here is a chance to ask yourself, if my argument is true, what else might be true? You can use your conclusion to answer the “so what?” question by placing the problem you have examined in larger contexts.