

## History 110A & 110B, Fall 2014: Term Paper Assignment

Writing a term paper is an accepted way to determine a history student's ability to research and obtain information, and to assess and discuss that information critically. In this class, your term paper effort will contribute 30% toward your final course grade. **Plan accordingly!** Here are the steps in the process:

### STEP ONE: CHOOSE A TOPIC and SUBMIT A TOPIC PROPOSAL

1.a) You must **choose your own term paper topic**, and **Dr. Myers must accept that topic**. Here are the rules:

- The topic you choose must be about a person, issue or event within the time periods and the topical fields respectively covered in the course.
  - ✓ **For students in History 110A, this means nothing later than 1500 C.E. and **nothing about a pre-literate culture.****
  - ✓ **For students in History 110B, nothing earlier than about 1450 C.E.**
- The topic you choose must not be a simple biography or recitation of events; it must contain critical analysis of persons and events, and must be of **sufficient intellectual complexity to reflect college-level work.**
- The topic **should not be too broad!** Rather it should focus on a specific event, individual, group, or belief; this aspect must allow you to demonstrate your abilities for analysis. For example: **DO NOT pose as a topic a broad statement such as:** "I want to write about the life of Alexander the Great [for 110A]" or "What Happened in World War Two [for 110B]." Instead, focus on a specific question to answer, such as: "Was Alexander really 'Great?' [for 110A]" or "How did the development of tanks impact how World War Two was fought? [for 110B]"
- The topic you choose **may be about a subject of personal interest**, but focused tightly on a specific aspect. Again, here are some examples: "The History of Dance in the Modern Era" is too broad and may lead to an "encyclopedia article" paper with description but no analysis. Instead, researching a specific question such as "How were Popular Dance Styles Influenced by non-European Cultures in the Twentieth Century" would be acceptable.
- **Topics specifically pertaining to American (U.S.) history are not acceptable for this paper.** However, *for students in History 110B only*, I will accept a topic of personal or family history such as "Why [and/or How] Did My Family Migrate to the United States?" as long as some family member who participated in the migration is still alive and is

**willing to be interviewed** on this topic (that interview becomes a primary source).

➤ If the topic of migration is chosen then the finished paper **must include a description and analytical discussion of the economic conditions, political policies and personalities of the abusive regime** in the old country.

- If your topic proposal is not initially accepted by Dr. Myers you will be asked to meet with him during office hours to negotiate a suitable topic.

**1.b) Pose your paper topic in the form of a question which will be answered by your research.** I call this the “topical question.” This is a crucial step to focus your research!

**1.c) You must submit a “TERM PAPER TOPIC PROPOSAL.”** One or two pages, typewritten, is sufficient. The proposal must tell Dr. Myers: 1) **WHAT** you intend to write about (**Be specific, as discussed above**); 2) **WHY** you chose that topic; and 3) **HOW** your investigation of this paper is important to your understanding of history.

➤ **You MUST express your topic in the form of a question which you will analyse and answer in the text of your paper.**

- Your Term Paper Topic Proposal must be turned in on the date announced in class. **Failure to do this on time will result in receiving an “F” on the term paper assignment!**
- **No electronically-sent Topic Proposal Forms will be accepted!**
- If your topic proposal is initially not accepted by Dr. Myers you will be asked to meet with him during office hours to negotiate a suitable topic. **Dr. Myers MUST approve your proposed topic before you can proceed any further with the assignment.**

**1.d) Once approved, the Topic Proposal Form becomes a contract between student and professor,** specifying what you intend to write about (the “topical question”), and any agreed modifications to help you focus your research.

- **Once Dr. Myers has approved your topic proposal, you MAY NOT CHANGE your term paper topic,** so be sure you can find enough research material to answer the topical question!
- **Save the copy of your topic proposal signed by Dr. Myers and turn it in with your finished paper!!!! Failure to do this will result in the receipt of an “F” grade on this project,** and I don’t want to do that to you any more than you wish to receive one.

## **STEP TWO: CONDUCT RESEARCH**

**2.a) As soon as you learn that your topic has been approved, you should immediately begin to do your research. At any time during the research and writing of your paper you are welcome**