

Teaching Assistant Handbook

Department of History

2020



UW - Madison
Department of History
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FOREWORD

This handbook is intended as a basic "how to" manual for teaching assistants in the History Department of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. **PART I** focuses on the mechanics of employment, TA training, and broad areas of policy, academic customs, and Departmental expectations that affect the lives and work of teaching assistants. **PART II** is devoted to teaching itself, and offers, we hope, some useful suggestions and guidelines for helping students learn. **PART III** offers sample syllabi, lesson plans, and other helpful handouts. Undoubtedly, this handbook will not be any TA's sole source of information, nor should it be. Teaching well is an ongoing enterprise in which the entire Department shares.

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***Please note that information specific to teaching remotely/COVID-19 has been added to this edition of the handbook. For more detailed information regarding these policies, please visit**

<https://smartrestart.wisc.edu/>*

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PART I: HOW THINGS WORK

THE ROLE OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS

For decades, teaching assistantships at UW Madison have played a central role both in educating undergraduates and providing financial support for graduate students. Though the primary job of a TA is to support the instructor's pedagogical endeavor, undergraduates often have more contact with their TAs than they do any other academic staff or faculty on campus, so the impact of graduate student teachers is immense.

Generally speaking, each TA is responsible for attending lectures, grading student assignments, holding office hours, and leading weekly discussion sections, which clarify themes from discussion and lecture. Additional duties vary widely and may include photocopying, leading review sessions, managing AV equipment for the lecturer, and writing paper assignments and examinations. For this reason, it is important that TAs arrange to meet with their supervising professors as soon as possible in order to share their skills and interests and learn faculty expectations.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS TO FACULTY

As their title suggests, teaching assistants "assist" the faculty in teaching certain courses. Faculty are defined in the Regents' rules (UWS 1.04) as persons holding the rank of instructor or above. The teaching assistant is expected to support and enhance the course as designed by the instructor: e.g., to lead small-group discussion sections, to devise and make available instructional aids useful in conveying the course content, to grade most of the written assignments, and to meet with students individually to assess their progress. The faculty member is expected to mentor the TAs in learning the craft of teaching. In every case the course is under the supervision of a faculty member, since under University rule 1.20.A "the faculty has primary responsibility for academic and educational activities." Disciplinary matters in a course are ultimately the responsibility of the faculty member, since, under the University disciplinary code, actions must be initiated by the "instructor," who is defined as "the faculty member who has responsibility for the overall conduct of a course and ultimate responsibility for the assignment of the grade for the course" (UWS 17.02.9). In practical terms this all means that final grades must be reviewed and the grade lists (or grade-change forms) signed by the faculty supervisor, and that problems such as cheating, class disruption, etc. are ultimately the responsibility of the faculty member and should be reported to the Department Chair and/or Dean by the faculty member, not by the TA.

The answer to many questions about what TAs are "supposed to do," or how a course is "supposed to work," is "it depends on the professor." Each professor has a different style and philosophy of working with a teaching assistant, and different ideas about how the TA(s) should fit into a course. The sooner you figure out your supervising professor's style, the better sense you'll have of how to go about leading discussion sections, meeting with students, and grading assignments. And the best way to familiarize yourself with your professor's approach to teaching is to meet, early and often. Most professors expect to meet with their TA regularly, and some insist on it. If a professor does not suggest regular meetings, however, you may need to do so. Generally, it's a good idea to meet at least once—and possibly more than once—before the semester even begins. That way, you will enter your first section meetings with a strong sense of the course's overall structure and goals, and of the professor's expectations for the students.

During the semester, whether you meet every week, every other week, or once a month, the meetings will be more productive if you go into them with specific questions. One of the most vexing concerns for first-time TAs (and veterans, for that matter) is figuring out just what a TA is supposed to do. Should discussions center on the reading assignments or the lectures? How much time can be devoted to reading, writing, and research skills? Asking your professor specific

questions about readings and lesson plans will often elicit not only specific answers, but a more general sense of the course's overall structure, themes, and objectives.

As both students and instructors, teaching assistants occupy a sometimes-ambiguous middle ground between the lectern and the lecture-hall seats. This indeterminate position is especially apparent in the relationship between the TA and the professor. It is a relationship between professionals, colleagues, and mentor/mentee all at the same time, and it generally assumes all of these forms over the course of the semester. The lecturer has primary responsibility for the course content, discipline, and final grading, and so ultimate authority over how the course should be taught, but in practice, teaching a lecture course is necessarily a cooperative endeavor shaped by both the lecturer and the teaching assistant.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHING ASSISTANTS, FACULTY, AND THE DEPARTMENT

The chair of the Joint Committee on Teaching Assistants (JCOTA), assisted by the Graduate Coordinator, administers TA allocations and assignments, and you should direct all questions about such matters to either individual. The Director of Graduate Studies heads the Graduate Council, to which the chair of JCOTA belongs. The Joint Committee on Teaching Assistants is responsible for reviewing the performance of TAs. TAs may bring questions about classroom situations to this committee. The relationship between supervising professor and TA is a professional and collegial one, and the Department hopes that they can resolve any difficulties between them. Should outside mediation become necessary, involved faculty and/or TAs should advise the chair of JCOTA, who deals with issues arising under the TAs' contract with the State. The chair of JCOTA may tender advice informally, and if necessary conducts Step 1 Grievance Proceedings as stipulated by contract. Both professors and TAs should be aware that TAs may work only a certain number of hours per semester and may not be asked to devote excessive overtime to their duties. The chair of JCOTA may intervene if it appears that a TA may be working more hours than the appointment level normally requires. The Teaching Assistants Association, the teaching assistants' union, represents TAs in negotiations with the University and the State. Students may wish to join the union but are not required to do so, and whether they join or not has absolutely no bearing on the allocation and assignment of TAs in the History Department.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS TO THEIR STUDENTS

Although under the administrative supervision of a faculty member ultimately responsible for the conduct of the course, the TA is the students' actual teacher in discussion sections. TAs prepare for and lead sections, create and reproduce handouts used in sections, read papers, grade exams, keep records, confer with and advise students, submit final course grades to the instructor, and write letters of recommendation (if they are asked and are willing).

HOW TEACHING ASSISTANTS ARE SELECTED

The Department allocates TAs by dividing applicants into the three major fields of study (U.S., European, and Non-Western) and then ranking them within each field. Students are then matched to particular courses within the context of this ranking, their own stated preferences, and the supervising faculty's assessment of a given student's adequacy of preparation. See the *History Graduate Handbook* for further details on the ranking and selection process.

MOVING IN

After being hired as a TA, you are assigned to an office to be shared with other TAs. Report any problems about its furnishings, lighting, heat, etc. to Lisa Normand, the Graduate Program Assistant, in room 4217. You will need to see Lisa to get an office key. It is illegal to duplicate University keys or to transfer them to unauthorized persons (UWS 18.06.12). You are also assigned a mailbox (if you don't already have one) on the fourth or fifth floor of Humanities, where you will receive U.S. and campus mail, Departmental notices, and messages or papers left by students.

Questions about payroll, taxes, tuition, segregated fees, and health insurance should be addressed to the Department's Payroll and Benefits Specialist. TAs are paid on the first of the month with Semester I pay dates October 1 thru February 1 and Semester II pay dates February 1 thru June 1. Health insurance premium, if required, may be deducted from your paycheck.

HISTORY DEPARTMENT SUPPORT STAFF

A listing of the History Department support staff and their duties as they relate to teaching assistants is included with the employment materials distributed at the department's TA orientation.

SUPPLIES AND SERVICES

Free copies, known as "desk copies," of any texts assigned in your course will be provided or acquired for you by the instructor. You should never have to spend your own money, even temporarily, for any instructional materials in courses that you teach. If the instructor has forgotten to order a desk copy for you from the publisher, ask her/him to give you a memo addressed to the appropriate bookstore, asking for a copy of the book. After the instructor has written the publisher and received a desk copy, you can give that copy to the bookstore in exchange for the one given you. Grade books, photocopies, Departmental stationery, and miscellaneous office supplies are available upon request in the main office. All employees of the Department are asked to use these supplies sparingly, since the Department's supplies budget is limited. Bluebooks for exams are also found in the main office.

The Department has two copy machines. Access codes are needed to use the copy machines. TAs will be provided with their own codes for copying course material at the Department TA Orientation.

Campus mail, enclosed in brown inter-departmental mail envelopes, may be posted in the mail box found in the main office. You also may deposit U.S. mail there but will have to supply your own stamps (unless you are mailing letters of recommendation for your students).

AUDIO-VISUAL AIDS

The Department owns audiovisual equipment and materials, which may be checked out from the main office and room 4212: maps, VCRs, monitors, slide projectors, portable phonograph, cassette tape recorder/radio (boom box), overhead projectors, movie projectors, cassette tape collections of famous persons and events (principally for American history), and slide collections for American history and for the history of Western Civilization. Advanced sign-up is strongly recommended. DPI (Department of Public Instruction) and LSS (Learning Support Services) provide free films. Instructors/TAs are responsible for reserving, picking up, and returning the films. Other films may be rented if the faculty or TAs use their own funds—contact the designated Department staff person (3211) before doing so.

COURSE ROSTERS

Instructors will receive class rosters for each course via the Academics tab on their MyUW portal. These rosters give essential information: the students' full names, identification numbers, school and year, and number of credits. This information may be useful should academic problems arise during the semester. The abbreviation indicating the school or college program will tell you which Dean to contact. When corresponding with a Dean or the Registrar about a student, include the student's name, school, year, and identification number. One continuing problem is keeping track of your students. In the first two weeks, students may add, drop, or switch classes. Continue to check your online roster as it changes as students add or drop classes. Students may continue to change from Credit to Audit up to the end of the fourth week, however, or to drop courses through the ninth week; after those deadlines they will need special permission from the Dean. Don't be upset to find students dropping; they regularly shop around, then adjust their schedules after they get a

sense of the syllabus, difficulty of the course, their job hours, etc. Some even sign up for an overload of courses and then in mid-semester drop the course in which they are doing most poorly. To discourage this practice, the University has adopted a policy under which students who drop courses or withdraw from school after the first seven class days will have that fact recorded on their transcripts.

Students attending class whose names are not on the roster should contact the instructor or TA to discuss what they need to do to get properly enrolled. Students who continue to come to class without being enrolled come under Regents' rules about "unauthorized presence" (UWS 18.06.21a and b) and are subject to disciplinary measures. In the event this problem occurs, consult with the faculty member in charge of the course.

Identification photographs of your students are available on MyUW by clicking on the "Photo Roster" button and are enormously useful in learning your students' names quickly.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

You should take attendance at the first class meeting and make note of the number of students attending. The Department tries to maintain 18 students per section. There is no firm Departmental policy on attendance, although faculty members in charge of a course often set ground-rules for their TAs, such as notifying the Dean of Students if any freshman misses three classes in a row. There is a University-wide presumption that lecture courses are different from independent-study courses, and that for students to get credit for a course with lecture and discussion, they should be present at those lectures and discussions. If faculty expects regular attendance, and most do, they should make that clear to the students from the outset, preferably on the syllabus, so that students know what is expected and cannot claim to a Dean that the instructor gave the impression that attendance was not mandatory. As a TA, you can also outline your own expectations for attendance on your discussion section syllabus, but make sure this does not conflict with your instructor's attendance policy. You are within your rights to lower a student's grade or to fail a student for excessive absences.

CLASSROOMS

Classroom changes are possible. If a classroom to which you are assigned presents problems such as heating, lighting, noise, or hazard, report it to the Department front desk staff (3211), who will report the problem to the proper UW personnel. If the classroom problems involve size or location, or immovable chairs, see the Curricular Coordinator, who will request a room change if necessary. Room change requests should be taken care of early in the semester – preferably within the first two weeks.

You should make unauthorized room changes only on an emergency basis. If you plan to hold a class off-campus, as is sometimes done, inform the Department's Receptionist and Department Administrator and leave a note on the blackboard or door of the regular classroom to direct stragglers to the right place. If you wish to hold a class off-campus regularly, you must consult with the course instructor and Department Chair, since liability issues may require permission from the Chancellor. In spring and early fall, students often suggest that classes be held outdoors; discomforts and distractions, however should be weighed against any potential benefit. If you wish to reserve another room for class purposes, you must make a special request of the Timetable Representative, who handles such requests. Neither the Curti Lounge nor the seminar rooms on fifth floor are to be used for discussion sections or make-up exams, as they are reserved exclusively for Department committee meetings and seminars. If you need a room for a film, review session, make-up class, or make-up exam, please try to give the Timetable Representative your request a week in advance. She will notify you once the assignment has been made.

Smoking is prohibited in the classroom, as is the use or possession of controlled substances or of drinks with an alcohol content of more than 5% (UWS 18.06.13, 18; 18.10). Peddling, soliciting, selling tickets, etc. are prohibited during regular class periods (UWS 18.06.16).

Some classrooms are AV-compatible, while many are not. If you have questions regarding the AV equipment in a room on the first or second floor of the Humanities Building, please contact AV specialist Mike Wood at mjwood@wisc.edu, or 608-265-9713. His office is in 5227 Humanities. For TAs in non-Humanities Building rooms, the contact for AV help is av@fpm.wisc.edu, or 608-890-4900.

SIX-WEEK GRADES

If you are teaching any first-year student, you will receive an email about a month into the semester inviting you to submit online Mid-Term (Six Week) Grades for those students, which are not recorded on their transcripts. This is not mandatory. But it can be a useful opportunity to signal to students how they are performing. You will likely have little graded work with which to calculate this grade, but it is OK to still post that grade. It is a good idea to tell your first-year students, in class or by email, what these grades reflect.

OFFICE HOURS

TAs with a 50% appointment schedule three-and-a-half office hours weekly. ***In the case of this extraordinary hybrid semester due to COVID-19, you must find a way to hold your office hours remotely. Please consult with your supervising faculty on how best to do this (Canvas, BBCollab, etc.). It may be easiest in some instances to block out these time and schedule appointments.*** You might also use the Web Conferencing application under the “Communication” tab on the course’s Canvas page. Office hours can be used for many purposes, such as individual advice about paper assignments, review of exams and papers whose grading the student professes not to understand, exam prep, disciplinary problems, and individual help with extra reading or research projects.

Office hours should not be used for private tutoring, remedial work for students who have missed class, or other kinds of instruction for which the students themselves should be responsible. Students may eat up your time if you let them engage you in discussions of their personal lives or general academic problems. Don't feel obliged to do work that others are trained and paid to do. Refer students to the Undergraduate Advisor for information on the History undergraduate major requirements, the History Lab for remedial help with writing, the Academic Advancement Program or the Athletic Program Tutors for tutorial help, and the Office of the Dean of Students for referral to professional counseling services such as the Crisis Center, test-anxiety classes, reading help, etc. If you think a student may need psychological therapy, call the Dean of Students Office, whose staff will contact the student. (For a partial list of campus and community resources, see the list at the end of this text.)

It is wise to schedule your office hours at a time you could use for prepping that week’s sections, should few students come. That said, one-on-one work with students can be rewarding and can give you a better sense of where your teaching is succeeding and where it is falling short. So avoid the temptation to subtly discourage students from coming.

You need not hold your office hours in your assigned TA office. Another public place, such as a nearby coffee shop or common area of a library, can produce better conversations, **though this is not recommended during the Fall 2020 semester, as you cannot enforce the mask policy in a public area outside campus.**

IN CASE OF ILLNESS/COVID-19 POLICY

You are eligible to earn sick leave. **At the beginning of each appointment period, you will be credited with a bank of (6) sick leave days.** Sick leave may not be used in increments of less than one half day. Unused sick leave will carry over from appointment period to appointment period only within the same department. Any combination of sick leave carry-over and newly accredited sick leave cannot exceed (12) days. No lump-sum payment will be made for unused sick leave balances. In the event of an absence, you must contact your professor/supervisor who will be responsible for covering the section or creating an alternative assignment. Please cc Leslie Abadie by email (abadie@wisc.edu). It is imperative that you track your sick leave usage using the Google form found at <https://forms.gle/Gbi5JKR9Djg5GFfn9>.

COVID-19 Sick Policy and Leave:

There are two federal emergency leave programs under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) – in effect through December 31, 2020 (<https://hr.wisc.edu/covid19/emergency-leave/>)

- Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act (EPSLA)
- Emergency Federal and Medical Leave Expansion Act (EFMLEA)

For a summary of the benefits of these programs, see the last pages of the Instructions For Requesting Emergency Leave (<https://hr.wisc.edu/docs/covid19/instructions-for-requesting-emergency-leave.pdf>) on the website above. Please contact Laura Fisk, Divisional Disability Representative (DDR) at (608) 265-3333, or laura.fisk@wisc.edu to request emergency leave.

The UW–Madison COVID-19 Pandemic Leave Policy explains more about the various options.

TA EVALUATION PROCEDURES

1. How Information is Gathered:
 - a. The Joint Committee on Teaching Assistants, composed of one faculty representatives from the Graduate Council (who is chair) and one faculty representatives from the Undergraduate Council, the Graduate Funding Coordinator (ex-officio), and three graduate students elected by their peers, shall review teaching assistants. This committee is also charged with the responsibility of requiring improvement, when needed, and directing non-renewal or removal, where appropriate, after due process.
 - b. During or before the seventh week of each semester, JCOTA is responsible for administering student evaluations of all TAs who either are teaching for the first time in the History Department at UW-Madison or scored an 'unsatisfactory' on their final evaluation during their most recent semester of teaching. These are sent out to students as an anonymous online survey.
 - c. All History Department TAs are evaluated toward the end of the semester using evaluation forms distributed and filled out during lecture or section. The TA should not be present in the room where students are filling out these evaluations. The final evaluation is somewhat longer than the 7th-week, and may take 15 minutes. On the

final student evaluation, a mean score of less than 3.5 (on a scale of 5.0) on all questions regarding TA performance identifies an unsatisfactory performance.

- d. Any faculty member supervising a TA who either is teaching for the first time in the History Department at UW-Madison or scored an 'unsatisfactory' on the final evaluation during their most recent semester of teaching shall visit at least one of that TA's discussion sections during or before the seventh week of the semester. All supervising faculty shall visit at least one discussion section of each of their TAs during or before the twelfth week of each semester and write a letter of evaluation to be placed in the TAs employment file. First-time TAs should be observed a total of two times. JCOTA is responsible for notifying supervisors which TAs they must visit by the seventh week. **During the Fall 2020 hybrid semester, please consult with your supervising faculty about how this is to be conducted, especially if teaching only online sections.**

2. System of Evaluation:

- a. The principal purpose of the evaluations is to provide every teaching assistant with information on students' reactions and suggestions for improvement.
- b. In the event that a teaching assistant's performance appears to JCOTA to be in need of improvement, the following steps are taken:
 - i. Any teaching assistant, new or experienced, who receives an unsatisfactory rating on their end-of-semester student evaluations will be reevaluated in the 7th week of the next semester teaching for the Department.
 - ii. If a problem with a TA's teaching is identified either (a) by a score of under 3.5 on a scale of 5.0 on the final student evaluation, or (b) by a detailed expression of concern at any time during the semester by the supervising professor, or (c) by the JCOTA at any time during the semester, then the Committee's Chair shall either [a] appoint a three-person review committee consisting of two faculty members (other than the student's supervising professor, major professor, or advisor) and a former TA to visit the TA's sections. The Committee writes a report to the TA offering advice to improve the TA's performance and recommending remedial action if necessary; or [b] take other appropriate action upon advice of the Committee in consultation with the course instructor.
 - iii. If a Teaching Assistant scores an 'unsatisfactory' on a final evaluation and then scores an 'unsatisfactory' on the 7th-week evaluation during their next semester of teaching, the Director of Graduate Studies shall appoint a second committee (constituted as in 2 above) to review the TA's performance. This committee presents the Graduate Council with a recommendation about whether the student should be allowed to continue teaching or should lose all future eligibility to hold a TAs hip within the History Department. The Council reports the decision to the Department's Executive Committee, which makes the final determination.
 - iv. In extreme cases, the Department may terminate a student's appointment as a TA at the end of one semester, in accordance with any relevant university procedures.

SUMMARY PERIOD AND FINAL EXAMS

The following rules are from the Faculty Senate Minutes, May 9, 1977: "The academic semester consists of an advising and a registration period, a regularly scheduled instruction period, and an eight-day summary period. The first day of the summary period is for individual study and review, and no classes or exams are to be scheduled then. The last seven days are pre-scheduled to include one two-hour summary block for each course of two or more credits (except seminars, directed study, and independent study courses). This two-hour block shall be used for an examination or for

other instructional activities as deemed appropriate by the instructor and as approved by the instructional unit offering the course. Final examinations or other summary period activities cannot be scheduled during the two weeks preceding the summary period. Take-home final examinations are due at the scheduled two-hour block.

"The summary period block schedule must be published in the Timetable and must be adhered to by all faculty.... The time of a two-hour block for a class and/or the due date for a take-home examination may be changed only with the prior approval of the dean. Where a student has more than two summary blocks scheduled within a period of 24 hours, the instructor may, within guidelines adopted by the college or school faculty, reschedule a final exam to avoid hardship. Rescheduled summary blocks shall be of the same general nature and quality as the activities of the regular two-hour summary block...."

Course grade must be submitted within four calendar days (96 hours) from the date and hour of the two-hour block scheduled during the summary period. Late reporting of grades will require filling out Grade Change Report forms for all students registered in the class.

FINAL COURSE GRADES

All undergraduate courses must be graded A, AB, B, BC, C, D, F, or I. TAs usually calculate the grades and submit them to their supervising professor. The supervising professor approves and submits the final grade for each student online through MyUW, or has the TA do so. A has traditionally meant excellent work, B very good work showing special merit, C average, acceptable college work, and D barely acceptable work showing serious weaknesses. F, of course, indicates work that is inadequate for college credit. If a student is listed on the grade sheet but did not do the work required in the course, give a grade of NW (for No Work); if the student's name does not appear on any other grade list (for another section of a course having more than one lecturer, such as History 101 and 102), the Registrar will translate the NW into an F. Once a regular grade (A through F) has been submitted to the Registrar, it may not be changed unless it can be shown that a clerical error was made.

The grade of I (for Incomplete) should be given very sparingly, and students should be discouraged from expecting Incompletes without very good cause. Students should not be encouraged in the habit of living on borrowed time, and removing Incompletes means a lot of extra clerical work. You should not give an Incomplete that you are not prepared to defend to a dean, if asked. The official University policy on Incompletes is as follows:

"A grade of incomplete may be reported for a student who has carried a subject with passing grades until near the end of the session and then, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond their control, has been unable to take or complete the final examination, or to complete some limited amount of term work. An incomplete is not given to a student who stays away from a final examination except as indicated above. In the absence of such proof the grade shall be F. Any subject taken by an L & S undergrad student marked incomplete must be completed by the end of the fourth week of classes of the student's next semester of residence at the UW-Madison (exclusive of Summer Sessions), or it will lapse into a Failure unless the time limit has been extended in writing by the dean's office. Any subject taken by other than L&S undergrads must be completed by the end of the student's next semester of residence (exclusive of Summer Sessions). Incompletes incurred in the last semester of residence may not be removed after five years of absence from the University without special advance permission of the student's dean. Such Incompletes remain on the record but do not lapse into Failures."

College or School Special students are subject to the rules applicable to their respective unit regarding the completion of Incompletes. University Special students have until the end of their next semester in residence (exclusive of Summer Sessions) to complete their work and receive a final grade.

If you do give an Incomplete, indicate in your grade book what work remains to be done and what the estimated course grade is without that work. Thus if the student does not make up the work until after your term as TA, the faculty member in charge of the course will be able to compute a final grade.

Students may find their final grades through their MyUW Website (<http://my.wisc.edu>).

It has long been Departmental policy (although not everyone has known or observed it) for instructors to keep final exams on file for a year, and in some courses the same is done with all of the papers written for the course. Thus if a final grade is questioned, or if a student asks for the exam, paper, or for a recommendation, the teacher has the student's work at hand. Some instructors, however, do not wish to use up valuable office space to store exams and papers. Instead they often attempt to deposit exams and papers in the lobby of the History Office. This contravenes College regulations because it violates the federal Right to Privacy Act. (Students can easily look at other students' grades or even steal other students' papers or exams.) Do not leave graded exams and papers in the main History office or hallways. Do not return graded work to students in a manner that invites them to flip through other students' work, such as a stack of papers in your mailbox. Course grade books are considered Departmental property and must be deposited with the instructor for whom you taught when your TAship is complete, so that the instructor may deal with Incompletes and future questions about grades.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

The University definition and rules for academic misconduct and the procedures for dealing with it are spelled out in a booklet titled *Academic Misconduct: A Guide for Instructors*, and a brochure, *Academic Misconduct: A Guide for Students*. Both are distributed by the Office of the Dean of Students. These publications fully explain the rules and provide sample letters. Acquaint yourself with the rules and procedures (<http://students.wisc.edu/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html>), but feel free to call the Dean of Students Office (263-5700) if you have questions. Any formal action initiated against an offending student MUST be handled by the faculty member in charge of a course, not by the TA. Ordinarily, disciplinary actions taken by the Dean are recorded on the student's internal transcript for a limited term (usually a couple of semesters) and are then expunged, but serious offenses become part of the student's permanent record and will appear on their external transcript.

Cheating is a serious problem and it is best to make every effort to prevent it. In exams, ask students to sit in alternate seats (if room size allows) and put books and papers on the floor. During exams, be attentive, walk up and down the aisles occasionally. In classes where you make up the exams yourself, you can also minimize the likelihood of cheating by giving only long essay questions, or by handing out two or three different versions of a short-answer section so that each student's nearest neighbors will be answering different questions.

Early in the semester you should explain what constitutes plagiarism, why it cannot be tolerated in a university, and what the penalties are (at the very least, removal of the student from the course). You may prepare your own handout on kinds of plagiarism. For essays, some TAs and professors have found it helpful to assign very specific topics, and to prescribe the approach to be followed. For term papers, you may wish to suggest some very particular slant or approach that will make it difficult for the student to use someone else's paper. If you suspect exam cheating or plagiarism,

you should immediately caution students to pay attention to their own work. If the behavior persists, you should issue a pointed warning and make as exact a record of the facts as you can—names, time, place, evidence of dishonesty—and bring this information to the faculty member supervising your teaching.

DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS

Disruptive students are an occasional problem. In a student body as large as ours, an instructor must expect some behavioral problems. If a student is persistently hostile, argumentative, or rowdy in such a way that hampers the daily conduct of a class, you should speak to the student in an office conference and confer with the instructor. If at any time you are apprehensive about your personal safety in such a confrontation in your office, ask that another TA or the course instructor be present at the same time. Discussion sections are for helping students understand and master the materials of the course, and not for any other purpose. The Office of the Dean of Students (web site above) also has resources for dealing with disruptive students. Additionally, TAs can also confer with the department's undergraduate advisors for advice.

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

There are some obvious requirements of teachers, such as being prepared for and meeting all classes, being present during office hours, arriving on time and not dismissing early, and teaching what one is qualified and supposed to teach. If you are unable to meet a class, you could arrange with another TA to take your place; if that is impossible, you should call the History Department's Receptionist who will see that a notice is put on the blackboard or door of your classroom to inform and dismiss the students promptly. Faculty legislation also allows classes to be officially dismissed when they conflict with the previously announced appearance on campus of the President of the United States or a nominee of a major party for President. Class periods should be devoted to the subject matter of the course. If you wish to discuss your personal views with students, you should do so outside the context of the course. Students are guaranteed freedom of inquiry and expression in "Student Freedom Policies" (faculty legislation, 11-700).

Grading should be fair—that is, it should be done equitably, and carefully according to standards that are clear to the students and comparable to the standards used by other teachers. You can do students a real disservice in the long run by giving them higher marks than their work actually merits. Grading should also be done as promptly as possible, to provide correction and reinforcement while the student's work is still fresh in the TA's mind. It is ethically very dubious to accept a new writing assignment before having corrected and returned the previous one, since you may end up penalizing a student for errors in the second assignment that the student could have avoided if you had already pointed them out in the first.

Confidentiality of your evaluations of students is important. Do not leave piles of graded papers or exams unattended so that students may read each other's' grades, or post grades in such a way that students may read other names and grades. Neither should you casually express your opinion of one student to another. Any of these breaches of confidentiality may be legally actionable under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).

It is also considered bad form to tell students your judgments of your fellow TAs. It is certainly not part of your job to do so, and since you have not studied under them, your opinion of their teaching can be based only on impression and hearsay.

The Regents adopted a code of conduct governing sexual harassment (Faculty Document 458, November 2, 1981). As originally written, the code applied only to faculty and academic staff; legislation approved later extended it to TAs as well. The rules are too extensive and detailed to be reproduced here. In general, however, sexual harassment by a teacher is defined as (1) making,

threatening to make, or agreeing to or offering to let one's evaluation of a student be affected by sexual favors; (2) flagrant or repeated sexual advances or physical contact harmful to a student's study, performance, and environment; or (3) sexually demeaning verbal or other expressive behavior in or out of class. The rules allow visual, verbal, and written materials of a sexual nature to be used in class or assigned if they are "germane to the subject matter of the course." The guidelines do not absolutely rule out dating or consensual sexual contact between student and teacher, but that has long been considered professionally unethical conduct and even cause for dismissal because of the extensive opportunities for abuse invited by such behavior. For further information on this issue, contact the Equity and Diversity Resource Center (263-2378).

PART II: TEACHING

ORIENTATION

During Welcome Week of each fall semester and the week before the start of classes in the spring semester, the College of Letters and Science holds a teaching workshop for beginning teaching assistants and for those who wish or need to revise or rethink their teaching techniques. This workshop is conducted by experienced teaching assistants (Teaching Fellows). The Academic Personnel Office also offers workshops on sexual harassment and cultural diversity during the semester. ***During the Fall 2020 semester, these workshops take place virtually.**

The Department holds an orientation session each semester before classes begin. It involves staff, faculty and the Graduate Program Project Assistant. It is offered as an information session to acquaint new and experienced TAs as to how matters pertaining to them are handled in the History Department.

REQUIRED TRAINING FOR NEW TAs

The Department, along with the University, is required to provide at least eight hours of job-related training during the first semester of teaching. The department determines which TAs will be required to take part in the various sessions that are offered. The University offers training workshops (mentioned above) for partial fulfillment of this requirement. The department schedules the remaining hours of training throughout the semester tailored to the needs of the TAs involved.

TEACHING TECHNIQUES

Methods and styles of teaching are as varied as the individuals hired to teach. Still, there are some commonly used techniques that have proven successful for TAs in the past. Over the course of the semester, you will find that you must fulfill several responsibilities simultaneously. These include: getting acquainted with your students, handling early-semester roster/section changes, preparing students for exams, guiding students through writing assignments, and the running of weekly discussions. Thus, discussion sections can and should be used for different activities in different weeks. You'll probably want to use the first week to introduce yourself and the course to the students, and to have the students introduce themselves to one another. The week before a test, you may want to devote a discussion section to review. If students are being asked to write a research paper, you may want to spend some time discussing the assignment and acquainting them with the campus resources they will need to write a successful paper. You may want to begin your planning by considering what sorts of "special activities" are suggested by the course syllabus and by plotting out time to attend to those activities.

Most weeks, your work will involve helping students understand the unfolding content of the course in weekly discussion sections. Think about how you can bring variety to that enterprise. Is there a week that might lend itself well to a debate between groups of students, or another when students might benefit from breaking up into pairs or groups of three to work closely on some issue? Can students role-play historical figures? Would a film clip work for one week, or parsing a political cartoon? How about a debate? Keep an eye out especially for opportunities for joy—even a little structured silliness, which can help bring you and your students together and to pull in students who might otherwise remain reserved.

TIPS FOR APPROACHING THE TEACHING ASSISTANT GIG

Frontload the work

With a bit more work up front, you can lighten your workload for the semester considerably. As early as possible—preferably before the course starts—you should establish and put into place systems of organization that, in addition to meeting the needs of the specific course, will play to your strengths and compensate for your weaknesses as a teacher. This requires gathering as much information about the course and course materials before the semester gets rolling. This information should include:

- the syllabus,
- course readings or materials,
- student enrollment information (how many students enrolled, how many per section, names, etc.),
- expectations of you (from the department, professor, co-TAs),
- times and locations of all lectures, sections, office hours, and TA meetings.

Having this information allows you to:

1. determine appropriate policies for and expectations of students,
2. prepare handouts and forms necessary for communicating expectations and tracking students (e.g., course or section guidelines and policies, attendance sheet, section switching forms),
3. set up organizational systems that you will need during semester (e.g. grading system, email folders, electronic and paper files, lesson plan blueprint)
4. develop a sense of what directions you want to take in the course
5. set a schedule that accommodates your TA duties and other obligations.

Anticipate, Anticipate, Anticipate

At the beginning of the semester, it's good to familiarize yourself with the trajectory of the whole course by looking over the syllabus and talking to the professor and other TAs. The purpose is to identify points of stress and points of relief that might occur during the semester for you or the students. Identifying these in advance cuts down on unpleasant surprises and allows you to plan for the difficult periods and take advantage of the quieter moments.

The following are possible pitfalls to anticipate and plan for accordingly:

- points in the semester that might require more work or time on your part (e.g., grading papers or exams);
- assignments or topics that might challenge your teaching abilities, due to either lack of knowledge or lack of experience about a certain topic or with a type of assignment;
- periods when students may be more taxed or distracted (e.g., during midterms, the day after Halloween);
- periods when *you* might be more taxed or distracted (e.g., end of the semester papers, prelims, personal life events).

Also, look for points during the semester or aspects of the course that might provide you (or your students) with a breather. For instance, sometimes professors cancel a class due to conferences or other professional engagements. This could provide an opportunity you to catch up on your own work or to plan something more elaborate for the next time the class meets. Or, perhaps there is a topic to be covered during the semester about which you are very knowledgeable. Again, this could be a time to either give yourself a break and turn to your own work, or use the extra time to get creative with your teaching.

In addition to making these assessments at the beginning of the semester, it's a good idea to reassess throughout the semester. From time to time, look ahead a couple of weeks on the course syllabus and, keeping your own coursework, research, and personal obligations in mind, refresh your memory about what those weeks will entail for you and the students and look for any new obligations that may have come up due.

GETTING READY FOR THE FIRST DAY

Making a syllabus

Each professor will write a syllabus for the course, and it will tend to serve as the final word for the class. Some TAs, however, like to make up a section syllabus to hand out along with the course syllabus, and some courses require such syllabi. History courses with more than one TA are more likely to rely on multiple syllabi. Most TAs who design their own syllabi do so with their discussion section in mind—any information about the course already provided in the main syllabus does not need to be included in the TA version, unless it bears repeating. What should be included is information that could vary from section to section and from TA to TA, such as:

- *Contact information and office hours.* Generally, a TA will provide an office number, office telephone number, department mailbox number, and e-mail address. Only the most selfless TAs offer their personal phone numbers. Whatever information you end up providing, it also helps to explain your daily routine and how students can best track you down—that is, when you are generally in your office, how likely it is that you'll get a phone message from an officemate, and, most important, how often you check and return your e-mail. Many TAs will designate windows of time that they will not respond to email, such as the 24-hour period preceding the due date of a paper, the 48-hour period following the return of a paper, or weekends.
- *Policies.* Many of the course policies will already be included in the main course syllabus, but there may be other policies that need explaining, or course policies that could use elaboration. Some likely candidates are section attendance, discussion participation, grading criteria, late papers, extra credit, quizzes, review sessions, and whether or not and in what form you will look at rough drafts.
- *Readings.* Some courses give TAs a certain degree of control over reading assignments, in which case the TAs need to provide a week-to-week description of their sections' readings, as well as information about how to access the texts.
- *Resources.* Services like the Writing Center, the McBurney Center, and University Health Services are likely to come up at some point in the semester, and it helps to have their contact information on paper.

It helps to think about the syllabus as a contract. Most students will consider whatever is in the syllabus as having the force of law. If a discrepancy or disagreement arises during the semester, the syllabus can serve as the final authority, but only if it is clear and comprehensive. A classroom with a good syllabus appears governed by reason and principle; a classroom without a syllabus appears subject to whim and prejudice.

The first day

The first day of class is inherently unpredictable, and many teaching assistants (as well as professors) experience anxiety beforehand. There is nothing unusual about this, and, in fact, a little anxiety may help instructors to think carefully about the first meeting and to prepare thoroughly.

Here are some basic goals to consider for the first class meeting:

- Introduce yourself, and make clear how students can best get a hold of you. Let them know how frequently you check e-mail, when you hold office hours, and how flexible you will be in making appointments outside of your regular office hours.
- Have students introduce themselves or each other. This gets everyone talking on the first day of class, and will help you begin to remember names. Nametags for the first few weeks,

or even the whole semester (as students will rarely learn all other students' names) are encouraged.

- Be sure to cover the nuts and bolts: go over the syllabus to give everyone a sense of how the semester will unfold; describe the class's major assignments; and discuss the course materials—i.e. where students can find books or packets, which are required, what is available in the library, etc.
- Explain the general purpose of your discussion section, and your goals for the semester, including things like creating a space for active discussion of the course material; preparing students for assignments and exams; answering questions about lectures and readings; or working on writing. Keep in mind that some of your students may be in their first semester at the university, or may have never taken a history course before, and so may have little sense of what discussion section is all about.
- It is generally a good idea to try to have some sort of substantive discussion relating to the topic of the course at some point on the first day of class. Otherwise, the first day can seem overly administrative, and not entirely necessary. Chances are that no readings will have been assigned at this point, and this may be an advantage—many students feel more comfortable talking about their personal opinions and experiences than analyzing books, and this sort of off-the-cuff discussion can help them to gain confidence speaking in section.

LEADING DISCUSSIONS

It is probably safe to say that leading classroom discussion is far and away the greatest source of anxiety for teaching assistants. In part, this is because many students judge TAs—and many TAs judge themselves—largely on the basis of how well discussions go. This is not entirely fair. Many less glamorous tasks, like designing and grading assignments, and meeting with students individually, are no less difficult and just as important. But leading discussion remains the most public and most evident part of a TA's job, and, whether justified or not, the most obvious demonstration of a TA's effectiveness.

Leading discussion can also be a powerful source of satisfaction, and even exhilaration, for a teaching assistant. When a discussion goes well, it offers a kind of intellectual vitality, and immediate satisfaction, that few other aspects of teaching can.

The first thing to keep in mind about discussions is that the excitement and angst they produce come from the same source: their unpredictability. Classroom conversations are more like cats than like dogs; they don't respond to direct commands, but they can be gently coaxed in one direction or another. They are at times arbitrary and mercurial; the exact same lesson plan can work perfectly at 8:50, and fall flat on its face at 11:00. They can be affected by elements that would never factor into a lesson plan: assignments for other courses, social events, that morning's headlines, or even the weather. TAs can exercise a great deal of influence over the tone, content, and course of a discussion, but they can never account for all of the variables that affect its success or failure.

The second thing to keep in mind is that despite the unpredictable, spontaneous nature of classroom discussions, their outcome depends directly on how much planning the TA puts into them. It's hard to lead an interesting and productive conversation without dedicating any thought to the subject beforehand. You cannot script a classroom discussion (nor would you want to), but you can decide what the primary goals of the discussion should be—what questions should be considered, what issues should be highlighted, what concepts should be explained, and what aspects of the reading assignment should be examined—and you can plan how best to guide the conversation toward reaching those goals. Lesson plans do not need to draw a straight line from point A to point B; often, the best plans are those that can move in any direction, or from one major topic to another and back again, without derailing the conversation. But it is crucial that TAs have some sense of the overall discussion well before it begins.

Otherwise, there are no tried-and-true formulas for insuring a successful discussion. But there are a handful of useful strategies that, together, can help produce lively and engaging discussions over the course of the semester.

Ask Open-Ended Questions: This may seem obvious, but nevertheless it is surprisingly easy to fall back onto dead-end questions in the middle of a conversation. What's worse, this tendency is most common when the discussion is not going well. Any question that can be answered with a "yes" or a "no" or any one-word answer is generally best avoided, and never to be relied on as a conversation-starter. Straightforward, concrete questions can be used to set up larger questions, or to draw in quiet students, or to change the pace of the discussion, but they can never serve as the core of a conversation, or at least of a conversation that is in any way interesting and challenging. Engaging discussions center on broad, interpretive questions that require synthesis and analysis.

On the other hand, there is such a thing as questions that are *too* broad. "What was the significance of the Great Migration?" may be a fascinating topic, but framing the question in such broad terms is likely to generate only blank stares. Central questions should be expansive without being sprawling.

Let Students Answer Your Questions Themselves: Presumably, the point of asking questions is to have students think about them, and then offer an answer. It is surprising, then, how easy it is for TAs to unconsciously undermine this basic goal. The most common form of self-sabotage is not giving students enough time to consider the question and offer a response. Often, TAs will pose a problem, wait for an answer, decide that there is none coming, and answer him or herself, all in the space of five or six seconds. Many thoughtful responses take longer than this, and might be forthcoming given a little more time. Also, you'll find it's the same students who are able to process your questions the fastest, and so if you always allow the students with the quickest response to speak, you'll end up with the same few students always speaking. Try varying the format in which students are given to gather their thoughts. Have students consider your questions first with short (3-5 minute) free writes in the topic, or have them turn to a neighbor and discuss their thoughts about it before opening up to a full-class discussion.

Another way that TAs can frustrate their own goals is by asking questions in a way that leads in an obvious direction or even attaches a ready-made answer. Asking things like "Isn't it clear that workers were acting against their own interests in this instance?" or "Why is race so different in Brazil? Is it because of Brazil's unique historical experience?" may work well for trial lawyers, but not for teachers. Students will see little point in responding to questions that do not require them to think. Most students will simply refuse to respond to question when they think the answer is obvious.

They will also remain silent if they sense there is one correct answer. TAs can create an uncomfortable climate in which to ask questions. Phrasing things like, "I'm sure it's obvious from the reading..." or "Here's an easy question..." or "Does anybody not get that? It should be pretty clear by now..." or, after listening to a handful of responses, "The *real* answer is..." will not encourage participation. Students who feel that getting a question wrong suggests a lack of intelligence (or, for that matter, that there is always a "wrong" answer) will generally stop hazarding responses. Even your (sometimes unintentional) half-hearted vocal response to a student's comment – for instance, a limp "OK..." – can shut students down for the day, or longer.

Use Structured Activities: Debates, role-plays, quiz shows, student-led discussions, or any other structured alternatives to conventional question-and-answer discussions can both add variety to the semester and effectively cover course material. These are "high-risk" approaches to discussion section, however; they can be engaging and fun, or they can completely backfire. To avoid a meltdown, it is important to *sell* the activity. More than in any other sort of lesson plan, a TA using a structured activity must act as coach, referee, and cheerleader, all at once. If the TA does not seem committed to the activity, there is little chance that the students will be. (It's also good in these

cases, and generally, to over plan—have more options on your lesson plans that the fifty minutes will allow.)

Another thing to keep in mind is that although these activities tend to put the students in more control of the conversation than do conventional discussions, they require as much or more planning. Ideally, debates and role-plays run of their own accord once they get going, but in practice, they often depend on a well-timed question, observation, or adjustment to stay on track. The more well-sketched such activities are beforehand, the better sense the TA will have of where they should be going and how best to get there.

Do Group Work: “Group work” is a vague term, and is rarely accompanied by a description or explanation. But that lack of explanation is less a sign of arbitrariness than of flexibility. “Group work” can mean many things, from small-group discussions to peer editing to group projects outside of class, and any other classroom scenarios in which students are asked to work in pairs or teams.

Group work offers many benefits: it allows students to get to know some of their peers, and so creates a more familiar and comfortable environment in the classroom; it offers, for many, a less intimidating and more casual forum for discussing the material; it suggests to students that they can approach and analyze classroom readings on their own, with only a minimum of guidance from an instructor; it allows students to have a discussion on their own terms, quite possibly from an angle that might not have come up in a TA-led conversation; it promotes cooperative rather than competitive learning, and dispels the notion that studying history is always a solitary, isolated experience.

Finally, group work helps the teaching assistant. Used in combination with a class discussion (that is, breaking into groups first, and then coming back together to talk as an entire class), group work can help to “prime the pump” of conversation, and so lead to a richer analysis of the material. When students have already talked with one another about the week’s readings, they will have ideas and concepts at their fingertips, and they will have a sense of how their own ideas compare with others’. And the TA will have a reservoir to draw from in leading the conversation (i.e. “discussing the discussion”), by asking questions such as: What issues came up most frequently in your group conversations? What sort of disagreements surfaced? and How did talking to your classmates change your own ideas? Questions geared toward analyzing the outcome of small-group discussions can be a highly effective way of drawing people into the conversation.

*Note: Small group conversations can, if properly structured, be so fruitful that it is redundant, and not worth the time, to rehash the point with a follow-up full-class conversation. Not all small-group discussions must be concluded with a large-group discussion.

A common student complaint about group work is that one or two students end up shouldering most of the burden, while other students sit in silence. Group work still requires active guidance from the TA, through eavesdropping on conversations, checking in with each group, and asking key questions.

Play Devil’s Advocate: Don’t be afraid to ask extreme or off-the-wall questions as a way of getting conversations going. Posing questions from an unexpected or not-yet-considered perspective, context, or ideological position can spark debate and pull in more participants. There are some types of questions that even the most reticent student will have difficulty letting stand, unchallenged, in the classroom. Further, asking surprising questions can help prevent an atmosphere in which students try to mold their responses to what they think the TA “wants to hear.”

Talk to Other TAs: Your fellow teaching assistants are, as always, your best source of information about what works and what doesn't in the classroom. Someone else in the department has taught the topic you are teaching, planned the lesson you are preparing, and tackled the problem you are facing. Veteran TAs are an endless source of ideas, cautionary tales, and invaluable advice drawn from their own experience. Do not hesitate to ask to observe other TAs' sections. Stepping inside someone else's classroom is almost always refreshing and reassuring.

GUARDING YOUR TIME

Teaching is an endeavor to which one can always devote more time. It is bottomless. Teaching assistants, as both students and teachers, must learn to police the boundaries of their various identities. To a large degree, teaching assistants are on their own in this endeavor. TAs are responsible for their own schedule and time commitments, and for making sure that teaching duties do not eclipse graduate work, not to mention eating and sleeping. Balancing the role of teacher with the role of student means taking to heart the often-repeated analogy that teaching is like a "black hole" that will consume any time and energy not clearly directed toward other pursuits.

One important tool to help with time management is the department's Estimate of Workload Excel sheet/calculator, which all supervising faculty with TAs are asked to fill out at the beginning of the semester and return to the Dept. Chair. The purpose of this sheet is less to set absolute limits on the number of hours a TA should dedicate to grading, planning, or reading (those numbers need to remain somewhat flexible), than to provide an opportunity for the TA and the supervising professor to think through much time the course will realistically demand. The estimated total should come close to the prescribed total for a 50% or 41% appointment; if bringing the two numbers close together requires that the specific estimates for grading, planning, etc. seem implausible given the course workload, there is a problem. At that point, the instructor and TA should try to reconcile this problem by discussing what sort of adjustments could be made to course requirements, or to the teaching assistant's work strategies, or to both. If the TA and the instructor have trouble completing the Estimate of Workload spreadsheet to their mutual satisfaction, they can go to JCOTA for assistance.

DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE

There is no obvious set of tips or guidelines for teaching inclusively. Creating an inclusive and comfortable classroom environment for all students is an always elusive, but nevertheless absolutely crucial, goal for every teaching assistant. Decades ago, the instructor's opinions and authority were very nearly indisputable; today, the university classroom is less hierarchical, and more open to multiple perspectives. In both its curricula and student body, the university is more heterogeneous than it has been, in terms of sex, race, class, gender identity, sexuality, and religion. This shift has made teaching a richer, and more challenging, experience.

Creating an inclusive classroom begins with simple practices, like making a concerted effort to learn—and to pronounce correctly—everyone's name, and not to confuse one student with another; paying attention to your own cultural references, and making sure that you do not consistently refer to books, television shows, sports, movies, or music that only part of the class is likely to recognize; understanding that students of color are not necessarily more likely to know about the history and culture of their communities than majority students; paying attention to your use of pronouns (both by using your students' preferred gender pronouns and paying attention to gender when discussing course materials, as in "If we asked a progressive-era reformer about it, what would *he* be likely to say?"), and paying attention to the assumptions carried by "us" and "them," as in "As Americans, *we* have all experienced this phenomenon."); taking attendance every day, rather than "eyeballing" who is there and who is not, a practice that tends to disproportionately penalize students who stand out (a student who wears traditional clothing, the only Asian-American student in the class, etc.).

Such practices are only the very beginning of fostering inclusiveness and teaching effectively in a diverse classroom. Beyond such basics, there are at least two things that are especially important to keep in mind. The first is that diversity in the classroom makes teaching more challenging in the best possible way. Taking into account a heterogeneity of backgrounds and perspectives means considering a greater range of views and experiences, and that in turn leads to more textured analyses and interpretations. It makes studying history even more complicated, which should be a TA's goal in any case. The second is that there is no such thing as an "expert" on diversity, or a TA who has "mastered" teaching inclusively. Teaching with diversity in mind is an ongoing project; each new course and set of students involves further learning and a renewed commitment to taking difference into account. At the University of Wisconsin, teaching assistants are required to participate in diversity workshops. But it is important to continue thinking about them beyond this work, by reading campus newspapers, keeping abreast of undergraduate affairs, getting a sense of how different students would characterize the campus climate, and keeping track of events sponsored by the many student organizations dedicated to issues of diversity (see the list of resources in this handbook).

GRADING

Grades are important. As all instructors know, grades are not the *point* of a course, and they can be crude tools for measuring ability. But grades matter, and they should be treated accordingly. It is tempting, when students fret about one or two points, or a fraction of a grade, to tell them that they are worrying over nothing; but because we use grades to evaluate student performance, and because we post those grades on the student's record, we should take them as seriously as does each student.

The first step to grading fairly is making sure that students know what they will need to do to get a good grade on a paper or exam. This means clearly explaining—well in advance of the due date or date of the test—the goals for the assignment, and the criteria by which their work will be judged. Should the paper be more synthetic or analytic? Should it draw heavily from class readings, or from a balance of readings, lectures, and other materials? Is it more important to be clear and organized, or to be thoughtful and original? Will the exam require students to cite particular scholars and their works? How specific should dates be in short-answer questions? It is even harder to assign grades when you have doubts about whether students understood the nature of the assignment, and whether you did an adequate job explaining it. The best way to avoid this situation is to explain—repeatedly—what students need to do to get a good grade.

Similarly, it is important to give students every opportunity to seek help if they need it. Let them know that you are available to discuss the assignment (and how best to make an appointment), and check in with each section before the assignment is due. Sometimes, just pointing out one or two potential difficulties in writing the paper or studying for the exam will open up a longer conversation about how best to research or study. Often, students will seem most concerned with technical issues, like formatting, citation, and graphics. Don't dismiss these topics; if they are a source of anxiety for students, then they are worth discussing. But at the same time, it is a good idea to explain that a paper's formatting is far less important than its thesis, its structure, and its use of evidence.

Once you have the papers or exams in hand, it helps to calibrate your grading by getting a sense of the entire spectrum. Some TAs read through a handful of papers or exams before marking anything, some start with the work of students who received especially high and low scores on the previous assignment, and some start writing comments right away, but put the actual grades on post-it notes, to be finalized at the end.

Grading can produce a lot of anxiety. It is easy to get trapped in doubt, second- and third-guessing every grade you assign, and questioning your own sense of a "B" or a "C." It can be liberating, then,

to admit that there is no science to judging an essay, and that there is always some flexibility in determining its grade. You should be confident in the grades you assign, but you need not be certain beyond any doubt. Trust your instincts; you are qualified to be a teaching assistant not because you have memorized a secret formula for figuring grades, but because you have developed an acute sense of what makes a good paper, and what falls short of one. Developing rubrics, on your own or, preferably, in conjunction with your supervising faculty and/or co-TAs, can be a great source of clarity of in grading process.

The job of a teaching assistant is not to evaluate students' work in absolute terms, but to communicate, through grades and comments, what each student needs to work on in order to become a better writer and thinker. That process involves a delicate balance of letter grades and written comments, and a sense of which students would benefit most from encouragement, and which from admonishment. Sometimes a harsh grade and a heartening comment, or vice-versa, is the best approach. Except for the most dismal papers, it is always good to include some note of encouragement, and comments that are more constructive than reproachful. Most students will read your comments carefully, and will take them to heart, so they need to be both substantive and respectful.

Grading should be a careful, thoughtful, and purposeful process. But it should not take forever. The great challenge of grading is to do justice to the work that most students have put into the assignment, without spending the entire semester working through one batch of essays after the other. There is no easy way to achieve these competing goals, but there are a variety of strategies that can help in the endeavor. Some TAs rely on stopwatches while they grade, giving themselves only ten or fifteen minutes for each paper or exam; some use standardized comment sheets, tailoring each sheet with specifics in categories like "clarity," "thesis," and "evidence"; other TAs limit their comments to each paper's particular issues, leaving more general comments (especially regarding grammar and writing) to be discussed with each section as a whole. Most teaching assistants use some sort of shorthand for corrections, to avoid writing the same words or sentences over and over again. However you grade, you will likely have to prioritize your concerns, and decide how much time you are willing to commit to things like correcting spelling and punctuation, or writing specific comments in the margins (versus more general notes at the end of the essay).

A Note on Plagiarism: Even if you never come across a case of plagiarism, you will always be conscious of the possibility that a students' papers was lifted, either wholesale or piecemeal, from unattributed sources. And you should be conscious of this possibility, as it is a very real one. But you should also keep in mind that not all plagiarists are equal. Failing to cite a source because of inexperience or carelessness is a very different kind of infraction than intentionally copying from a source in order to avoid doing original work. Intentional plagiarism is a serious offense in the academic world, and it should be dealt with severely. Defining plagiarism, however, can be a fuzzy business, for professional historians as well as for undergraduates, and it makes sense to give students the benefit of the doubt when judging their motivations.

The University requires that instructors meet with any students they suspect of plagiarism, to explain the reasons for this suspicion, and to give the students a chance to explain themselves. If the instructors feel that cheating has occurred, they have the option of either handling the situation themselves by imposing a moderate punishment, or else reporting the offense to the Office of the Dean of Students, in which case the students could suffer a written reprimand in their file, a reduced grade, probation, suspension, or expulsion. Students have the right to appeal any level of sanction.

PART III: SAMPLE HANDOUTS

This section provides examples of discussion handouts that you may find helpful as you begin to plan your first few sections. These handouts represent a variety of teaching methods that have worked well for previous teaching assistants, and we think they may be of use to you. Of course, you can adapt these formats to your own needs and strengths, as well as to the requirements of the course you are teaching.

Section I - Syllabi for Discussion Sections

Section II - Discussion Aids (Assorted)

Section III - Hints on Writing

Section IV - Grading Checklist

Note: for Fall 2020, please refer to the L&S Remote Teaching Toolkit (<https://sites.google.com/wisc.edu/lis-remote-teaching-toolkit/3-guides?authuser=0>) for tips on leading remote discussion sections, designing assessments, supporting students, and creating community in a hybrid or remote teaching environment.

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SECTION I - SYLLABI FOR DISCUSSION SECTIONS

What should you include in your Discussion Section Syllabus?

Title:

- Course name
- Course number
- Semester

Vital Statistics:

- Professor—Office Location, office hours, email address
- Teaching Assistant—Office location, office hours, office phone, email address
- Lecture—location, time
- Sections—section number, location, time

Overview of Discussion or Lab Section:

States overall purpose or goal of the breakout section in relation to the course as a whole

Specific Expectations:

Assignments specific to the discussion section should be described in brief

Grade Breakdown:

You might include a breakdown of each portion of the student's final grade, especially the weight of their discussion. The discussion grade can be one overall participation grade or it can be a percentage of the overall grade that is comprised of multiple things such as participation, response papers, quizzes, group presentation, etc.

Attendance Policy:

Make the attendance policy for the discussion section absolutely clear. Spell it out from the beginning.

Email Policy:

This is optional, but many TA's have found it necessary to create boundaries around email use to protect themselves from the unrealistic expectations of some of their students.

Statement on Plagiarism:

Make sure your students are aware of what it is and what the consequences are both in terms of you, the professor, and the university.

History 460 – American Environmental History
Spring 2012

Discussion Section Guidelines

Teaching Assistant: Brian Hamilton
Email: brianhamilton@gmail.com
Office Hours Location: Chadbourne 126
Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:00AM - 1:00 PM

Professor: Bill Cronon
Email: wcronon@wisc.edu
Office: Humanities 5103
Office Hours: Wednesdays 9:45-11:45AM

Sections: 306 Tuesdays 2:25-3:15 PM Humanities 2115
305 Tuesdays 3:30-4:20 PM Humanities 2115
302 Tuesdays 5:30-7:00 PM Chadbourne 126
309 Wednesdays 11:00-11:50AM Humanities 2241

My intentions. I have two goals for myself this semester: to serve as a resource to you as you work to build your knowledge of the environmental history of the United States; and, perhaps more importantly, to help you to strengthen your writing and oral communication skills.

Contacting each other. Aside from office hours, email is the best way to reach me. You can expect to receive a response within twenty-four hours. Some matters are too complex to address via email; in those cases I will suggest we chat in office hours. (Should Tuesdays mornings not work for you, I'll be happy to try to find another time to meet.) Email will also be the way I get in touch with you outside of section. If you do not already check your email daily, please get in the habit of doing so.

Electronics. Laptops, cell phones, and other screen-based devices may not be used during discussion section.

Readings. You are expected both to have completed the assigned readings before section and to bring them with you. This class has, compared with other 400-level history courses, a light reading load. However, there are several weeks with more assigned reading than some of you will be used to. Keep an eye on future assignments and plan accordingly.

Grading. I will be grading all of your work in this course. Your place paper will be graded according to the rubric on the course syllabus. Your section grade is the composite of two grades: half is determined solely by attendance. (If you foresee being forced to miss a week, contact me beforehand.) The other half of your section grade is based on your productive participation in discussion. We will brainstorm as a class what that means and how I should assess it.

Plagiarism. Your place papers will be screened for instances of plagiarism, which will be punished vigorously. If ever you are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism, please bring your questions to me or to the Writing Center. If ever you are tempted to plagiarize because of a lack of time or sources, please contact me before it is too late.

McBurney students. Please turn in your visas as soon as you can so we can best serve you.

HIST/CLS 462: THE AMERICAN WEST SINCE 1850

Discussion Syllabus

Instructor Johanna Lanner-Cusin

Lecture Information: HUM 1121, Tues/Thurs

TA CONTACT INFORMATION:

Cori Simon

Office: 4271, 4th Floor Humanities

Mailbox: 5052, 5th Floor Humanities

Email: clsimon@wisc.edu

Office Hours: Tues. 11-noon, Wed. 9:45-10:45,

and by appt.

SECTIONS/LOCATIONS:

Wednesday:

Section 305—11:00-11:50, HUM 2653

Section 306—12:05-12:55, HUM 2111

Section 308—1:20-2:10, HUM 2211

OVERVIEW:

The main goals of our discussion are to **analyze, clarify, and interrogate** our assigned readings and to draw connections between those readings and lecture. We will use these sections to review and expand upon the lectures, to prepare for papers and exams, and to exchange and enhance our knowledge and analyses of the history of the North American West.

MY ROLE AS TA: As your Teaching Assistant for this course and facilitator of discussion section, I see my job as threefold: I will be your resource, your cheerleader, and your coach—I am committed to creating an open intellectual space for the meaningful discussion of the themes relevant to the course. However, it is not my responsibility to tell you what to learn or how to think—you are encouraged to bring your own original interpretations to section—nor am I a student of the course, which means in every section my goal will be to limit the amount of time my voice is heard in discussion. Like you, I am bound to the course syllabus as outlined by Instructor Lanner-Cusin, and will do my best to help you meet the expectations outlined in the course syllabus.

EXPECTATIONS:

My expectations regarding your participation in the discussion sections can be summed up in one word—“respect.” I expect that you respect me, each other, the materials, and our limited time for discussion.

Specifically, I expect all students to come to the section prepared to speak to and/or write about the readings in an informed and thoughtful manner. **In addition, each week every student will be responsible for coming to class having completed a short reading response** to ensure that everyone comes to class prepared to actively participate. The requirements and expectations for discussion are as follows:

Attendance: Your section grade is based on your preparation for and participation in discussion. If you are not in section your grade will suffer. You are allowed **2** excused absences. Each section missed beyond the first two will result in ½ letter grade reduction for attendance/participation (i.e. what would be an A would become an AB). You are responsible for finding out what you missed, and you cannot make up in-class assignments.

Participation: Active participation (contributing to discussions and listening to others) is vital to both your section grade and your learning experience. Simply showing up will not guarantee you the grade you hope to earn. To receive full participation points, students are required to bring copies of the assigned readings each week. To ensure that all students are actively engaged, **this**

will be a technology free classroom. Students will not be permitted to bring laptops, tablets, phones, etc. **EXCEPT** on days where primary readings are assigned in the course reader. Students are encouraged to seek out **paper copies** of all course books—ebooks will not be allowed in section. On any given day, participation can include small group activities, individual and group writing, and larger group discussion.

Preparation: Because your section grade is based on participation, you are required to complete a **one-to-two paragraph** response to the readings to help you think about your readings and organize your thoughts before you come to section. **To receive full credit, you will complete this response and bring a paper copy of the assignment to every section.** I will randomly collect these responses as part of your participation grade several times throughout the semester and neglecting to do them each week will negatively affect your participation grade—be prepared at any time to turn them in. You should also be prepared to share your response in discussion. Responses should be written in full, well-organized paragraphs and complete sentences. Your weekly response to the reading should take **ONE** of the following forms:

- 1) **Something you've learned:** Something you learned from the readings, an explanation of why it is important and how it helped advance your thinking about themes and issues explored in the course.
- 2) **Something that confuses you:** A description of one issue, argument, or event from the readings that confused you and/or which you would like to learn more about, and why.

GRADING: Your class participation grade (20% of your final grade) will be determined by your attendance, participation in, and preparation for section. I expect you to have **all** readings and reading responses completed before section.

HOW TO REACH ME:

If at any time during the semester, you have questions, concerns, would like help with your writing assignments, or are in need of assistance, please come talk to me.

Office Hours: Office hours are the best time and place to reach me, though exceptions can be made. In addition to my scheduled office hours, I am available to meet by appointment. If you would like to schedule a meeting with me outside my scheduled office hours, please email me several windows of time that you are available. I am most likely to be able to schedule extra meetings on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays.

Email: I will occasionally send announcements via e-mail. You are more than welcome to email me with questions or concerns about our section that can easily be handled via e-mail. However, please save substantive issues for section or office hours and **please do not email me questions that can be answered by the syllabus or with minimal effort on your part.** For example, if you need information that you know should be contained in 1) the lecture notes, 2) the reading materials, or 3) a past email, I strongly recommend that you track down the answer yourself or ask another student in the class. Emails are an extension of your participation in the classroom and a reflection of your ability to be responsible for your work, so please keep them concise and professional.

NOTE: I check email periodically throughout the day, and will try to answer within 2 days. If you do not hear back from me within **48** hours of the original email, **please send a follow-up.**

WRITING:

Writing well—a crucial component of this course—requires preparation (including starting early) and proofreading. I am eager to discuss the writing process with you! I encourage you to come see me or visit

HISTORY LAB (4255 Humanities) and **WRITING CENTER** (6th floor HCW) are resources for help in the writing process. Feel free to send me thesis statements and outlines via email. I may be able to give you feedback through email, but your best bet is to send me your work **at least 24 hours** before my office hours and then stop by to discuss it in person. The earlier you contact me for feedback, the more likely I will be to be able to help. **NOTE:** I will only be able to read thesis statements/outlines up to **48 hours** before the assignment is due. I will not be your personal proofreader, but I will be happy to give you tips on how you can become your own keen editor.

PLAGIARISM:

University policy defines plagiarism as "the unacknowledged use of another's words or ideas. It is a violation of University policy and may result in failure of the course." Plagiarism occurs in several different ways. The most blatant acts of plagiarizing, the intentional lifting of words and ideas, are easily recognizable and will result in an automatic failure of the course. Furthermore, because the historian's craft involves working with numerous sources, both primary and secondary, we are also susceptible to committing unintentional acts of plagiarism. However, plagiarism is easily avoided by the proper use of citations. If you are concerned that you might be unintentionally plagiarizing or unclear on how to avoid it, please come see me to discuss citations and how to use sources appropriately

TA INFO

TA:
Office:
Phone:
Hours:

LECTURE INFO

Professor:
Time:
Location:

SECTIONS

#301 Rm. 2635 Humanities 9:55a – 10:45a Wednesday
#302 Rm. 1221 Humanities 11:00a – 11:50a Wednesday
#303 Rm. B135 VanVleck 2:25p – 3:15p Wednesday
#304 Rm. 4035 Vilas 9:55a – 10:45a Thursday

OVERVIEW

The goal of the discussion sections is to analyze, clarify, and interrogate the information imparted in the readings and lectures. We will use these sections to review and expand upon the lectures, to prepare for papers and exams, and—of course—to exchange and enhance our impressions, ideas and analyses of the reading materials.

EXPECTATIONS

My expectations regarding your participation in the discussion sections can be summed up in one word—“respect.” I expect that you respect me, each other, and, perhaps most importantly, the materials.

Specifically—I expect all students to come to their sections prepared to speak to and/or write about the readings in an informed and thoughtful manner. In short, one way or another, we’re gonna do a lot of talking. From week to week you may be asked to do one of the following: answer questions about the materials, either in a discussion format or in writing, and/or write short response papers, either in or out of class.

As success in this course greatly depends upon familiarity with the reading materials, I may give small quizzes in section to encourage you to keep up with your readings. This will depend on your collective performance in discussion sections.

Everyone should come with their own prepared questions or ideas to share with the class; because I will frequently call on members of the class to do this, just to get things rolling. Please know, it will never be my intention to humiliate or “pick on” anyone, but as this is a **discussion** group, you *must* come prepared to **discuss** the readings (this seems fair, no?).

ATTENDANCE

Your section grade is based on your preparation for and participation in discussion. Therefore, if you are not in section your grade will obviously suffer. You are allowed two (2) free absences. Any absences beyond these two—**whatever the reason**—will count against your final grade. You are responsible for finding out what you missed, and you cannot make up in-class assignments.

HOW I GRADE WRITTEN WORK*

- An **Excellent (A)** paper—is, in order of importance, intellectually challenging and complex, logically argued, cogently developed, clearly and compellingly written and free of basic errors in grammar, punctuation and usage.
- A **Very Good (AB)** paper—will do one of the less important things less well.
- A **Good (B)** paper—has reasonably strong arguments and complex ideas, but may be flawed in other areas.
- A **Satisfactory (BC)**—has flaws in significant areas, including weaker arguments and unchallenging ideas, or it may have minor flaws in many areas.
- A **Lacking (C)** paper—has numerous flaws in significant areas.
- A **Not Very Good (D)** paper—has major problems in all areas.
- An **Unacceptable (F)** paper—has to be really bad, incomplete, incomprehensible, plagiarized, etc.

Keep in mind, this is a **general**, unscientific outline, meant to give you the basic expectations. In my book, your ideas are more important than your mechanics, *but* I do expect your papers to be polished and technically sound.

*This rubric refers to formal written work, and not necessarily short response papers done in or out of class.

THE WRITING CENTER

If you wish to improve your chances of writing an “excellent” paper, you should consider doing any—preferably all—of the following: start early, come see me for guidance, **visit the writing center** (6th floor HCW), and proofread. I grade written work with the knowledge that you have many resources available to you. Keep this in mind.

PLAGIARISM

What is plagiarism? To quote University policy, plagiarism is “the unacknowledged use of another’s words or ideas. It is a violation of University policy and may result in failure of the course.” In other words, it’s a bad thing—don’t do it. After all, it’s not necessary; you are free to use the ideas and words of other people/sources to enhance your own ideas. Just give credit when it’s due and you’ll be alright.

EMAIL POLICY

You are more than welcome to contact me—or your fellow students—via email with questions, concerns, and/or ideas. However, **please do not email me questions that can be answered by the syllabus or with minimal effort on your part.** For example, if you need information that you know should be contained in 1) the lecture notes, 2) the reading materials, or 3) a past email, I strongly recommend that you track down the answer yourself or ask another student in the class. Emails are a reflection of your ability to be professional and responsible for your work.

FINALLY...

You should always feel free to bring materials (books, essays, newspaper articles, poetry, pictures, music, etc.) to our discussions that you think will add to our collective knowledge, perspective, appreciation and/or enjoyment of the materials and ideas we are studying. (If you need me to get a cd player, projector, etc., just let me know in advance.) Not only will this improve our discussions; it will probably impress the heck out of me and could boost your overall participation grade.

And remember, if at any time during the semester, you have questions or concerns, or you are in need of assistance, please come talk to me.

History 403 - Immigration & Assimilation in US History - Hiroshi Kitamura

Discussion Sections

301 W 12:05-12:55 (2619 Humanities)

302 R 9:55-10:45 (2611 Hum)

303 R 11:00-11:50 (2653 Hum)

304 W 3:30-4:20 (2111 Hum)

Office 5269 Humanities

Office Hours W 1:00-2:00, R 12:00-1:00,
and by appointment

Office Phone:263-1868

e-mail: hkitamur@students.wisc.edu

Attendance: Regular attendance to discussion section is a course requirement Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each section meeting. You may have one unexcused absence from section, but any other failure to attend class without prior notice will significantly harm your final letter grade. If there is an emergency situation such as illness or a significant personal problem that requires you to be elsewhere be' sure to consult with me beforehand so that we can work out some alternative arrangement. Otherwise, no excuses will be given for missing section.

Participation: Participation during discussion section does not mean to just show up. You should be prepared to discuss the issues raised in Professor Archdeacon's lectures and reading material assigned in the course syllabus. The goal, for you and our weekly meetings, is to understand, clarify, and integrate the content of the readings, lectures and current issues relevant to our course. I urge you, thus, to be an active participants by sharing questions, opinions, criticisms, and arguments, all of which are equally valuable for our understanding of I & A - one of the most complicated subjects in human history.

Obviously, we will get to know each other fairly quickly in these small group settings If you are a shy person by nature, take advantage of this course as an opportunity to speak up with confidence. Improvements, in addition, will be rewarded in your final grade. So don't be afraid or intimidated to speak up in front of others. Make sure you talk to me in person if you have any concerns or problems regarding classroom participation, among other important issues about teaching and learning. As a note of caution, it will be painfully clear - to me and your classmates - if you haven't done the reading or fail to attend lecture meetings. If such circumstances are evident, I will give pop quizzes and/or short assignments regarding the lectures and reading material. Make-ups for these short assignments, if they take place, will not be available. It shouldn't be difficult to avoid these extra tasks: just keep up with the lectures, books, and articles.

Grading: Your final grade will be determined by attendance, verbal performance in discussion section, three major examinations - two of which will take place during regular lecture hours - and short assignments that may be given in class. Classroom participation will determine 25 % of your final grade. Take this 25 % seriously, because your overall performance can improve considerably if you successfully demonstrate your engagement with the given material in class, while the lack of engagement will, most likely, affect your final letter-grade downward. Any questions or complaints about grading policies and your actual grades should, first, come to me.

History 354

Women in the US since 1865

Julianne Unsel

4272 Humanities Bldg

263-1939; 263-1800

junsel@students.wisc.edu

Office hrs: Tues, 9-10 am and by appointment.

Grading: Your grade in this course is based on attendance, participation, and writing. Attendance and participation are graded in section. Writing is graded on the two papers, the mid-term exam, and final exam described in the syllabus. I do all the grading.

Attendance: Regular attendance in lecture is essential to doing well in this course. Regular attendance in section is a course requirement, and attendance is taken at each section meeting. You may have one unexcused absence from section per term. If you need to miss more than one section, you should discuss this with me. You may make up an absence by attending an alternative section, but you need to coordinate with me if you do this. More than one unexcused absence will considerably affect your course grade.

Participation: Participation in section gives all of us the opportunity to talk about course content and to listen to what other students have to say. Participation means coming to section, with notes from the readings and the lectures in hand, and contributing actively to discussion. Section discussions are intended to help students integrate the contents of the course readings and lectures together and to clear up any confusions or questions students might have. Asking questions and offering comments or answers are equally important to creating lively discussion, and lively discussion is a great tool for learning the material in this course. Remember that any question you have is an important question. Any relevant comment you want to make is an important comment. Your fellow students are your best asset in this course, and chances are the discussions will go best when we listen to other people and build on their ideas.

As section participants, we get to know each other very quickly in these small group settings, so don't be shy about speaking up. If you are a shy person by nature, you can use this course as an opportunity to learn to speak up with confidence! If you are a slow starter, don't worry. Improvement in your participation over time will show in your grade. If you have any problems with your section participation, or with any other aspect of your experience in this course, feel free to come and talk to me about it during my office hour. If my office hour is inconvenient for you, ask me about setting up an alternative appointment.

Writing: Your written work on the exams and papers is a crucial component of your performance in this course. The quality of your writing is the main index I have to assess your understanding and learning of course content. In section, we will practice writing for the mid-term with ungraded short ID exercises that mock the mid-term exam format. We also will discuss and troubleshoot as a group the paper assignments and the take-home final. The UW Writing Center offers help with all stages of producing a fine piece of written work. The Writing Center is located in room 6171 of the Helen C. White Library. Hours are 9-6 pm Mon-Thurs and 9-3 on Friday. It is best to call ahead for an appointment at 263-9305. The care you put into writing and polishing your papers and the final will be reflected in the grades you get. If you receive a BC or below on either of the papers, ask me about options for a rewrite.

Professor J. B. Lee

James Carroll, TA

4268 Humanities, Box 4079

263-1867 (office); 257-0577 (home; not after 10:00 P.M.)

jcarrott@facstaff.wisc.edu

Office Hours: Wednesday 2:30 to 4:30 P.M.; or by appointment.

How to Reach Me: See above. For shorter questions, you can call or e-mail me. Please don't call me after 10:00 P.M. or before 8:00 A.M. - my brain doesn't work then. Don't call me the night before an exam-if you don't know what's going on by then, it's too late. Otherwise, though, you are welcome and encouraged to call me (yes, even at home) with questions.

Attendance: Attendance at both discussion section and lecture is required. I will take attendance in section every week. You are allowed one unexcused absence during the semester. If you must miss a section beyond that one (for reasons of illness, death, or other drastic misery), please contact me in advance to make alternative arrangements. Failure to attend sections will severely injure your class participation grade (you can't participate if you ain't there).

Participation: Being here is more than just breathing. You should come to each section having done the appropriate readings (and written assignments) and be prepared to discuss them, along with the lecture materials. Failure to participate actively in discussion sections will damage your participation grade (it's a participation — not an attendance — grade). More importantly, your active participation will make sections far more interesting and informative for all concerned. Feel free to incorporate anything you think germane to our discussions. The only set in stone limitation on our discussions is that you respect the opinions of everyone in the class. You're welcome to disagree, even with me, but do so respectfully. Finally, please remember that, although frequent comments are appreciated, it is the quality of your participation, not the quantity, that matters most.

Grading: 25% midterm exam, 35% final exam, 20% discussion (attendance, participation, and brief assignments), 20% papers (see opposite side of this page).

Discussion questions: Most weeks I will give you a sheet of discussion questions for the following week. These questions are intended to give suggest themes and concepts that you should keep in mind as you read. I don't expect you to answer each and every one of these questions in class, nor will we be spending every class wading through a list of questions. I expect, rather, that you will give the questions some thought, using them as a jumping off point for your own analysis.

Assignments: Most weeks you will also have a brief ungraded assignment due in class-these serve primarily to facilitate discussion, and thus your completion of these brief assignments is considered in your discussion grade. All (graded and non-graded alike) must be typed, double-spaced, in a 12 point font.

E-mail: I will send some class announcements and assignments over e-mail. As such, you are required check your e-mail regularly.

SECTION II—DISCUSSION AIDS (ASSORTED) **First Day Checklist***

ADMINISTRATIVE STUFF

- **INTRODUCE SELF**
(briefly at first, more later when you have them introduce themselves)
 - **CHECK NAMES AGAINST CLASS ROSTER (do get to know you activity later)**
 - **SEND EMAIL SHEET AROUND**
 - **TALK ABOUT SWITCHING SECTIONS→PASS AROUND SECTION SWITCH FORM**
-
- **GO OVER INFO ABOUT WHERE STUDENTSS CAN GET COURSE MATERIALS**
 - **HAND OUT ANY FORMS HANDED OUT IN LECTURE TO STUDENTS WHO MAY NOT HAVE BEEN IN ATTENDANCE**
-
- **DISCUSS ROOM SET UP** (if you have any preferences)
 - **DISCUSS ANY POLICIES SPECIFIC TO YOUR CLASSROOM**
 - **DISCUSS LATE ARRIVALS**
-
- **TALK ABOUT YOUR ROLE**
-
- **HAND OUT and GO THROUGH GUIDELINES OR SECTION SYLLABUS**
-
- **DO INTRODUCTIONS/ICE BREAKER**
 - **DISCUSS EXPECTATIONS—THEIRS & YOURS**
-
- **SET UP THE FOLLOWING WEEK**

Sample First Section

Write on board:

Preferred Name (e.g., Brian) Preferred Pronouns (e.g., he/him/his)
Year
Major or area(s) of interest
In what places have you lived?
What brought you to this course?
What are your goals for yourself this semester?
What do you see as your biggest challenge in this course?
How can I best help you?
To share during introductions: a story about your name

Opening procedures.

Please arrange your desk into a circle so that you can see everyone's face. This is how we'll set up our classroom to begin each section.

Please use the scrap paper to respond to the prompts on the board. Just as one does not identify always with the name he or she is given at birth, one does not identify always with the gender assigned at birth (and/or continuously assigned/assumed by others every day)

You need not include the last item, but be thinking about a story to share when we do introductions.

Please fold the nametag (half of a file folder) in half and write on it what you want to be called. I'll hang on to these and bring them to every section.

Introductions.

Our most important objective this week and in the first few weeks is getting to know each other. Discussion section is one of the rare places where this big impersonal university gets more intimate, feels more like a community. We're going to go around and take about a minute each to share our names, our majors, where we've lived, why we're in this class, and a story about your name--how you got it, what it's like to live with it. Please don't rush.

Names

As your TA it is my responsibility to learn your names. But as classmates, great discussions are far more likely to come among those who know each other a little bit, trust each other more, and address each other always. Nametags help with that, but we'll practice names the first few weeks for those out-of-section encounters.

Have students hide nametags, then go around two or three times with students saying their names, pausing between rounds to check on whose we don't remember.

Discussion section syllabus.

Review its most important pieces of information. Take questions.

Purpose of discussion sections: *Why doesn't the UW scrap them, go to bubble exams, and pocket the savings?* Discuss.

Class norms.

Take a minute to think about what can make discussions and/or discussion sections go poorly. Turn to your neighbor and share your horror stories.

Go around the room; each pair shares one thing that can sink discussions

Reflecting on this list, think about how we can these scenarios. It's the responsibility of all of us. With your partner, come up with three expectations you have of each other and three expectations of me, your TA.

Record these expectations on two lists on the board.

This is our contract with each other. We will revisit these expectations periodically to see how we're doing.

Photograph these lists. Use them on mid-semester and end-of-semester student self-evaluations.

Questions?

*Thanks to Brenna Greer for sharing this resource.

Generic Lesson Plan Framework*

LESSON PLAN #:

DATE:

TOPICS TO COVER:

ADMINISTRATIVE STUFF

- **Take roll**
 - **Announcements pertaining to the class or otherwise**
 - **Reminders about upcoming assignments or exams**
-

AGENDA

(Here's an example of a possible broad agenda. I often write the agenda on the board, but not always, sometimes a more informal approach is necessary.)

- **Discuss paper assignment**
 - **Take questions for upcoming exam**
 - **Discuss this week's materials**
 - **Set up next week's materials**
-

MATERIALS COVERED THIS WEEK

(Often I write the titles of the week's lectures and readings or assignments on the board so they know to what to refer during our conversations)

- **Lectures**
 - **Readings**
 - **Exercises/Experiments**
 - **Films**
-

THE MEATY SECTION OF THE LESSON PLAN

- Here's where you flesh out each agenda item in your lesson plan
- Try to organize lesson so that information & understanding build logically
- Include in your lesson plan any notes (from materials, etc.) that might help you administer a good section. You want this stuff handy when students start asking questions.

- Develop “take away” points

Leading a Good Discussion (Josh Becker, Travis Tennesen)

Goals for Discussion:

- Clarifying vagueness or gaps in lecture and reading materials
- Preparing students for exams and written assignments
- Creation of a thinking space; a space for “I think” statements
- Developing a higher comfort level with course material
- Getting students comfortable with the process of learning and sharing
- Developing written and oral skills
- Constructing and contesting arguments collectively
- Examining specific issues and concepts in depth
- Helping students come to their own understanding of course material

Leading Discussion:

- Starting your section on the right foot: Get to know students--especially their names!
- Present your true self; students will see through a facade
- Know the material and course themes in advance--add background readings if necessary
- Be active immediately--don't wait until the bell rings and the staring contest begins
- Keep students actively engaged throughout their time with you
- Have syllabus prepared in advance; it should be separate from the lecture syllabus
- Set expectations from the outset
- Determine your motivational strategies before class begins
- Clearly define the relationship between you and your students--are you a friend, mentor, disciplinarian? Early impressions are hard to change!
- Ask each student to speak at the first meeting to model the kind of participation you expect; this also gives students a sense of ownership of their ideas and knowledge
- “Show” the safety of discussion sessions by modeling respect

Beginning and Sustaining Discussion (through a class period and the semester)

- Begin with questions having a “low embarrassment factor”: “What surprised you about the readings?”, “What did you like?”, “What did you hate?”
- ...or, start with concrete thoughts and questions and work toward abstract concepts, but be ready to adapt to how students choose to approach topics
- Give students a feeling of empowerment. Let their ideas and interests influence the course of discussion when possible
- Connect the current topic with ongoing themes in the course
- DO NOT be too predictable—it leads to passivity
- Have students write their own discussion questions/reading summaries to share as a safety valve against early discussion death
- “Pre-questions” asked before meetings may enhance participation, especially for shy students
- Establish a positive-feedback loop of enthusiasm--help students feed off your enthusiasm and you can feed off theirs
- Give assignments that lead into active discussion; get students “argumentatively-minded” before class

Concluding Discussion

- Tie discussion to the larger themes of course
- “Sign post” the discussion’s main points--where we’ve been, where we’re going
- Assign ownership of ideas and points to individual students

- Offer hints for understanding upcoming lectures and readings; get students thinking about next week's discussion
- Praise group for good discussion--if you can do it genuinely

HISTORY 344 - THE ERA OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Week Ten - April 5-6, 2000

Reading for April 5-6:

- Colin Bonwick, *The American Revolution*, chap. 7
- Herbert J. Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For*.
- James Madison & Co., *The Federalist Papers* (essays 1, 6, 9, 10, 14, 39 47 51 52 62 69, 78,85)
- The Constitution (in Bonwick, 260-273)
- Selected Antifederalist essays (to be handed out in section)

Objectives: The war's been won and the United States has an independent government. The Revolution is over, right? Wrong. For the next couple weeks we will be investigating the struggle over the Constitution and the debate over the future of American government. Okay, so we know that the Federalists won... but that does not mean that it was easy, nor does it mean that everyone agreed on the Constitution, even after its ratification.

Some caveats: You're reading some of the most incisive and impassioned essays in American political history. Each of these essays addresses a specific point of debate over the Constitution and the questions and problems of federal government. The key to understanding any given essay is in finding that specific point. For example, In Federalist 10, Madison argues against concerns that the United States is too large to be a functional republic—from there, you know why he makes the points that he makes. That's a freebie... you're on your own for the rest.

Questions:

- What were the Federalist critiques of the Articles of Confederation? Did any Antifederalists critique the Articles? If so, how did these two positions differ so strongly?
- What were the Antifederalists/or? Federalists coined the term "Antifederalist." What might the Antifederalists have called themselves if given the choice?
- You're reading some really intense and powerful arguments on both sides. What was at stake in the debate over the Constitution? What did the Constitution represent?
- Some historians have argued that there were many American Revolutions and that powerful terms like "liberty" meant different things to different members of the Revolutionary generation. Does what you've read this week support or undermine this assertion?
- Both sides of this debate presented arguments steeped in Revolutionary ideology. Make up your own mind. Which side would you have been on?



Managing Discussion Sections

By Gladys McCormick

History Department, Spring 2002

Get to know the students:

- Remember their names.
- General information card with interesting facts about them.

Starting discussion:

- Plan your time accordingly. Keep a watch/clock handy.
- Quick announcements.
- Week's main themes and terms contributed by the students.

Formats for discussion:

- Know when to let go of your agenda and let discussion follow what is intriguing/appealing to students.
- Open discussion, mini-groups, pairing off two or three students, debate, student discussion co-leaders.
- Structure your lesson plans to aim for the "middle" by tailoring section to different student abilities. E.g. use open discussion for the more advanced students in the first half of section, while using mini-groups for the less advanced students in the second half.
- Have an alternate plan if your original lesson plan does not work.

Keeping students engaged in discussion:

- Express your passion and excitement with the material to them.
- Ask straight-forward and compelling questions.
- Relate students' comments to one another.
- Give them positive feedback.
- Connect readings to lecture material.
- Response papers on the week's reading (two paragraphs/critical thinking).
- Prepare guiding questions (two) to contribute in section.
- Five-minute group presentations.

- Ask if they have any remaining questions or comments.

Other suggestions:

- Weekly email letting students know what's coming up in discussion. Include two or three questions to keep in mind as they do the reading. If you or the professor are handing out discussion issue sheets ahead of time, highlight them again. List important due dates and reading/writing strategies to keep in mind. Set up a list serve at the start of the semester.
- Tolerance speech.
- Reproduce your authority via preparation, attendance, speaking loudly, having a sense of humor, using a TA syllabus with clear expectations, etc.

Time Management:

- Know when to refer students to resources available on campus (Writing Center, GUTS, UHS, etc.).
- Structure your TA work into set times in your schedule, leaving "unbroken" times of the day in which you can do your own work.
- Instead of scheduling appointments with students at their convenience outside of your office hours, have an alternate hour during the week to meet that won't conflict with most schedules (e.g. Friday 4 p.m.).
- Have a strict email policy that's clearly stated in the TA syllabus.

Problem-solving:

If you do have a problem, ask yourself the following questions and consider the following responses. If these don't work, talk to your professor and experienced TAs as soon as possible with the specifics and ask them for additional suggestions. Remember that L&S has an excellent resource center to help TAs with their teaching.

- **Frustration:** What do I do if the material is too difficult to grasp and they are utterly frustrated? Know when to take charge and go to the blackboard. Use humor if need be to lighten up the situation. Start them off with posing easy ideas and simple questions.
- **Spatial dynamics:** Is the room in a bizarre configuration or intimidating? Arrange chairs in a circle or switch out by contacting the History Office.
- **Cliques:** Is a group of students talking during discussion in a disruptive way? Sit or stand next to the clique during section. If the problem persists, take aside the students and talk to them honestly, saying that their behavior is disrupting the class.
- **Chemistry:** Is one of your discussion sections going nowhere fast no matter what you do? Move. Walk around the room. Ask them provocative questions or questions that make them connect material to their lives/experiences. Bring in maps and pictures. Again, use humor.

- **The Shy ones:** Talk to them one-on-one to see if there's anything you can do to make it easier for them to speak up in section. Ask low-stakes questions to get discussion going. Give the students a prompt and then go around the room having each student comment on it.
- **The Chatty ones:** What do I do with a student who doesn't shut up? Talk to them one-on-one. Tell them politely but firmly that you are excited that they are excited, but that you both need to leave room for other students to participate.

STUDENT LED DISCUSSIONS

THE ASSIGNMENT

This semester each of you will take a turn leading section discussion. Don't panic, you will not do this alone, but with a small group. You and the other members of your group are responsible for meeting outside of class and developing a "discussion plan." At least one week prior to the day your group is to lead discussion, your group—or a democratically selected representative(s) of your group—must meet with me during my office hours to go over your plan. This is just so we can go over your plan together and, if necessary, I can make suggestions, answer any questions you might have and/or help you iron out any problem areas. Also, this will assist my preparation in supporting the discussion. This meeting is mandatory, so plan ahead. You should plan to lead discussion for 30 minutes. Some days, we may have less time, depending on what other "business" we need to address. If you have any handouts you wish to distribute, I can make copies for you if you get the materials to me in advance. Also, if are in need of AV equipment (CD player, VCR, projector, etc.), again, give me plenty of notice and I will arrange this.

SUGGESTIONS

You should feel free to be creative with your methods for leading discussion. (If I anticipate any problems with or have any concerns about what you have planned, I will let you know in our pre-discussion meeting.) Just remember that your purpose is not to present on the readings, but to generate discussion about the readings—how you do this is essentially up to you (within reason). Your group's role is to provoke and guide the discussion. This requires that you all have a solid familiarity and understanding of the readings. At the least, I suggest (and perhaps this is obvious) that you come with a prepared list of questions about the readings. However, you should try to avoid a question and answer format. The goal is to lead discussion in a manner that allows for a fluid and comprehensive analysis of the readings. In other words, you want to try to lead a discussion that builds on itself. And remember, LESS IS MORE. Generally, you do not want to lead a group discussion by asking complicated, multi-level/part questions. Such questions usually bring a discussion to a grinding halt, because they give one too much to think about at one time, or one think there is a correct answer, which is intimidating. Start simple, with broad questions or topic areas. Once people are warmed up and a foundation is set, you can narrow and/or complicate the

questions or issues. Ideally, a group leading discussion will be able to both guide the group in a spirited and productive discussion and follow the group's interests.

FINALLY

You are free to assign responsibilities within your group as you please, but it must be apparent to me that all members have pulled their own weight. As this is a group project, you will be graded as a group, which means all members are individually responsible for the grade the group receives. Please feel free to come talk to me (as a group or individually), if you have any questions or concerns about this assignment.

History 344: The Age of the American Revolution
James Carrott, TA

What is History?

It's what we'll be doing this semester, both in and out of section itself. Want more detail? You're in luck. The practice of history derives essentially from critical thinking. It can, however, be broken down like this:

- **Evidence:** books, letters, journals, newspapers, pictures... whatever folks left behind. These, in the history biz, are called primary sources. Don't let them fool you -just because they're documents doesn't mean they're "true" or that they're not biased. The folks that put together our evidence had opinions and pre-conceptions just like we do - it's okay to disagree with them-they're no more right than we are.
- **Argument:** this is what you do with evidence, creating secondary sources. Every book historians write (even a textbook) is an argument-a point of view informed and supported by primary sources and other secondary sources. You are just as capable of doing this as any other historian is-don't be intimidated by the extra letters after their names, they have to read books just like you do.
- **Disagreement:** okay, this really isn't all that different from argument, but I wanted to make a different point with this one. Historians disagree with each other all the time. Disagree with them, they expect it. It's part of their job. Being a historian is about making up your own mind and whether we like it or not making up your own mind always means that you disagree with somebody.

How do you do it? (trust me, you can)

1. **Read.** Pay attention to your primary and secondary sources - think about where they came from, who the folks that left them for you were, what their interests and biases were-what are they trying to tell you? Is there something they tell you that they weren't meaning to tell you?

2. **Think.** Spend a little time mulling over what you've read. Does it mesh with what you heard in lecture? With what you thought before? With what you've read elsewhere? Do your sources agree with each other? How would you explain the connections between them?
3. **Talk.** Discuss what you've read in class (you have to), or <gasp!> outside of class. Use what you've learned about American history when you're arguing about politics or watching TV with friends. This will really help develop your thoughts before you have to get graded on them in your papers.
4. **Write.** Let's face it, thinking and talking are never really enough. Believe it or not, this really does make what you have to say more real. You'll be surprised at how much your ideas about history develop as you try to hash them out on paper.

History 434
Cerri/Kitamura

Focus Questions for January 26/28, 1999

Note: Each week we will hand out a set of questions for you to prepare for discussion sessions. Use these "focus questions" as a study guide in reviewing lectures and reading the assigned texts. This week is a bit special in that the reading is primarily theoretical. We will occasionally call upon the various analytical models offered in the Paterson and Merrill book (Chapter 1) throughout the semester.

1. Discuss the structure of the modern world-system. How does the system operate? What is power and how is it distributed? What is hegemony and how do hegemonic forces shift? Probe the underlying assumptions that sustain the world-system model. What are the utilities and problems with this framework?
2. Are culture (Iriye) and gender (Rosenberg) relevant concepts in understanding U.S.-foreign relations? Do the frameworks Iriye and Rosenberg propose complement, challenge, or contradict with the world-system approach? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these models? Are you persuaded most by one of the three approaches, or are they equally persuasive?
3. Likewise, how does the national security approach, corporatism, and bureaucratic politics model, complement or differ from the world-system model? Do they provide an adequate explanation for why nations act internationally? Do they share fundamental similarities? Would you prefer one of these frameworks over others?
4. Do you think diplomacy and international relations can adequately be discussed in psychological or psychoanalytical terms? How would world-system theorists respond to the psychological approach?

5. Why and how was the 1890s a "historic turn" in U.S.-foreign relations (LaFeber, 194)? Are there cultural, racial, or psychological explanations for this change? Why did the United States under President McKinley go to war? What was the significance of China -- among other existing nations and territories? Which theoretical model (in Paterson and Merrill) do you think best captures the essence of U.S.-foreign relations at the turn of the nineteenth century?

S

ection III—Handouts on Reading & Writing

Tips for Reading

I know many of you, especially those who don't regularly take humanities courses, are anxious about the course readings. You will get a good sense right away of what to expect in terms of length, density, and style. While we will talk throughout the semester about how to read critically and efficiently, here are a few suggestions as you jump out of the gate

Read actively. If you plow through every sentence of every page of every article with the authors' words as the only voice in your head, you are very likely to show up in section burned out and bored. Do not read passively, as if you are lying back and letting the words wash over you. That can be enjoyable way to read a poem; it's a maddening way to read historical articles and documents. It makes it hard to see the forest for the trees.

Instead, attack these readings with a mission. Keep a stock of standard questions in your head:

What is the author's main point?

Why does the author think this point is important? How does it change the way people think about the historical subject?

What type of evidence does the author use to make this point? Which pieces of evidence do you find most convincing?

Your goal as an active reader is to get answers to your questions. Your goal is *not* to remember as much information as possible from your reading. You will be much better prepared for section if you have tried to get a good sense of each author's argument than if you instead have memorized word-for-word three dozen disconnected facts from the readings.

Read out of order. The most efficient way to find the argument of a scholarly article is to know first where to look. Think about an outline you might have had to write for a paper in college or high school. It probably required you to have an *introduction* that lays out the topic and the major claims you were going to make, *topic sentences* at the beginning of your paragraphs that flagged for your reader which point you were making in that section, and a *conclusion* that restates the argument and offers some comment about its significance.

Since your top priority when reading actively is discovering an article's main point, you should go first to those places where it's likely to be stated most explicitly. So begin by taking some time with the title and any section headings. What do they tell you about the scope of the article and the claims the author might be trying to make? Then, try skipping directly to the conclusion to find a succinct statement of the argument and the reason the argument is important. Look for these next in the introduction. When you get to the body of the article, read over the topic sentences before reading the paragraphs themselves. This way you know sooner what the historian is trying to prove and you can turn your attention to weighing the evidence provided.

You don't *have* to read out of order. But do keep the article's invisible architecture in mind when you read. Some articles have more obvious structures than others. But in all cases, every sentence is not worth the same level of your attention. Sniffing out the most important parts early will save you time and energy.

Leave a paper trail of your thinking. Take notes. But more does not equal better. In discussion section a paragraph with all but one sentence underlined probably won't do you much good. But a short note in the margin indicating that this paragraph contained the article's main argument or that this paragraph did not make any sense to you--that is a useful note. That can be the spark of a productive class conversation that helps all of us dig deeper into the readings.

Keep a dictionary handy. You are bound to come across words you don't know. I sure do. Taking the five seconds needed for the Internet to define them will both lower your anxiety about difficult readings and make seemingly dull readings more interesting.

Ask for help. We may have all "learned to read" in elementary school, but we all can work to become better readers. Feel free bring to me any questions about this week's reading or reading in general.

HOW TO READ A DOCUMENT

Level 1: Identify the nature of the document

A. Who wrote this document?

1. Did a single person or a group write this document?
2. What is the author's social background?

B. What is the historical setting of this document?

1. When was the document written?
2. What historical events occurred when this document was written?

C. Who is the intended audience?

1. To whom did this author write when composing the document?
2. What is the relationship between the author and the audience?
3. Note: The audience often determines the language used and the amount of knowledge assumed by the author. The relationship here often reveals the purpose of the document.

D. What is the story line?

1. What is going on here? What story is being told?
2. Note the main points of the story line.

Level 2: Probe behind the essential facts to understand its meaning

A. Why was this document written? What is its purpose?

1. Was this document meant to be private or public?
2. Was the purpose to convince the audience using logic, to entertain, or to motivate through emotional appeals?
3. Is this a persuasive, a personal, or a formal document?
4. examples: novels, diaries, laws, treaties

B. What type of document is this?

1. Is this a newspaper article? Is this a novel? Is this a diplomatic treaty? A diary or a journal?
2. Note: The document's type often reveals information about its purpose and its possible biases.

Level 3: Pose your own questions

A. Can we believe this document?

1. Is this document one-sided? Is it slanted? What are its strengths and weaknesses? Is this document biased?
2. What critiques can be made about this document?
3. Can this document be used as a credible historical source?

B. What can be learned about the society that produced this document?

1. Documents reveal details about their author and the era in which they were produced.
2. What attitudes pervade the document?
3. Can generalizations be made about the time period in which the document was written?

C. What does this document mean to students of history?

1. What can be learned from it?
2. What does it mean to the author? To the audience? To the society in which it was produced?
3. What does this document mean to present-day society?
4. What is the document's meaning to the individuals who read it?

TIPS FOR WRITING

What most often separates the strong papers from the weak is proofreading. It can be hard to make time for, hard to look back at what you wrote, hard to erase sentences you toiled over and then draft new ones. But it is the best favor you can do for your writing. When rereading, keep in mind the following.

Title. All papers should have a title. It should not be something generic like “Reading Response 1” or “Wilderness.” Rather, your title should help your reader start to understand your argument.

Argument. Somewhere early in your paper you should briefly summarize its central argument. Each subsequent paragraph should be obviously working to help to convince your reader of that argument. Many scholars do this by taking the first sentence of each paragraph to state the point they are going to make with that paragraph, before proceeding to present the evidence supporting that point.

Wordiness. One of the best things you can do to improve your draft before turning it in is to read through it and cut out any words that aren’t adding anything. In writing, succinctness equals strength.

Show, don’t tell. Convince your reader with examples, not adjectives. Avoid claims like “Thoreau offers amazing and insightful wisdom about agriculture.” *Show* your readers what’s amazing about Thoreau; *make* them appreciate what is insightful and wise about him.

First person. Using the first-person pronouns *I* and *me* increases wordiness. You don’t need to say “I think...” because your name is on the paper. Your reader will know that any claim in your paper is yours. Also, do not use *our* to refer to U.S. citizens (and *especially* not to refer, even implicitly, to white Americans); write inclusively and precisely.

Second person. Do not address your reader directly (as *you*) in formal writing.

Word choice. Dictionaries are your best friend when it comes to making sure you’re saying what you mean to say—which is, in writing, the most important thing. While it’s important to vary your language, to avoid echoing the same words over and over again, do not just blindly draw from a thesaurus, because you might pull out a word that has a significantly different implication.

Junk English. Avoid vague words that tell your reader little about what people are feeling or thinking (e.g., “American farmers *experienced* the market revolution,” “The market revolution had an *impact* on farmers”). Avoid needless words that could be cut without altering the meaning of your sentence (e.g., “Tenant farmers remained in debt because of the crop lien *process*”). And just as Michael Pollan advocated that we shouldn’t eat what our great-grandparents wouldn’t recognize as food; don’t use what your great-grandparents wouldn’t recognize as words (e.g., *marketization*). Don’t use a \$10 word when a 5¢ word will do.

Gendered language. Don’t use *man* to refer to humans. Don’t use *her* to refer to the United States, nature, etc.

Ethnocentric language. Don’t make claims about what “humans” do when, for instance, you’re really describing only the privileged populations of wealthy nations. And, according to just about all

scholars in the humanities, there is no such thing as “human nature.” If you’re going to try to assert otherwise, you’d better bring lots and lots of evidence to the fight.

Careless errors. No college student should still be confusing *affect* with *effect*, *their* with *they’re* and *there*, *its* with *it’s*, *led* with *lead*. If you are uncomfortable with any of these distinctions, head straight to a dictionary. Run-on sentences connect two independent phrases (phrases that could stand alone as sentences) without separating them with a semi-colon or a comma combined with a conjunction. Sentence fragments are either missing a subject, or do not link that subject to a verb—and are much more common than you might expect.

Quotations. Use quotations from primary and secondary sources only in two situations: when you want to analyze the specific *language* a writer uses, or when that language is particularly evocative. Do not quote a section of a source just because you are discussing that section. Rather, just paraphrase that section, putting it in your own words. Be careful not to quote too often or include long quotations (over two sentences). Your reader is most interested in what *you* have to say, not what your sources say. Also, make sure that your reader always knows who is speaking in your quotations; don’t just drop them unannounced. Ellipses (...) should be used only when omitting words from the *middle* of a quotation. Do not put anything in quotation marks that you are not quoting; that is, avoid ironic or scare quotes (e.g., “This wasn’t true for ‘real’ farmers”). Do not use a single inverted comma (‘...’) to open and close a quotation; that’s European. Commas and periods, even when not part of a quotation, belong inside the quotation marks (again, on this continent).

Citations. In your reading responses, since you are using only course readings, you do not need a bibliography, footnotes, or in-text citations. For any quotations, include the page number in parentheses after the quotation marks and before the period. If you borrow any ideas from Frederic, put the date of the lecture in parentheses.

Books and articles. When referring to sources, remember that the titles of complete works (like books, magazines, or albums) are italicized, while the titles of partial works (like chapters, articles, or songs) are put in quotation marks. No titles should be underlined; that’s a relic of the typewriter era. Also remember that the word “novel” refers only to fictional works.

Formatting. Standard college paper formatting calls for double-spacing and a 12-point font with 1” margins. Do not put spaces in between your paragraphs. Always staple your work.

THESIS STATEMENTS

In historical writing, essays revolve around one central argument or thesis. While some disciplines prefer implied thesis statements, the best historical writing relies upon an explicit thesis that clearly informs the reader of the paper's main argument. The following is a list of suggestions for writing strong thesis statements:

- **The thesis statement must address the question.** Whether you have been instructed to answer a specific question or have independently posed a problem, make sure your thesis explicitly answers the question. Avoid "dancing around the issue" or discussing it generally. Write at least two drafts of your paper—frequently students write thesis statements that do not address the question in their first draft. The best idea for your thesis statement might appear in the conclusion of your first draft, after you have thoroughly thought through the question.
- **Make sure to fully answer the question.** Failing to answer the question completely is a problem, especially in essay exams. Many students neglect to answer ALL ASPECTS of the question. For example, if a question asks you to analyze the political, social, and economic results of a certain event, be sure to address EACH CATEGORY (political, social, and economic) in the thesis and throughout your essay.
- **Make sure that the thesis is clear.** Because the thesis statement is the most important sentence in the entire essay, make sure that it is free of grammatical errors. Avoid writing long sentences that include many different ideas. Instead, write shorter sentences that sufficiently develop each idea.
- **The best academic thesis statements are complex.** Avoid polarized thinking. Try to show sophistication in your arguments, as most historical questions cannot be addressed in a simple yes or no statement.
- **Most academic theses are more than one sentence.** Breaking your argument into more than one sentence will help to achieve both clarity and sophistication.
- **Make sure that the thesis is manageable.** Carefully consider the nature and length of the writing assignment. Write a thesis that can be fully addressed within the parameters of the assignment.
- **Your thesis should be interesting and original.** Every student has something to contribute to the historical field. Bring something of yourself to your writing and argumentation, and your essays will be considerably more interesting. Teaching assistants read many papers - the more interesting your paper, the more engaging it will be to the reader.
- **Continuously revise the thesis (and the paper).** The best thesis statements require substantial revisions. Begin your first draft with a working thesis, recognizing that you will rewrite it many times before you turn in the final paper. As you write various drafts, your ideas will become clearer and more focused; consequently, you should revise the thesis to reflect your new arguments. The best thesis statements are revisions of earlier thesis statements and ideas.
- **Do NOT substitute an organizational preview for a thesis statement.** While you should give the reader a sense of what a paper will do (mapping) in the introduction, organizational statements are not argumentative. They do not qualify as thesis statements in historical papers.
- **Where does the thesis go?** Although in history we are flexible about the thesis, we generally tend to place it at the end of the introductory paragraph. Doing so will help you with the focus of the paper.

Thanks to Professor Sara Sewell and Gillian Glaes for help with this handout.

TAKING ESSAY EXAMS*

The essays you write for an exam will necessarily be shorter than the papers you write for your course, but they should follow the same basic format. In other words, an exam essay should begin with a thesis, stated clearly in the first paragraph, followed by several paragraphs in which you provide evidence supporting your thesis, and end with a conclusion. The difficulty, of course, is that you will be writing this essay under pressure, in a limited period of time, and without the opportunity to check the accuracy of your data. Here are some suggestions for preparing to write a successful essay on a history exam.

Preparing for the exam

The best preparation for an exam does not begin the day, or even the week, before the exam but takes place throughout the semester. Careful reading of the texts and periodic review of your notes on a weekly basis will ensure that you have a firm grasp of the material come exam time.

Throughout the semester, you should do the following.

- Attend class regularly and take good notes. It is not necessary, of course, to write down everything your professor says. When taking notes, you should listen for the professor's main points and note the evidence that he or she gives to support those points. (You will discover that your professor's lectures usually follow the same format as a good essay.) Follow the same suggestions for a discussion class; your classmates will often make important points about the material you are studying.
- Review your notes regularly, preferably after each class. If you review your notes while the class is fresh in your mind, it will be easier for you to notice places where the notes are unclear. Mark these places and clarify confusing points as soon as possible, either by researching the issue yourself or by asking your professor.
- Refer to your syllabus throughout the semester. Many professors provide detailed syllabi that state the themes for each section of the course. Use this as a guide for your own studying and thinking about the course material.
- Take careful notes on the material you are reading for the course. Keep in mind that simply copying long sections from your texts is not very useful in ensuring that you have understood the material. It will be much more useful for you to take notes in the form of summaries (see pp. 10-11 for a fuller discussion).
- If one is not assigned for the course, consider keeping an academic journal. In your journal, record important points about the material you are reading, any questions you want to answer or issues you would like to raise, important ideas suggested by class discussions, and so on. You can use the journal to track your growing knowledge of the material you are studying.

The week before the exam

- Review your notes, syllabi, and texts. Identify the most important themes and issues of the course and assemble the evidence that elucidates those themes.
- Imagine that you are the professor faced with the task of setting the exam for this course. What questions would you ask? Framing your own exam questions and answering them can be a useful way of organizing your thoughts.

Taking the exam

Before you write. Do not begin to write right away. This is probably the biggest mistake that students make in essay exams. Before you write, do the following.

- Read the exam carefully. Make sure you understand what each question is really asking. You will not gain points by scribbling down everything you know about the development of Chinese politics from the tenth through the fifteenth century when the question asks you to discuss the impact of the Mongol invasion in 1260.
- If you are offered a choice, make sure you answer the question you can answer best. This may not always be the one you are drawn to first. One great insight about the significance of the Treaty of Waitangi will not be enough to write a good essay about Maori-British relations in nineteenth-century New Zealand. Be sure that you can cite several pieces of evidence in support of your thesis.
- Take the time to organize your thoughts. Jot down a quick outline for your essay, stating the thesis and listing the evidence you will provide to support that thesis.

Writing the Essay

- Once you are ready to write, your essay should follow the same format as any other history essay.
- Begin by stating your thesis. Do not waste time restating the question - your professor knows what he or she asked.
- Cite the evidence that supports your thesis. If you are aware of any counterevidence, make sure you discuss it.
- Be sure you stick to the point. Do not go off on interesting tangents that are irrelevant to the question. Referring frequently to your outline will help you keep on track.
- Tie your essay together by stating your conclusions.

*from Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, 2 ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998): 19-21.

HINTS FOR MIDTERM EXAM

For this exam you will answer two essay questions from the choices provided. The essays will be grouped into two groups and you will need to answer one from each group. Each essay is evenly weighted so be sure to spend half your time on each essay. Try to work steadily throughout the period so you are not rushing to get done at the end.

1. Read all the essay choices and choose the ones you wish to answer. Reread these questions carefully to make sure you understand what is being asked and that you are answering all parts of the question.
2. Take some time to organize your thoughts. Jot down a quick outline to make sure you don't leave anything out and that your ideas flow smoothly together. Of course you can do all this (and even write out answers to each question) before you take the test but you cannot refer to any outlines, notes, or any other type of written preparation while you are taking the exam. Any attempt to do so will be grounds for failure.
3. Each essay should begin with an introduction in which you broadly describe what you will argue (a thesis statement). The body should discuss each part of the question in turn. Make sure each paragraph is well-constructed with a topic sentence and several supporting sentences. End your essay with a strong conclusion that summarizes your argument succinctly but completely.
4. Your answers should include specific historical examples which support the broader points you make. Be as specific as possible about the when, what, where, and how of the events, ideas and/or individuals you are discussing. Most important, make clear the historical significance of your examples. Try to make sure your examples are directly relevant to the topic at hand. Define your terms carefully so that it is clear to me that you understand their meaning.
5. The point of these essay questions is for you to show both your breadth and depth of knowledge. Some things to keep in mind: - try to use different examples for each essay (although some overlap is ok) -provide specific and concrete examples for each question you answer - try to discuss a fairly wide variety of examples in each essay. You want to provide enough to show you recognize the complexity of foreign or domestic policy (for example) but not so many examples that you can only provide 1 or 2 lines for each.
6. Try to bring your own critical thinking into your essay and don't be afraid to take risks. Don't just reiterate the lectures or the readings; bring this material together with your own assessment to advance a compelling argument.

Hints for an Effective Review Essay

In your review essay, we are looking for two basic results from your efforts: (1) a presentation of your interpretation and your argument (thesis) about the issue under discussion, and (2) your evaluation of the authors' arguments. By looking at each author's evidence, line of reasoning, and historical assumptions, you can evaluate how effectively the author tells the story and persuades you of the argument. In your review essay, you are expected to present your own thesis that may agree with, disagree with, or in various ways modify what the authors have presented.

Quotations: When using a direct quote, make sure that you introduce and explain them. Whether these quotes are set off in quotation marks (less than 5 lines of text) or set apart from the main body of the text in single-spaced indented blocks, you need to explain how the quotation fits with the arguments you are making. Too many block quotes show that you're coasting on someone else's ideas. Paraphrasing is a vital skill for academic work. You may rephrase someone else's ideas, as long as you extend credit where it is due. In papers, we do this through footnotes.

Footnotes: Use of direct quotations or paraphrases requires footnotes. Footnotes generally take this form for the first reference-Sam Bass Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs. The Process of Growth in Boston. 1870-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 80. A second reference to the same work can be abbreviated-Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs.* 151.

Getting a Head Start: A clearly written essay is a successful essay. Write your essay several days before the due date, so that you have time to rework it. How do you rework an essay? Let a friend read it to see if it's understandable. Read it out loud yourself to see how it sounds. Pretend you are grading someone else's essay. Remember that the majority of work in writing is actually rewriting.

Does Spelling Count?: An occasional misspelling will rarely result in a massive grade reduction (with the exception of misspelling your name). But spelling, punctuation, and good grammar are vital parts of a clearly written essay. While everyone makes typographical errors, more than one or two per paper look unprofessional and raise questions about the author's commitment to careful and responsible work. Please take the time to proofread carefully, and keep in mind that computer spell-checks don't catch every error.

QUESTIONS TO ASK IN WRITING AND REVISING*

I

- a. Has my paper (chapter) a single informing theme, with its proper developments, or is it merely a series of vaguely connected ideas and images?
- b. Does my beginning begin and does my conclusion conclude? (A beginning should not go back to the Flood, and a conclusion is not the same thing as a summing up.)
- c. Is each of my paragraphs a division with a purpose; that is, does it organize a number of sentences into a treatment of one idea and its modifications?
- d. Is each sentence built to stand on its own feet or is it thrown off balance by the load of qualifiers or the drag of after thoughts?
- e. Have I made proper use of transitional words and phrases to keep all my connections clear? For example, nevertheless, moreover, even, still, of course (in its use of minimizing the idea before), to be sure, admittedly. (The transitional word or phrase is usually better in the course of the sentence than at the beginning.)

II

- a. What is the tone of my piece? Is it too stiff and too formal, trying for the effect of authority? Is it perhaps too relaxed, too familiar, too facetious? Or is it, as it should be, simple, direct?
- b. Are there any passages that I especially prize? If so, am I sure that, in my creative enthusiasm, I am not delighted with something "fancy"?
- c. Have I been conscious of the reader and have I consulted his convenience? Or have I, on the contrary, been easy only on myself and used a private language?
- d. Could I, if called upon to do so, explain the exact meaning and function of every word I have used? For example, subjective, objective, realistic, impact, value, metaphor.
- e. Are my images aids to the reader or merely ways for me to escape the difficulty of clear thought?

III

- a. Is it perfectly clear to which noun or noun-clause my pronouns refer? (The slightest ambiguity is fatal.)
- b. Have I tried to give an air of judicious reserve by repeating the words somewhat, rather, perhaps, and have I used for this purpose the illiterate "to an extent"? Or, conversely, have I overdone the emphatic with very, invariably, tremendous, extraordinary, and the like?
- c. Have I arbitrarily broken or altered the idiomatic links between certain words, particularly between verbs and their allied prepositions, committing such solecisms as: disagree . . . to, equally . . . as, prefer . . . than ?
- d. Have I imported from science and disciplines in which I am interested a vocabulary out of place in civilized writing? What jargon and vogue words have slipped out by force of habit? Examples of jargon are: interface, area, parameter, frame of reference, methodology, in terms of, synergy, approach.
- e. Have I preferred the familiar word to the far-fetched? The concrete to the abstract? the single to the circumlocution? the short to the long?

*Figure 20, from Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff, *The Modern Researcher*, 5th ed. (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992): 268-269.

Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide

The Chicago Manual of Style presents two basic documentation systems: (1) notes and bibliography and (2) author-date. Choosing between the two often depends on subject matter and the nature of sources cited, as each system is favored by different groups of scholars.

The notes and bibliography style is preferred by many in the humanities, including those in literature, history, and the arts. This style presents bibliographic information in notes and, often, a bibliography. It accommodates a variety of sources, including esoteric ones less appropriate to the author-date system.

The author-date system has long been used by those in the physical, natural, and social sciences. In this system, sources are briefly cited in the text, usually in parentheses, by author's last name and date of publication. The short citations are amplified in a list of references, where full bibliographic information is provided.

Aside from the use of notes versus parenthetical references in the text, the two systems share a similar style. Click on the tabs below to see some common examples of materials cited in each style, including examples of common electronic sources. For numerous specific examples, see chapters and [15](#) of the 16th edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

Notes and Bibliography: Sample Citations

The following examples illustrate citations using the notes and bibliography system. Examples of notes are followed by shortened versions of citations to the same source. For more details and many more examples, see [chapter 14](#) of *The Chicago Manual of Style*. For examples of the same citations using the author-date system, click on the Author-Date tab above.

Book

One author

1. Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 99–100.
2. Pollan, *Omnivore's Dilemma*, 3.

Pollan, Michael. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin, 2006.

Two or more authors

1. Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns, *The War: An Intimate History, 1941–1945* (New York: Knopf, 2007), 52.
2. Ward and Burns, *War*, 59–61.

Ward, Geoffrey C., and Ken Burns. *The War: An Intimate History, 1941–1945*. New York: Knopf, 2007.

For four or more authors, list all of the authors in the bibliography; in the note, list only the first author, followed by *et al.* (“and others”):

1. Dana Barnes et al., *Plastics: Essays on American Corporate Ascendance in the 1960s* . . .
2. Barnes et al., *Plastics* . . .

Editor, translator, or compiler instead of author

1. Richmond Lattimore, trans., *The Iliad of Homer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 91–92.
2. Lattimore, *Iliad*, 24.

Lattimore, Richmond, trans. *The Iliad of Homer*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951.

Editor, translator, or compiler in addition to author

1. Gabriel García Márquez, *Love in the Time of Cholera*, trans. Edith Grossman (London: Cape, 1988), 242–55.
2. García Márquez, *Cholera*, 33.

García Márquez, Gabriel. *Love in the Time of Cholera*. Translated by Edith Grossman. London: Cape, 1988.

Chapter or other part of a book

1. John D. Kelly, “Seeing Red: Mao Fetishism, Pax Americana, and the Moral Economy of War,” in *Anthropology and Global Counterinsurgency*, ed. John D. Kelly et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 77.
2. Kelly, “Seeing Red,” 81–82.

Kelly, John D. “Seeing Red: Mao Fetishism, Pax Americana, and the Moral Economy of War.” In *Anthropology and Global Counterinsurgency*, edited by John D. Kelly, Beatrice Jauregui, Sean T. Mitchell, and Jeremy Walton, 67–83. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Chapter of an edited volume originally published elsewhere (as in primary sources)

1. Quintus Tullius Cicero, “Handbook on Canvassing for the Consulship,” in *Rome: Late Republic and Principate*, ed. Walter Emil Kaegi Jr. and Peter White, vol. 2 of *University of Chicago Readings in Western Civilization*, ed. John Boyer and Julius Kirshner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 35.
2. Cicero, “Canvassing for the Consulship,” 35.

Cicero, Quintus Tullius. “Handbook on Canvassing for the Consulship.” In *Rome: Late Republic and Principate*, edited by Walter Emil Kaegi Jr. and Peter White. Vol. 2 of *University of Chicago Readings in Western Civilization*, edited by John Boyer and Julius Kirshner, 33–46. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986. Originally published in Evelyn S. Shuckburgh, trans., *The Letters of Cicero*, vol. 1 (London: George Bell & Sons, 1908).

Preface, foreword, introduction, or similar part of a book

1. James Rieger, introduction to *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), xx–xxi.
2. Rieger, introduction, xxxiii.

Rieger, James. Introduction to *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, xi–xxxvii. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Book published electronically

If a book is available in more than one format, cite the version you consulted. For books consulted online, list a URL; include an access date only if one is required by your publisher or discipline. If no fixed page numbers are available, you can include a section title or a chapter or other number.

1. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2007), Kindle edition.
2. Philip B. Kurland and Ralph Lerner, eds., *The Founders' Constitution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), accessed February 28, 2010, <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/>.
3. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*.
4. Kurland and Lerner, *Founder's Constitution*, chap. 10, doc. 19.

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2007. Kindle edition.

Kurland, Philip B., and Ralph Lerner, eds. *The Founders' Constitution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. Accessed February 28, 2010. <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/>.

Journal article

Article in a print journal

In a note, list the specific page numbers consulted, if any. In the bibliography, list the page range for the whole article.

1. Joshua I. Weinstein, "The Market in Plato's *Republic*," *Classical Philology* 104 (2009): 440.
2. Weinstein, "Plato's *Republic*," 452–53.

Weinstein, Joshua I. "The Market in Plato's *Republic*." *Classical Philology* 104 (2009): 439–58.

Article in an online journal

Include a DOI (Digital Object Identifier) if the journal lists one. A DOI is a permanent ID that, when appended to <http://dx.doi.org/> in the address bar of an Internet browser, will lead to the source. If no DOI is available, list a URL. Include an access date only if one is required by your publisher or discipline.

1. Gueorgi Kossinets and Duncan J. Watts, "Origins of Homophily in an Evolving Social Network," *American Journal of Sociology* 115 (2009): 411, accessed February 28, 2010, doi:10.1086/599247.
2. Kossinets and Watts, "Origins of Homophily," 439.

Kossinets, Gueorgi, and Duncan J. Watts. "Origins of Homophily in an Evolving Social Network." *American Journal of Sociology* 115 (2009): 405–50. Accessed February 28, 2010. doi:10.1086/599247.

Article in a newspaper or popular magazine

Newspaper and magazine articles may be cited in running text ("As Sheryl Stolberg and Robert Pear noted in a *New York Times* article on February 27, 2010, . . .") instead of in a note, and they are commonly omitted from a bibliography. The following examples show the more formal versions of

the citations. If you consulted the article online, include a URL; include an access date only if your publisher or discipline requires one. If no author is identified, begin the citation with the article title.

1. Daniel Mendelsohn, "But Enough about Me," *New Yorker*, January 25, 2010, 68.

2. Sheryl Gay Stolberg and Robert Pear, "Wary Centrists Posing Challenge in Health Care Vote," *New York Times*, February 27, 2010, accessed February 28, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/28/us/politics/28health.html>.

3. Mendelsohn, "But Enough about Me," 69.

4. Stolberg and Pear, "Wary Centrists."

Mendelsohn, Daniel. "But Enough about Me." *New Yorker*, January 25, 2010.

Stolberg, Sheryl Gay, and Robert Pear. "Wary Centrists Posing Challenge in Health Care Vote." *New York Times*, February 27, 2010. Accessed February 28, 2010.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/28/us/politics/28health.html>.

Book review

1. David Kamp, "Deconstructing Dinner," review of *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*, by Michael Pollan, *New York Times*, April 23, 2006, Sunday Book Review, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/23/books/review/23kamp.html>.

2. Kamp, "Deconstructing Dinner."

Kamp, David. "Deconstructing Dinner." Review of *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*, by Michael Pollan. *New York Times*, April 23, 2006, Sunday Book Review.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/23/books/review/23kamp.html>.

Thesis or dissertation

1. Mihwa Choi, "Contesting *Imaginares* in Death Rituals during the Northern Song Dynasty" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2008).

2. Choi, "Contesting *Imaginares*."

Choi, Mihwa. "Contesting *Imaginares* in Death Rituals during the Northern Song Dynasty." PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2008.

Paper presented at a meeting or conference

1. Rachel Adelman, "'Such Stuff as Dreams Are Made On': God's Footstool in the Aramaic Targumim and Midrashic Tradition" (paper presented at the annual meeting for the Society of Biblical Literature, New Orleans, Louisiana, November 21–24, 2009).

2. Adelman, "Such Stuff as Dreams."

Adelman, Rachel. "'Such Stuff as Dreams Are Made On': God's Footstool in the Aramaic Targumim and Midrashic Tradition." Paper presented at the annual meeting for the Society of Biblical Literature, New Orleans, Louisiana, November 21–24, 2009.

Website

A citation to website content can often be limited to a mention in the text or in a note (“As of July 19, 2008, the McDonald’s Corporation listed on its website . . .”). If a more formal citation is desired, it may be styled as in the examples below. Because such content is subject to change, include an access date or, if available, a date that the site was last modified.

1. “Google Privacy Policy,” last modified March 11, 2009,
<http://www.google.com/intl/en/privacypolicy.html>.
2. “McDonald’s Happy Meal Toy Safety Facts,” McDonald’s Corporation, accessed July 19, 2008,
<http://www.mcdonalds.com/corp/about/factsheets.html>.
3. “Google Privacy Policy.”
4. “Toy Safety Facts.”

Google. “Google Privacy Policy.” Last modified March 11, 2009.

<http://www.google.com/intl/en/privacypolicy.html>.

McDonald’s Corporation. “McDonald’s Happy Meal Toy Safety Facts.” Accessed July 19, 2008.

<http://www.mcdonalds.com/corp/about/factsheets.html>.

Blog entry or comment

Blog entries or comments may be cited in running text (“In a comment posted to *The Becker-Posner Blog* on February 23, 2010, . . .”) instead of in a note, and they are commonly omitted from a bibliography. The following examples show the more formal versions of the citations. There is no need to add *pseud.* after an apparently fictitious or informal name. (If an access date is required, add it before the URL; see examples elsewhere in this guide.)

1. Jack, February 25, 2010 (7:03 p.m.), comment on Richard Posner, “Double Exports in Five Years?,” *The Becker-Posner Blog*, February 21, 2010, <http://uchicagolaw.typepad.com/beckerposner/2010/02/double-exports-in-five-years-posner.html>.

2. Jack, comment on Posner, “Double Exports.”

Becker-Posner Blog, The. <http://uchicagolaw.typepad.com/beckerposner/>.

E-mail or text message

E-mail and text messages may be cited in running text (“In a text message to the author on March 1, 2010, John Doe revealed . . .”) instead of in a note, and they are rarely listed in a bibliography. The following example shows the more formal version of a note.

1. John Doe, e-mail message to author, February 28, 2010.

S

SECTION IV—GRADING

Information About Grading at the UW-Madison*

UW-MADISON GRADE OPTIONS

(Notice, there is no A-, B+, B-, C+, etc. If you are giving out letter grades instead of points or percentages, be aware that such a grades will confuse students.)

A, AB, B, BC, C, D, F

CONVENTIONAL SCALE

(The scale below is the generally recognized and used distribution of points at the University of Wisconsin. However, a professor/lecturer/instructor can formulate any grade scale appropriate to their course requirements.)

100 – 93	A
88 – 92	AB
83 – 87	B
78 – 82	BC
70 – 77	C
60 – 69	D
50 – 59	F

ASSIGNING LETTER GRADES

(If you want to assign letter grades instead of percentages or points, you will need to assign a value to each letter grade so that you can tally grades at the end of the semester. Students should be aware of the values assigned to the letter grades they receive.)

A	4.0	C	2.0
AB	3.5	D	1.0
B	3.0	F	0.0
BC	2.5		

Another approach to take...

(If you are more comfortable with the flexibility that minus and plusses provide, consider the following value distribution)

A	4.0
A-	3.7
B+	3.3
B	3.0
B-	2.7
C+	2.3
C	2.0
C-	1.7
D+	1.3
D	1.0
F	0.0

*Thanks to Brenna Greer for compiling this information

VARIOUS GRADING SCALES

15 POINT GRADING SCALE				20 POINT GRADING SCALE					
15.00	100%	8.00	53%	20.00	100%	13.00	65%	6.00	0.30
14.50	97%	7.50	50%	19.50	98%	12.50	63%	5.50	0.28
14.00	93%	7.00	47%	19.00	95%	12.00	60%	5.00	0.25
13.50	90%	6.50	43%	18.50	93%	11.50	58%	4.50	0.23
13.00	87%	6.00	40%	18.00	90%	11.00	55%	4.00	0.20
12.50	83%	5.50	37%	17.50	88%	10.50	53%	3.50	0.18
12.00	80%	5.00	33%	17.00	85%	10.00	50%	3.00	0.15
11.50	77%	4.50	30%	16.50	83%	9.50	48%	2.50	0.13
11.00	73%	4.00	27%	16.00	80%	9.00	45%	2.00	0.10
10.50	70%	3.50	23%	15.50	78%	8.50	43%	1.50	0.08
10.00	67%	3.00	20%	15.00	75%	8.00	40%	1.00	0.05
9.50	63%	2.50	17%	14.50	73%	7.50	38%	0.50	0.03
9.00	60%	2.00	13%	14.00	70%	7.00	35%	0.00	0.00
8.50	57%	1.50	10%	13.50	68%	6.50	33%		

25 POINT GRADING SCALE				50 POINT GRADING SCALE									
25.00	100%	16.50	66%	8.00	32%	50.00	100%	41.00	82%	32.00	64%	23.00	46%
24.50	98%	16.00	64%	7.50	30%	49.50	99%	40.50	81%	31.50	63%	22.50	45%
24.00	96%	15.50	62%	7.00	28%	49.00	98%	40.00	80%	31.00	62%	22.00	44%
23.50	94%	15.00	60%	6.50	26%	48.50	97%	39.50	79%	30.50	61%	21.50	43%
23.00	92%	14.50	58%	6.00	24%	48.00	96%	39.00	78%	30.00	60%	21.00	42%
22.50	90%	14.00	56%	5.50	22%	47.50	95%	38.50	77%	29.50	59%	20.50	41%
22.00	88%	13.50	54%	5.00	20%	47.00	94%	38.00	76%	29.00	58%	20.00	40%
21.50	86%	13.00	52%	4.50	18%	46.50	93%	37.50	75%	28.50	57%	19.50	39%
21.00	84%	12.50	50%	4.00	16%	46.00	92%	37.00	74%	28.00	56%	19.00	38%
20.50	82%	12.00	48%	3.50	14%	45.50	91%	36.50	73%	27.50	55%	18.50	37%
20.00	80%	11.50	46%	3.00	12%	45.00	90%	36.00	72%	27.00	54%	18.00	36%
19.50	78%	11.00	44%	2.50	10%	44.50	89%	35.50	71%	26.50	53%	17.50	35%
19.00	76%	10.50	42%	2.00	8%	44.00	88%	35.00	70%	26.00	52%	17.00	34%
18.50	74%	10.00	40%	1.50	6%	43.50	87%	34.50	69%	25.50	51%	16.50	33%
18.00	72%	9.50	38%	1.00	4%	43.00	86%	34.00	68%	25.00	50%	16.00	32%
17.50	70%	9.00	36%	0.50	2%	42.50	85%	33.50	67%	24.50	49%	15.50	31%
17.00	68%	8.50	34%			42.00	84%	33.00	66%	24.00	48%	15.00	30%
						41.50	83%	32.50	65%	23.50	47%	14.50	29%

*Thanks to Brenna Greer for sharing this resource.

Hist 242: Modern Latin America
Semester II, 2000-2001
TA: Molly Todd

Paper#1

Student name:

Discussion section;

Date rec'd:

Date(s) reviewed:

THESIS/ARGUMENT

EVIDENCE/ANALYSIS

WRITING MECHANICS

Grade:

PAPER CRITIQUE KEY

prob. thes.	Problematic thesis—meaning it could be too broad, unclear, or it does not make a claim.
prob.	Problematic'—meaning, there are problems with your reasoning or your use of evidence
elab.	Need to elaborate on your meaning or your evidence
eid?	Need evidence to demonstrate/prove assertion
cite?	Where is your citation of the evidence?
source?	From where did you get your evidence?
meaning?	Your meaning with a certain word/statement/assertion is not clear.
pt?	What is the claim—or the point—that you are trying to make and how does it help/fit into your thesis
Why?	Meaning, you need to carry your reasoning/evidence/demonstration out further.
no	Meaning, your assertion, evidence, or information is incorrect based on the facts at hand
w.w.	wrong word
b.w.	could use a better word
awk. clarity	The writing or organization is awkward and affects the meaning or clarity
n.c.	Not clear.
def. terms	Need to define the terms you are using and/or explain how you are using them
trans.	Need a transition from one idea to another
p.r.	Proofread

Student Self-Evaluation

Below I have listed some of the criteria by which I determine participation grades. I realize that students rarely fall squarely into one “category,” and I do not mean to imply that I view students as one of these three “types.” However, the reality is that I can only evaluate you on what I see and hear you do. For instance, if you *appear* to be inattentive, uninformed, and unwilling to contribute, it’s likely I will perceive you as such and grade you accordingly. Therefore, I like to give you an opportunity to evaluate yourself. I do this for several reasons.

1. I think it is only fair that you know the criteria by which you are being evaluated
2. It lets you know what is necessary for you to improve or maintain your discussion grade
3. It allows you an opportunity to explain something about your participation that I could not otherwise know
4. It helps to eliminate any misunderstandings or surprises regarding one’s section grade at the end of the semester—if you and I have a different perception of your participation, we can address it now.

Please read the criteria below and then rate yourself as if you were on the continuum (on page 2) and then email me where you think you rate and answer the questions on the following page (if you wish).

CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCELLENT PARTICIPATION

- Make substantial verbal contributions in each discussion section
- Volunteer contributions
- Demonstrate familiarity with reading materials and information from lectures when contributing
- Take the initiative in discussion—suggestion topics, themes, and/or questions to explore.
- Frequently share own ideas, reactions and/or questions in response to other’s contributions
- Bring outside information (whether physical materials or intellectual) to the discussions
- Take responsibility for getting answers to questions
- Listen to peers and instructor attentively and respectfully
- Communicate with instructors in an effort to make suggestions, ask questions, impart information, etc.
- Complete assignments on time and with thought and care
- Attend every week

CHARACTERISTICS OF AVERAGE PARTICIPATION

- Contribute from time to time
- Must be asked to contribute more than you volunteer
- Demonstrate some familiarity with reading materials and information from lectures
- Wait for others to initiate discussion or set course
- Ask questions more than offer ideas, reactions, thoughts, or suggestions
- Complete assignments on time
- Attend regularly

CHARACTERISTICS OF LESS-THAN-ADEQUATE PARTICIPATION

- Do not display familiarity with reading materials and information from lectures
- Rarely, if ever, contribute to discussion
- Detract from, rather than enhance the discussion
- Disrupt discussion and/or do not afford peers or instructor respect
- Do not complete assignments
- Attend inconsistently

(over)

Given these characteristics, how do you evaluate yourself as a discussion participant?
(Please indicate your rating of your participation by placing a mark on the continuum below.)



OPTIONAL STUFF

Please explain why you have evaluated yourself this way?

Is there anything you want me to tell me about your participation (or lack thereof) that I might not know?

Additional comments:

RESOURCES

Office for Equity and Diversity

Home to several of the most active diversity education programs including SEED, Leadership Institute, and campus-wide graduate assistant equity workshops

Bascom Hall, Room 179A

500 Lincoln Drive 608/263-2378, FAX: 608/263/5562

Institutional Change & Excellence Virtual Resource Center: <http://www.library.wisc.edu/EDVRC/>

Remote Teaching Resources through L&S

<https://sites.google.com/wisc.edu/ls-remote-teaching-toolkit/3-guides?authuser=0>

Provides instructional support for managing discussion sections, building remote courses, and creating community in a remote environment

<https://instructionalcontinuity.wisc.edu/workshops-forums/>

Provides a list of upcoming remote training sessions and workshops on various aspects of working as a TA

<https://instructionalcontinuity.wisc.edu/course-activities/>

Provides a toolkit of strategies and tools for conducting course activities remotely

Fetzer Student Athlete Academic Center

Office of Academic Services for athletes (includes tutors and advisors)

Lower level of McClain Center, next to Camp Randall

608/262-1787, FAX 608/265-5334

History Lab

Resource center for undergraduate students studying, researching, and writing about the past
4255 George Mosse Humanities Bldg.

<https://history.wisc.edu/undergraduate-program/the-history-lab/>

L&S Teaching Assistant Resource Center

Coordinates L&S TA training and maintains extensive teaching resource library

South Hall, Room 307

1055 Bascom Mall

608/265-0603

<https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/page.php?id=45363>

McBurney Disability Resource Center

A support and advocacy center for students with learning disabilities

1305 Linden Drive, Room 155

608/263-2741

<http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/>

Offices of the Dean of Students

Supports students in crisis (illness, grief, harassment) & also investigates student misconduct.

75 Bascom Hall, 500 Lincoln Drive

Phone: 608/263/5700

Teaching Assistants' Association

AFT Local 3220 secured graduate assistants their tuition waver and currently negotiates TA and PA contracts, including health insurance benefits.

TAA/AFT Local 3220

520 University Avenue, Suite 220 Madison, WI 53703

<http://www.taa-madison.org/>

UHS Counseling and Consultation Services

Provides free mental health services to all UW students, 24-hour mental health crisis services

333 East Campus Mall, 7th floor

608/265-6500

<http://www.uhs.wisc.edu/services/counseling/>