**Quick Glance Guide: Preliminary Assignments:** The process of researching and preparing for a research paper is actually more important than the writing itself. Your goal is to put more time and effort into the research and planning stages of the paper. These assignments are meant to assure student progress towards a successful final project.

**General Topic**: Choose from the list provided. Conduct some basic research from the [Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History: History by Era](https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/1945-present) on-line resource to decide on a general topic of American history that you will be researching further. **(5 Points, Due 11/26)**

a. Postwar Politics and the Origins of the Cold War

b. The Fifties

c. The Civil Rights Movement

d. The Sixties

e. The Age of Reagan

f. Facing the New Millennium

**Research Question**: Continue your focused research and write a research question. This will be the specific question that you will focus and attempt to answer in your research paper. (**10 Points, Due 12/1**

**Initial References**: Students must prepare reference entries in the correct format for all sources they have accumulated so far in the project. Not all sources that are in the references may end up being used in the paper itself. But after this point, no new sources should be added. You must have at least 5 sources. One source must be a book. Wikipedia is never an acceptable source and will result in two full letter grade deductions on the reference, outline, and final paper. **(30 Points, Due 12/8)**

**Outline:** An outlining sheet will be provided. Students will use it to plan their essay and to note where they will place information and quotations. We will peer-edit outlines in class before the final copy is due. Outlines will be due to both turnitin.com and a printed copy in class. **(25 Points, Due 12/12)**

**Rough Draft of Paper:** Your rough draft will be turned into turnit.com. You must also bring a hard copy to class for a peer review. Your paper needs to be at least 4 pages in length and must include a title page and reference page in correct APA format. (**30 Points, Due 12/23) If your rough draft is not completed and submitted to turnitin.com by the due date, your final copy will not be graded.**

**Final Copy of Paper:** Your final copy will be turned in to turnitin.com. Your paper should answer the research question using a combination of primary sources and appropriate secondary sources. Essay should be double-spaced in Times New Roman or 12 point font. You will have a cover page and a reference page. **(100 Points, Due 1/9)**

**Research Paper Guide**

**Basic Research & Posing a Research Question**

**Basic Research:** Once students have chosen a basic topic and made sure there are enough research materials, they should begin their basic research. Students should begin by seeking out as many sources as they can that seem to be relevant to their topic, while remembering that several people may be doing the same topic. If some books later prove to be irrelevant, that’s okay. During this phase of the project, students should learn the important basic facts about their topic and how it fits into history. A good method is to look for at least one general history book that contains a broad scope including the topic. For example is the student had chosen the Battle of the bulge, a book about World War II in Europe would be a good choice. Students should seek to learn about the before and after as it pertains to the topic. This sort of research is especially important for students who begin with a broader topic. A general overview will usually provide the student with a point of interest or question that they can focus more closely on for the project itself. During the basic research phase, students should take factual notes that will let them place their topic into context. Students should also use their basic research to arrive at the research question if they did not have one at the beginning of the process. For example, a student who wants to write a paper on Ghandi may find the idea of *satyagraha* interesting. This may lead them to pose a research question about the role of *satyagraha* in the Indian fight for independence, or from where the idea of *satyagraha* itself came. At the end of the basic research phase, students should have a grasp of the context of their topic, they should have narrowed the focus of their paper, and they should be ready to pose a good research question if they do not already have one.

**Posing a Research Question:** Choosing a good research question is critically important for the success of the paper. The answer to the research question is the paper’s thesis; students should choose a question that will lend itself to being answered with a complex thesis. Because the thesis must be complex, students should in all cases avoid a research question that can be answered with a simple yes or no. The research question must also be a question that has a plausible answer. Following are some examples of possible research questions that would yield a good thesis statement for an answer:

* Why did X win the Battle of Y?
* Why did Genocide in X happen?
* Why did the X artistic movement arise?
* Why did the City of X grow so quickly during the Y century?
* How was X able to seize political power in Y during Z?

Please notice that all of the above are impossible to answer with a yes or no. Also, they all lend themselves to answers that take a variety of factors into consideration and require argument. Students should seek to pose these types of research questions in their projects.

**Focused Research:** Once students have arrived at a good research question, the efficiency of their research should increase. The goal of the research in this phase of the project is to gather information that will make it possible to answer the research question posed by the student. Students should seek information that will provide them with the evidence not only to answer the question, but to back up their answer with facts, quotations, and any other relevant evidence. This is the point in the process where students should especially consult primary sources and journal articles. Notes should be taken on the research in a well organized manner so that they can easily be found and consulted during the preparation of the outline and the writing of the paper itself. Do not simply highlight or cut and paste information for your notes. Taking notes and putting the information in your own words will help you to avoid plagiarism. Once enough research has been completed, students will be ready to construct their thesis statement. Once the thesis statement is complete, students will continue their research where necessary, in order to make their argument as solid as possible. Following is a list of particularly helpful types of information:

* **Background Information-**Most of this should have been found in the basic research phase.
* **Facts to Support Thesis/Argument-**This can include dates, statistics, names, anything factual to back up the assertions made in the thesis/argument.
* **Quotations-**These are very important. Look especially for quotes from primary sources to help illustrate the argument, as well as quotes from historians echoing points from the thesis statement.

**Thesis Construction:** To put it simply, the thesis statement is the answer to the research question. A thesis statement contains the main points of the paper’s argument. This is not a simple task and care should be taken in constructing the thesis. If a thesis is well constructed, writing the essay itself becomes a simple task. The thesis should be logically constructed. In other words, if one part of the paper’s argument is dependent on another part of the argument, that element of the thesis must come after the material upon which it depends.

**Writing the Paper**

**Outlining:** A well written thesis statement will result in an essay with much the same format as a five-paragraph English essay with **one important exception. It is best to think of the paper as a five-section *essay* instead of a five-paragraph essay.**  Write as many paragraph as needed! Students should think of each body section as its own smaller essay. Students should introduce the evidence and argument to prove the thesis at the beginning of each body section. Each body section will argue, prove, and tie the section to the thesis statement before transitioning to the next body section. The argument for each section should be well focused. When the three (or four or whatever) body sections are complete, wrap the complete essay up with a conclusion paragraph tying the points together for the reader. Here is a sample outline for the term paper. Your paper will be a minimum of 5 pages.

1. **Introduction**
   1. Introduce the topic and briefly put it into context
      1. Historical context is key to leading up to a thesis statement
      2. Reminder: No hooks in history writing!
   2. Give your thesis statement
2. **Body Section One**
   1. Introduce the first argument of your thesis in its entirety
   2. Argue the point in logical, concise, focused paragraph(s)
   3. Connect the full point to the thesis and weigh its relative importance
   4. Transition to the next section
3. **Body Section Two**
   1. Introduce the second argument of your thesis in its entirety
   2. Argue the point in logical, concise, focused paragraph(s)
   3. Connect the full point to the thesis and weigh its relative importance
   4. Transition to the next section
4. **Body Section Three**
   1. Introduce the third argument of your thesis in its entirety
   2. Argue the point in logical, concise, focused paragraph(s)
   3. Connect the full point to the thesis and weigh its relative importance
   4. Transition to the next section
5. **Conclusion**
   1. Briefly restate the main points of your argument and also briefly discuss how the points work together and their relative weight and importance to the thesis
   2. You can repeat the research question if you like
   3. Restate your thesis statement
   4. Finish up with a short conclusion statement

**In text citations:** Citations tell where you found the information that you have used in your paper. An in text citation is a type of citation that appears at the end of a sentences. The author’s name and the date of publication are included in parenthesis inside of the punctuation. In text citations serve two crucial purposes. First, whenever you borrow someone else’s ideas or words, you must give them credit. Second, they allow your reader to track down the source of your information if they want to learn more or double check your work. Inaccurate or sloppy in text citations can result in you inadvertently taking credit for someone else’s work; this is plagiarism, a serious academic and school offense. Therefore, you need to be extremely careful when recording information and page numbers as you complete your note cards or note taking. Remember that your paper will be checked for plagiarism.

**When to Cite a Source: THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS OVER CITING IN A PAPER.**

1. When you use someone else’s words (written or spoken), you need to include a footnote. You also need to put quotation marks around the material you are using, unless you are using a block quote. Not doing so is still plagiarism, even if you properly footnote.
2. When you paraphrase someone’s original opinions or interpretations, even if you alter the wording completely, you must cite their work.
3. When you use someone’s original research, you must also give them credit. All statistics, studies, court cases, laws, etc. must have citations. You do not require citations for *common knowledge*, material that you can reasonably conclude most people know (i.e. George Washington was the first President of the United States). If you are unsure about what is common knowledge and what is not, ask your teacher.

**Placing in text citations.:** Always place the in text citation at the end of the section you are citing. Put it in parenthesis before the punctuation. If, however, a series of sentences paraphrase information from the same source, you can put one citation at the end of that material; just be sure to include that page number(s) for all the material from your source.

**Formatting in text citations:** the author’s last name and date of publication should be in parenthesis at the end of the information. If there is no author than you use the article title. If you have multiple works from the same author or article title, after the date include a letter. (Weimer, 2014a)

**NOTE:** If there are several other assignments due at the same time as a smaller assignment, students should plan to work ahead to assure the quality of their work. Students should set a goal to have a rough draft complete at least 5-7 days before the final copy is due. Extensions are only given for the final copy in times of genuine catastrophe.