

## APUSH RESEARCH PROJECT: HISTORIOGRAPHY

Your task in this research project is to write a historiographical paper in which you will explore the contributions of various historians to the understanding of a given topic. You will work with a partner on this assignment. It does not matter who your partner is, or who their teacher is, as long as they have also been assigned the historiography paper for their research assignment.

Historiography is the study of the writing of history. Authors often differ in their presentation of information and interpretation of facts. Your job is to determine which authors did the “best” job of interpreting the information surrounding the topic you choose. This will involve doing some research not only about the topic at hand, but also about the historians that have written about that subject.

In order to do this, you need to be familiar with the areas in your field of research in which there is broad consensus and where there is disagreement. You also should be able to explain why scholars agree on certain points, but not on others. Having an awareness of the key debates about your topic will enable you to explain to your readers where you fit into the debate. Determining who did the “best” job is a way of asserting your voice in the conversation about your topic. ***To that end, your paper is not so much about the topic at hand, but about the sources that address that topic.*** Your opinion about the topic will come out in your assessment of what others who have come before have said.

The hardest part of writing a paper like this is getting started. In general, you will want to start with a topic. That topic could be as broad as the Civil War, or as narrow as the Pullman Strike of 1894. It could also focus on a person or an idea. Once you have chosen a general topic, you need to come up with a list of themes or a “big questions.” This is where you narrow your focus to a more manageable and useful topic. Your goal will then be to discuss ways in which historians answer those questions and why they answer the questions in the manner they chose. For example, if you research the Pullman Strike of 1894, one of the “big questions” would be to assess the impact of the strike on organized labor. Different historians will answer that question differently – your task is to address ***why.***

As you write the paper, keep the following questions in mind:

### **What are the most important secondary sources for my topic?**

Some topics will have an overwhelming number of relevant secondary sources, while others will have a disappointingly small number of resources. You are not expected to discuss each and every book about your topic, only the most important—and the most reputable. Which books have been the most influential in defining the prevailing understandings of your topic? You may want to look at the “Suggested Reading” lists given in your book, or in other textbooks. You may also do a search about your topic and see whose names come up most often. Also, book reviews may come in handy. The reading lists will help you establish which authors you should focus on while doing your research.

### **What do these secondary sources say about my topic?**

Where is there agreement? What are the key points of disagreement? Why do the historians differ in their interpretation of the events? Which interpretation do you find the most plausible and why? In assessing the literature on your topic, you have several options:

In some cases it might make the most sense to describe changes in interpretation chronologically, noting change over time as new primary sources became available, or as scholars, influenced by concerns and debates of their own time, posed new questions about an old topic. For example, scholars writing in 1973 after the Watergate scandal would have a different assessment of Richard Nixon’s presidency than those writing in 1994 after his death. Historians writing in 2003 might look at Nixon’s role in laying the foundation for greater cooperation with the Far East and establishing our relations with China that led to “Most Favored Nation” status. In your paper you should note which primary sources and which events have been the most influential in shaping historians’ interpretations.

In other cases it might be more effective to describe the historical literature on your topic in terms of schools of thought. For example, nationalist historians from the 1830s may have a different, more heroic view of George Washington than revisionist historians of the 1960s who would fault Washington for perpetuating slavery. Still others may focus on the intimate details of Washington’s home life and relationship with his wife Martha. Which one tells you the most about Washington, the man? That is your job to decide.

Either way, ***you will have to do some research about the authors themselves*** in order to determine how they did their research, what their background is, what other works they have written, and other elements that may influence the way they address the issues at hand.

### **Specific requirements:**

1. Discuss at least three authors and their books. Your choice of authors should, if possible, span the

20th century. You should also be able to cite examples from their books. Textbooks and encyclopedias are not appropriate.

2. Internet sources can be used, but must be used IN ADDITION to books and journal articles. To do this well, you are going to have to put on shoes and socks and go to this mystical place called a "library."

3. Use at least 4 journal articles. They may be articles, book reviews, or the like. If you have a hard time finding journal articles through our school or public libraries, get a CCCC library card and you will be able to access J-STOR and History Center Online

4. Sources can be cited with parenthetical, MLA citations. You will also have a thorough bibliography in MLA format.

5. Paper should be 5-7 pages typed, double-spaced in 11 point Arial font. Standard one inch margins are also required.

6. Paper should have a cover sheet with title, name, class, period, teacher, date (NO FOLDERS – stapled upper left corner)

7. Papers will be evaluated for content and style. Errors of spelling, grammar, punctuation, typing and style will be substantially penalized.

8. You will need to submit your paper to turnitin.com before the paper is turned in. Once registered with turnitin.com, join class number **2103230** (APUSH Historiography: password "history") and submit your paper.

### **Suggested Format**

1. Begin with a brief summary of the topic at hand. This should be no more than a page.

2. Create a thesis that delineates what kinds of things cause these sources to differ.

3. Compare and contrast each source to the topic/thesis. This will be a big part of your research. You will need to be able to discuss why these works differ in addition to how they differ. Do authors have an axe to grind? Do they differ in what aspects of the topic they emphasize? What are they trying to achieve?

4. Conclusions may include questions for further research and/or analysis of which author was most effective. Discuss which books seem the most helpful to those studying the topic and why. Who is doing the most effective scholarship? What questions are left unanswered by the authors?

### **DUE DATES:**

1. Submit a one page typed (single spaced) proposal of topic. Your proposal should discuss your topic and where you see diverging opinions among historians. To that end, your proposal should include:

- A 1 paragraph summary of your topic. What are you researching? Where do you see divisions/differences between historians?
- A 2-3 sentence summary of the work/point of view of at least two of your authors.
- MLA citations for five sources that you have used and a two sentence summary of each source.
- **THIS IS DUE JANUARY 29, 2008**

2. Submit completed paper. **DUE MARCH 4, 2008**

**NO LATE WORK ACCEPTED: NO MATTER WHAT YOU MUST GET PAPER TURNED IN ON THIS DATE: NO EXCEPTIONS! DO NOT BLAME YOUR COMPUTER OR PRINTER!**

**THIS WORK COUNTS AS TWO TEST GRADES**

## FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT RUBRIC: HISTORIOGRAPHY

### 8-9

- Features three authors, using sophisticated sources with a full variety of types of books and at least 4 scholarly journals
- Sources adequately span the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Paper focus is on reviewing the research in depth and with sophistication.
- Sources are compared/contrasted in a sophisticated manner; authors' views discussed with thought and insight. Sophisticated discussion of both **how** and **why** the authors differ
- Paper cites copious examples from the both the texts and reviews.
- Paper shows an in depth understanding of historiography and bias.
- Conclusions are dictated by the research and provide the basis for a publishable, sophisticated paper.
- Uses the appropriate MLA format throughout
- Appropriately follows all directions

### 5-7

- Features at least 3 authors/sources with less variety, may not span century adequately
- Attempts to include 4 scholarly journals
- Paper attempts to focus on reviewing the research in depth and with sophistication.
- Attempted to compare/contrast sources, limited discussion on author's views in an acceptable manner. Paper discusses **how** the authors differ with sophistication, but may be lacking on **why**
- Paper has adequate citation of both the texts and reviews.
- Paper attempts to show an in depth understanding of historiography and bias.
- Conclusions are dictated by the research and provide the basis for a solid paper.
- Adequate attempt at following all directions – not a publishable paper – may have some errors
- Attempted to follow MLA directions

### 2-4

- Features 3 authors with less variety - some sources are weak.
- Paper makes cursory effort to focus on reviewing the research in depth and with sophistication.
- Very little comparison/contrast of sources, limited discussion on author's views-reads more like a report. Adequate discussion of **how** the authors differ, little discussion of **why**
- Paper relies on reviews of texts and has limited citation of the authors' work
- Paper shows little insight in understanding of historiography and bias.
- Conclusions are not dictated by the research; paper is more of a report with a few cursory attempts at research level work.
- Fails to follow MLA sufficiently, typos and errors

### 0-1

- Paper does not follow guidelines.
- Bibliography and paper reflect last minute or no research.
- Paper should be used in future as an example of procrastination, of what not to do, of what happened to the little girl/boy who waited till the last minute.