

Doing History

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Introduction

Through many years of reading about university teaching and learning, especially in history, I have come to the following realization. Students may not appreciate how the study of history can be relevant to their lives. Indeed, if the course is required, for example to fulfill general education, they may even see my course as an obstacle to their progress. What is more, the subject matter may not appear relevant to my students who come from a diversity of backgrounds. This can lead to resentment and student resistance, which most often manifests itself in hastily completed work. As I explored ways to tackle this resistance, to create an environment in which students want to learn history, I came to embrace the importance of centering my history courses around decoding the discipline, creating opportunities to learn how to **do history**. History is far more than names, dates, events that must be memorized. Facts like these are building blocks for thinking about the past.

When we do history, we practice reading content for **text**, **context**, and **subtext**. To make our subject matter manageable, Europe since 1650, I organized my selection of topics and **essential questions** around a **big idea**:

The legacy of European history is ambiguous and serves as a warning against western hubris.

This big idea is a through line around which I selected topics to explore so that you could practice **doing history**. Each unit is driven by a couple of essential questions inspired by the **big idea** and enables us to practice developing historical skills that are relevant even if not all topics interest you. Before I explain how we do history, that is decode my discipline for you, let me make the case for how this history course has "career-readiness" skills built in.

Career-Readiness Skills in a History Course

Career-readiness competencies are outlined by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). NACE identifies eight **career readiness competencies** that are described in terms of expected **behaviors** that employers look for in university graduates. Behaviors that you can expect to develop or hone, if you actively engage with the lectures, readings, discussions, and assessments will make you more career ready. Some of these behaviors are skills that are easy to measure, others are "soft skills." In this course, several behaviors that you can develop that improve your career-readiness are

- ✓ "display curiosity; seek out opportunities to learn;" (achieved by spacing out and interleaving your review of course content and self-testing)
- ✓ "understand the importance of and demonstrate verbal, written, non-verbal/body language, abilities;" (achieved through making reading notes, preparing and engaging in discussions, and successful completion of writing assignments)
- ✓ "Employ active listening, persuasion and influencing skills;" (achieved in making reading notes and being prepared for discussions)
- ✓ "Be present and prepared;" (achieved by reading assignments in a timely, thoughtful manner and avoiding hastily completing work or cramming)
- ✓ "Consistently meet or exceed goals and expectations;" (achieved by reflecting upon your work and how you can improve, sometimes called self-regulation)

- ✓ "Show a high level of dedication toward doing a good job;" (achieved through successful completion or reading and writing assignments and reflecting upon ways to improve)
- ✓ "Have an attention to detail, resulting in few if any errors in their work;" (achieved by editing your written work, paying attention to dates and sequence of events, and using correct terminology, specifically naming individuals and events)
- ✓ "Accurately summarize and interpret data [we call this historical evidence and interpretations or **primary and secondary sources**] with an awareness of personal biases that may impact outcomes [what historians call **contextualizing** and **avoiding presentism**]." ¹ (achieved through engaged reading, discussion, reflection, and writing)

Reading and Thinking like a Historian

When we read like a historian, our reading goals are determined by **questions** that triggered our interests or that developed as we learn more about the topic. When we read like a historian, we locate the **claims** and **sub-claims** (a.k.a. thesis/sub-thesis) within paragraphs, sections, chapters, and books. When we read like a historian, we differentiate the claims and evaluate the evidence used to support them. The evidence most frequently is documents from the past, letters, diaries, government records, paintings, artifacts, etc. a.k.a. **primary sources** originally housed in digital or brick-and-mortar archives. Evidence can take other forms including the facts of the event (e.g. sequence of events, knowledge of defining features, etc.) or other historians' interpretations when we lack the time or resources to go to the archives. When we read like a historian, we separate the **minor and major details** and commit to memory the major facts that will help us answer the questions that triggered our inquiry.² The more familiar the topic, the easier it becomes to read with discernment, to know what evidence is essential, and to recall the details.

In teaching history, I prefer to explore the past through documentary evidence, rather than ask students to read a textbook. But as historian David Pace and his colleagues indicated,

The bottlenecks of using evidence exist because students usually come into history classes from their high school training ill-prepared to think like historians: they see themselves as performers of existing stories or, worse, as repeaters of 'facts.' [For the novice in college-level history], what makes someone a good history student is the ability to know all the relevant details of the past. They do not see themselves as **'attorneys'** who must find both the evidence and the arguments to defend their clients in a convincing way. That history is constructed from and based in evidence is something they have to learn.³

As we navigate periods of European history, you will be asked to offer your interpretations of a sampling of representative evidence so you can practice persuading a "jury" like any good attorney.

¹ <https://www.nacweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined/> accessed on 23 January 2022

² David Pace, "Decoding the Reading of History: An Example of the Process," in *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* 98 (Summer 2004): 14-15.

³ Valerie Grim, David Pace, and Leah Shopkow, "Learning to use Evidence in the Study of History," in *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* 98 (Summer 2004): 63-64.

Facts are important, indeed essential, to historical investigation, but they create a foundation or are part of the journey, not the destination. Consider what Kathryn and Luther Spoehr noted,

History is about facts in much the same way that reading is about the alphabet: facts (and letters) are essential building blocks; without them you cannot do history (or read). But just as reading necessitates looking at how the letters and words stand in relation to one another (so that you can see the difference between a horse chestnut and a chestnut horse), thinking historically requires going beyond chronology or chronicles and looking at the relations that the facts bear to one another.⁴

In other words, the facts are building blocks or paving stones. Yet historical facts are easily forgettable if we do not have significant reasons for remembering them. To create a learning environment that increases your potential for remembering, each unit is driven by essential questions that are developed to help you think about the **big idea** of the course:

The legacy of European history is ambiguous and serves as a warning against western hubris.

Questions create a space in our minds for answers and will guide our study. Historical questions, which rarely have a single correct answer, drive our inquiry and provide opportunities to check for understanding. My challenge is to help you read and think like a historian because this is a career-ready, lifelong learning skill.

What do I mean by **lifelong learning**? It is the desire to be a voluntary, self-motivated learner, who does not have to depend upon a formal educational setting but is willing to learn informally. In this age of highly accessible information, we must be able to acquire knowledge, but also evaluate its reliability and relevant then think critically about what we have discovered. So, you need to evaluate the reliability of information, read, and arrive at an independent opinion, and when necessary, support your claims convincingly whether in dialogue or in writing. During this semester, you will be asked to engage in these learning behaviors. We will strike a balance between acquiring sufficient factual knowledge and pondering larger questions that will deepen your understanding of major developments in the history of Europe. By developing your critical thinking skills, and using these skills in other contexts, including the consumption of news, you become a better citizen.

Explore the questions that drive historians' research, and you can see their relevance as you navigate the world of working fools and engage with your communities.⁵

Cause and Effect What were the causes of past events? What were the effects?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who or what made change happen?• Who supported change?• Who did not support change?• Which effects were intended?• Which effects were accidental?• How did events affect people's lives, community, and the world?
Change and Continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who has benefited from this change? And why?

⁴ Kathryn Spoehr and Luther Spoehr, "Learning to Think Historically," *Educational Psychologist* 29, no 2 (1994):71.

⁵ Nikki Mandell and Bobbie Malone, *Thinking Like a Historian: Rethinking History Instruction: A Framework to Enhance and Improve Teaching and Learning* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2007), 10-12, 16-22.

What has changed? What has remained the same?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who has not benefited? And why?
Turning Points How did past decisions or actions affect future choices?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did decisions or actions narrow or eliminated choices for people? How did decisions or actions significantly transform people's lives?
Using the Past How does the past help us make sense of the present? What are the limits to this usefulness?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the past similar to the present? How is the past different from the present? What can we learn from the past?
Through their Eyes How did people in the past view their world?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did their worldview affect their choices and actions? What values, skills, and forms of knowledge did people need to succeed?

How to read History?

When reading history (or any topic for that matter), always remember this fundamental rule from Katherine Gottschalk and Keith Hjortshoj:

...knowing how to read something results almost automatically from knowing why we are reading, and without some purpose, reading is an aimless activity. ⁶

When reading evidence from the past, whether it is visual or written, you must remember the above fundamental rule, and then read to understand text, context, and subtext:⁷

Text	What is visible/readable, i.e., what information is provided by the source?
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was going on during the time period (timelines are a useful tool)? What background information do you have that helps explain the information found in the source (consult the introduction to the document or the topic)?
Subtext	<p>What is between the lines? Ask questions about the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Author: Who created the source, and what do we know about that person? Audience: for whom was the source created? Reason: Why was this source produced when it was? Infer: when we have sufficient documentation and knowledge. <p>Remember: even if we have public access to the source, does not mean that anyone or everyone had access at the time.</p>

⁶ Katherine Gottschalk and Keith Hjortshoj, *Elements of Teaching Writing: A Resource for Instructors in all Disciplines* (New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2003), 124.

⁷ Bruce Lesh, "Why Won't You Just Tell us the Answer?" *Teaching Historical Thinking in Grades 7-12* (Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 2011), 20.

This is a variation of the journalists' questions: who, what, when, where, why, and how.

After reading individual documents for text, context, and subtext, your work is not complete. You have opened windows into the past with individual documents, but what are the connections between documents? Which ones are more or less reliable to help you answer the questions being explored or developed? Here is where lectures play the role of a textbook to provide the larger context. You make use of the Foundational Knowledge Study Guides. In addition, always preview the writing assignments linked to our readings and lecture content so you can know where we are going. Knowing the questions for which we seek answers gives you structure and goals to **evaluate the significance** of events, people, and ideas, and significance of past eras and respond plausibly in written work.

How do Historians Determine Significance?

Why is this question important to understanding how we “do history”? If historians did not prioritize facts and evidence as they explore historical questions, they would be overwhelmed by detail. How we ascribe significance to the past is evident in a variety of ways: the historical questions we pose; how we periodize the past; and how we determine the start and stop dates of our historical research. For example, when did the Civil Rights movement begin in the United States? Many of us would say that it began when Rosa Parks refused to move to the back of the bus in Montgomery, Alabama on 1 December 1955. If we believe this was the trigger event, what events and people are included in our study and get left out of the history of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement? After all, the NAACP, an organization dedicated to civil rights, was formed in 1909.

As you contemplate history in this course and in your everyday life, remember Tim Lomas' observation,

“...in trying to make sense of history, ‘one cannot escape from the idea of significance. History, to be meaningful, depends on selection and this, in turn, depends on establishing criteria of significance to select the more relevant and to dismiss the less relevant.’”⁸

For historians, determining what is significant is not based on any scientific formula or absolute standard, but shaped by our life experiences, perspectives, education, background, and identities. The topics that we study, the questions that we pose, the time frames that we build around our research reflect what we believe is significant and manageable. Stéphane Lévesque, a Canadian researcher writes, “Historical significance is thus a quality determined by historians (or other investigators) in response to the past. An event, ... becomes significant when contemporary people see its relevance to other events and ultimately to the present.”⁹ In short, ascribing significance to some events and people is at the core of what we do, but it inevitably marginalizes other topics.

Until the mid-twentieth century, most professional historians were interested in war, political history, and the history of great men. Subsequently, their stories dominated the pages of history textbooks and monographs. Most of these historians at the time were

⁸ Tim Lomas, *Teaching and Assessing Historical Understanding* (London: Historical Association, 1990), 41.

⁹ Stéphane Lévesque, *Thinking Historically: Educating Students for the Twenty-First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 44.

white, Protestant, whose families were middle-to-upper class and made use of government archives. During the 1950s and 1960s, the historical profession became more diversified which made room for an ever-widening range of topics: feminist-women-gender Histories; Black Studies and African American History; Latino Studies and Hispanic History; Popular Culture; History of Memory; History of Everyday Life; Psycho-History; Sports History; Media History; and the list goes on.... The historical record is enriched by these developments.

What are the implications of knowing that significance is in the eye of the beholder and their generation? Consider most history textbooks, including those from grades K-12. Textbook authors present a story clearly organized around chronological or thematic narratives that emphasize what is significant. What are the narratives that K-12 textbooks advance? Do they openly confront the darker sides of history? Here, I am thinking of U.S. history textbooks and whether students learn about the exploitative nature of capitalism during the "age of industrialization" or portrays the brutality and hypocrisy of slavery? When we learn about the European roots of industrialization, what is the master narrative presented to readers?

Niall Ferguson offers a very familiar **Eurocentric interpretation** by suggesting that the "Scientific Revolution" laid the groundwork for the "Industrial Revolution." Equally important, Ferguson suggests that the "West" or "Europeans" had many advantages over the rest of the world. These factors include a stronger work ethic, scientific curiosity that led to innovation, higher purchasing power, and laws that protected property rights. To support his claim, Ferguson would not only have to prove these qualities were uniquely European or Western or British, but that they were absent from the rest of the world, which he does not.

Consider Robert Marks interpretation of the "Industrial Revolution and Its Consequences, 1750-1850," a chapter in his work, *The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Economic Narrative from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-first Century* (2007). He acknowledges that the western European nations, specifically Great Britain, led the world in industrialization and marked the beginning of the "Industrial Revolution." Yet, he offers a more sophisticated interpretation by placing industrialization into a more **global context** and an emphasis on the impact of nature on human choices (**environmental history**). In other words, what he ascribes as significant differs dramatically from Ferguson's Eurocentric interpretation. Marks explains that it was a conjuncture of events, some occurring in Great Britain, others in the world, some man-made and some nature-made that explain why the British industrialized first. Coal, for example, happened to be easily accessible at the surface level which fueled steam engines, enabling the British to "undersell Indian textiles not just in Africa, but interestingly in India as well."¹⁰ The combination of nature, easily accessible coal veins, and the invention of steam engines, individual ingenuity, helps explain why Britain led in industrialization. What is more, Marks notes at the same time, China in the 1700s, "looked as 'developed' as any other developed part of the world, ..." This claim is supported by drawing upon research on Chinese economic and environmental history; he found that government policies allowed for the development of regional markets and that Chinese peasants had more freedom than enslaved Africans or European serfs.

Therefore, when we read historical interpretations, we must be mindful of what the authors deem significant. When we read selected documents from the past, so we can practice "doing history," you will be asked to offer interpretations. How will you evaluate the significance of the documents in the context of the events that we will explore? You can be assured that the documents that I have selected are relevant and reliable to answer

¹⁰ Marks, 101

historical questions, but your perspective will shape how you interpret the documents and their significance to answering essential questions and exploring the big idea of the course.

For historians, however, we do not have any “scientific rule” to evaluate significance. Stéphane Lévesque outlines several **criteria** that shape historians’ choices even if they never articulate these for readers.¹¹

1. Importance

- a. Was it important to those who lived it?
- b. Did it influence their behaviors?

2. Profundity

- a. How deeply were people affected?

3. Quantity

- a. How many people were affected?
 - i. Be careful not to allow the need for large numbers to shape analysis.

4. Durability

- a. Should an event last a long time to be significant? What would that length of time be?
- b. How does one determine durability if the beginning and end are unclear?
- c. How does the before and after picture compare?
 - i. Be careful not to assume that only long-lasting events are significant.

5. Relevance

- a. Did the event have to be relevant to contemporaries?
- b. Does the event have to be relevant to the historian?
- c. Does the event have to be relevant to present-day developments?
 - i. Be careful to avoid presentism, that is imposing the values of the present to evaluate the past.

In judging relevance, we must acknowledge that “where we stand determines what we see.” However, we must also abide by the standards of the historical profession. Stéphane Lévesque elaborates and suggests three additional factors that might shape how we determine significance.¹² These challenge our ability to abide by the standards of history outlined in the [American Historical Association Statement of Standards](#). If, for example, we are driven by intimate interests, symbolic significance, or to provide contemporary lessons, do we risk misinterpreting and misrepresenting the past to advance a personal or group agenda?

1. Intimate Interests

- a. Is the event more personal or intimately of interest, e.g. family history, ancestry?
 - i. Be careful, because our personal investment may lead us to dismiss what is relevant if it does not jibe with personal interests.

2. Symbolic significance

- a. “Is the event emblematically important? Does it represent something significant in the collective consciousness?”
 - i. Be careful, because this approach may lead to **binary thinking** if we create labels of us vs. them. What is more, it might lead us to exaggerate a turning point. For example, World War I (1914-1918) is often interpreted as a major turning point in European cultural history, even though evidence of these changes was present before 1914.

3. Contemporary Lessons

- a. Are we drawn to a past event to explain or make analogies to current events?

¹¹ Lévesque, *Thinking Historically*, 46-52.

¹² Lévesque, *Thinking Historically*, 56-59.

- i. Be careful, when we engage in this approach, we risk failing to understand the past on its own terms, in its own context. We see this happening quite frequently in social media.

Historical Thinking is Messy and Can be Dangerous!

Imagine the following conversation:

Professor: Here are potential essay questions for your test; they are open-ended.

Student: So, we can just give you our opinion?

Professor: If by opinion, you mean sentiment, no. Opinions are informed by mustering the evidence in convincing, plausible ways.

Student: So, if we provide an interpretation supported by the documents that you assigned, we will earn an A?

Professor: Not necessarily, some interpretations are more convincing than others, and some are just wrong.

Student: What do you want us to write?

This conversation has occurred in many history classrooms including my own. Students who have been raised in a grade-driven education system, worry more about earning good grades than learning. They want to know what will earn them an A, or they just want to earn a C, so they do not hurt their G.P.A. When I am asked this question about what an A-level essay is, I can outline general standards: claims are corroborated with convincing evidence; accurate attention to details including names, dates, sequence of events; makes no factual errors; interprets evidence in context; does not ignore evidence that could undermine their interpretation; does not misinterpret. But much depends upon the available evidence and our knowledge of context. In some cases, evidence is lacking or the context is difficult to ascertain.

In short, the study of history is messy and involves uncertainty, and this makes some students uneasy for a variety of reasons. Some written responses (whether short answers or full essays) are more convincing and plausible than others, and some are simply wrong. Why this **ambiguity**? Are we just trying to be clever, or worse, deceptive? If you believe that to study history means to memorize a group of facts and regurgitate them onto an exam, then you fail to understand what historical studies should be. Some disciplines offer greater certainty, but history is not like that; in fact, before the mid-nineteenth century, history writing was considered literature. The historical record is never complete but textbooks, and now Wikipedia, fail to acknowledge the uncertainty of the past. (In your K-12 history lessons, your teachers might not have acknowledged this either). We can never have all the documents or artifacts; we can never know the private thoughts of individuals from the past; we can never know the details of all conversations. Professional historians embrace the uncertainty of the historical past, while outsiders may see this as “unnatural” or messy.

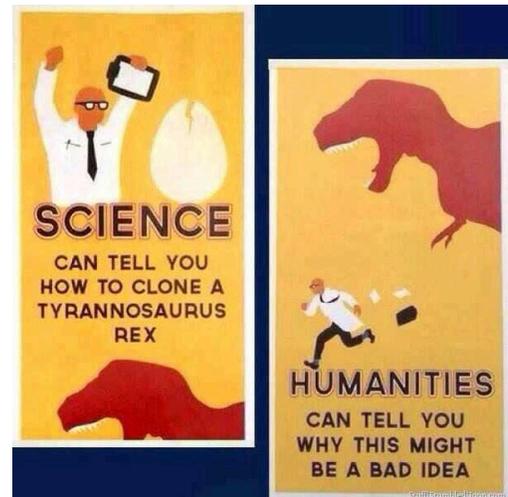
An additional factor that explains why some interpretations are more convincing than others revolve around point-of-view. Where we stand determines what we see, and our point of view (e.g. socio-economic status, religious beliefs, gender, etc.) influences how we interpret the past; we might not always even be aware of this. Consider this excerpt from the most recent Statement of Standards by the American Historical Association (2019):

Among the core principles of the historical profession that can seem counterintuitive to non-historians is the conviction, very widely if not universally shared among historians since the 19th century, that **practicing history with integrity does not**

mean having no point of view. Every work of history articulates a particular, limited perspective on the past. Historians hold this view *not* because they believe that all interpretations are *equally valid*, or that nothing can ever be known about the past, or that facts do not matter. Quite the contrary. History would be pointless if such claims were true, since its most basic premise is that *within certain limits* we can indeed know and make sense of past worlds and former times that now exist only as remembered traces in the present. But the very nature of our discipline means that historians also understand that all knowledge is situated in time and place, that all interpretations express a point of view, and that no mortal mind can ever aspire to omniscience. Because the record of the past is so fragmentary, absolute historical knowledge is denied us.¹³

Because absolute knowledge is impossible to achieve in historical studies, some students may shrug their shoulders and say why bother with it. History is part of the humanities; it is not a social science. Historical thinking requires students to sift through the evidence and arrive at the most plausible, convincing interpretations. Again, this is a career-ready, lifelong learning skill worthy of developing.

Still a single, master narrative that explains ALL is extremely attractive and dangerous. **Why dangerous?** Consider the following observations by John Arnold a professor of history at Birkbeck University of London.



The idea of a single true story – of History with a capital H – remains tremendously attractive, and hence tremendously dangerous. Newspapers talk daily of how “History” will judge politicians or events; politicians argue for foreign policy on the basis of “what History shows us”; warring factions across the globe justify their killing on the basis of “their History”.¹⁴

We find news pundits, politicians, and others in the public realm using history to claim there is a single, master narrative that is unshakable. They use these claims to eliminate the possibility of dialogue and label anyone who disagrees as an opponent or unpatriotic.

An expert of the Second World War, historian Michael Howard, warns us about the danger of being ignorant or willfully ignorant of context or the past.

Much has properly been made of Neville Chamberlain's failure to understand Hitler, as of Roosevelt's failure to understand Stalin; but these disastrous misunderstandings are often depicted as cases of honest men being outwitted by crooks. Alas, the misunderstandings were at a far deeper level than that, and it is one that is constantly recurring as new elites, almost boastfully ignorant of their knowledge of any world save their own, acquire authority in some of the most powerful states in the world. We have seen so much of this since the Second World

¹³ The bold type came from the original. I am drawing attention to particular words and phrases in this passage by boldly italicizing. <https://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/statements-standards-and-guidelines-of-the-discipline/statement-on-standards-of-professional-conduct> accessed on 8 January 2023

¹⁴ John H. Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 110.

War: people often of masterful intelligence, trained usually in law or economics or perhaps in political science, who have led their governments into disastrous decisions and miscalculations because they have no awareness whatever of the historical background, the cultural universe, of the foreign societies with which they have to deal. . . . Such miscalculations are always **dangerous**. In our own day they may be lethal on a very large scale indeed.¹⁵

Why lethal? Think about events throughout the globe and how movements, politicians, media pundits use history to promote their highly selective vision of the past to shape the future. In doing so, they encourage binary thinking, it's "us vs. them."

Still, history, Sam Wineburg points out, can teach "us a way to make choices, to balance opinions, to tell stories, and to become uneasy – when necessary – about the stories we tell."¹⁶ Wineburg, who has dedicated much of his research to how students learn history, also points out the advantages of historical thinking and why it is fraught with cognitive challenges that make us uncomfortable. Life would be so much easier if we would just be told what to think?! I do not teach history by telling students what to think. So, you will be asked to provide plausible interpretations of the documents from the past in response to questions posed by me. You need to realize that some interpretations (answers to the questions) are more convincing than others.

What makes some historical interpretations more plausible than others?

Not surprising, the answer to this question depends upon the historical questions posed, the available evidence, ability to understand the larger context, and writing skills more generally. Still historians share the following criteria to create a community of trust and respect that we encourage our students to join:

1. Do not arrive at conclusions until you have access to enough **reliable** information.
2. Aspire to be **objective** which means acknowledging to yourself that you have biases, preconceptions, and assumptions that may be influencing how you interpret the evidence and present your argument.
3. All conclusions must be drawn from the available evidence or be a reasonable, plausible inference when the evidence is lacking.
4. Your interpretation of history must stand the test of plausibility, to be trustworthy and gain the reader's confidence.
5. Do not say anything that is contradicted by the available evidence or else you will lose the reader's trust.
6. Do not fabricate evidence.
7. Do not take evidence out of context, misrepresent, or misinterpret it.

"To be human is to be biased. . . . To be **objective** does not mean to lack bias. Objectivity requires working according to a set of rules that make clear to yourself and to those who follow and check your steps, how you worked and why you decided what you did. It means sharing and acknowledging premises and assumptions; utilizing known pools of evidence; not ignoring what you know, or could know, including the work of others in your field; and being clear about your criteria for drawing conclusions based on shared evidence."
~ David Kobrin, *Beyond the Textbook* (1996)

¹⁵ "Michael Howard," in *Historians on History*, ed. John Tosh (Harlow, England: Pearson, 2000), 185-186

¹⁶ Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), ix

8. Interpret the past on its own terms that is contextualize, to achieve greater plausibility.
9. Corroborate evidence to avoid the accusation that you have over-generalized or over-simplified.
10. Quote primary or secondary sources to persuade or win the trust of the reader. Quote when the phrasing is unique and to win confidence. Be sure to frame the quotation, by telling the reader who said it, quote verbatim, then follow up with your interpretation. (Heavy reliance on quotations, with minimal text written by students may signify a recognition of essential ideas but lacking sufficient comprehension for the writer to put the ideas in their words.)
11. Leave behind your trail of research through citing sources. Historians citation style is called **Chicago Manual of Style** or Turabian; we prefer footnotes over parenthetical citations. Leaving behind a trail of research will help bring integrity to your words.
12. Acknowledge through footnotes how you have been influenced by the ideas of others even if you are paraphrasing or summarizing those ideas.
13. Write an articulate essay that advances a plausible, trustworthy interpretation abiding by the conventions in historical writing; do not simply throw data, facts, or evidence at the reader.
14. If you are writing an essay, a general rule to abide by: never assume your professor is the audience. If your professor does not provide you with a rhetorical audience, imagine one (e.g. someone who is not familiar with the course readings, but may have a "history channel familiarity" with the topic, etc.).
15. Follow the professor's writing assignment guidelines.