

Historiographic Essay Manual

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Why do historians write historiographical essays?

Historians do historiography on our projects to familiarize ourselves with all previous interpretations of the subject to discover whether or not questions remain unanswered, or interpretations need to be revisited. We develop research questions that we will attempt to answer given the available, accessible primary sources. While we build a bibliography and read secondary sources, we simultaneously generate a list of available documentary collections that we plan to explore for our research. Whatever questions we explore, to do history according to the standards of the profession, we must always know the available documentation and the history of the historical writing about the subject (i.e. the secondary sources). Your historiography project can become the foundation of your research and writing project in History 390; we want you to aspire to do original work.

Can you make an original contribution in an undergraduate project? Haven't we learned all there is to know about the past?

The short answers are Yes and No. History is interpretation of historical evidence, not the reconstruction of the past. It will never provide a complete story. Edward Carr, a well-known British historian, reminds us, "History means interpretation." When historians interpret, that is when they select facts and interpret evidence from the past, they are influenced by numerous factors including: the author's education and socio-economic background, personal values, the period and environment in which they wrote, the existence and availability of sources, and such mundane restrictions as the demands of publishers. Because of the multitude of factors that shape the composition of historical accounts, authors offer a variety of interpretations on any given event or past era even if they are examining the same documentary evidence. As one scholar summarized, "where we stand determines what we see." What is more, evidence from the past is incomplete and filled with ambiguity and uncertainty, and historians' background shape how they navigate the unknown. Subsequently, originality invariably results from our differing perspectives.

Consider the variety of historical interpretations about the origins of World War II in Europe. Most historians agree that German aggression against Poland in September 1939 sparked war, but they disagree upon the extent of German responsibility. Questions that continue to drive research:

Did the Treaty of Versailles push the Germans into aggression? Did appeasement convince Hitler that he was invincible? How important is individual agency to interpreting the past? How important was Hitler in the decision-making? What were his intentions? Did Neville Chamberlain's personality undermine the British government's ability to respond effectively? What role did the Soviets play in the origins of war in 1939? Did Soviet expansion in the winter 1939-1940 contribute to the German decision to attack in June 1941? To answer these questions, a professional historian, whose research may lead to publication, will not likely proceed immediately to the documentary record. First, they will examine what other scholars have argued about the evidence. In other fields this is called a **literature review**; historians call it **historiography**.

What is the goal of a historiographic essay?

Quite simply, your goal is to identify and evaluate the patterns of interpretation around historical questions. Mary Lynn Rampolla, whose *Pocket Guide to Writing in History* has been published in several editions, wrote the goal of a historiographic essay is "to identify, compare, and evaluate the viewpoints of two or more historians writing on the same subject."¹ Notice that a historiographic essay requires evaluation, that is you must **judge** the effectiveness of historical interpretations, not just report on the patterns. This requires knowledge of the historical topic and an ability to evaluate how each author uses evidence to support their claims.

In almost any historiographic subject, patterns of interpretation may emerge that will help you organize your thoughts. The two most common are a "**stand on my shoulders**" evolution or a **traditionalist--revisionist--neo-traditionalist--neo-revisionist** dialectic. Several factors shape these patterns, but the two most common are (1) how political, social, economic, and intellectual developments shape historians' framing of their historical questions and (2) the discovery of new evidence. If differences of interpretation exist, these can be quite subtle or strikingly obvious.

If the historical works that you read follow disciplinary convention, the authors will adopt an analytical writing style; they will give you cues in the text through word choice and organization of their argument (loosely referred to as rhetoric) and in their bibliography and footnotes. Ideally, they will explain how developments in historical interpretation have influenced their research and writing agendas; in short, they will provide historiographical context. However, for a variety of reasons, you cannot always rely upon convention being followed by historians. Perhaps the author is an "amateur" or a poorly trained professional; the scholar rejects convention; or the publisher had the last word. In any case, you cannot always expect that a secondary source adheres to the convention of explaining to readers why they embarked on their study.

¹ Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, 2nd ed., 17.
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How should I go about selecting a topic?

Start thinking what large geographic areas interest you most. For example, do you enjoy American, European, Japanese, Middle Eastern, etc. history? What time period do you prefer to study? Ancient, medieval, modern? A particular century, decade or year? Ponder what types of histories you enjoy: political, cultural, social, gender, economic, military, and so forth. Brainstorm and write ideas below.

1. Identify your geographic interests. What part of the globe interests you?

What are your geographic interests and why?

2. Identify time periods that most interest you.

What era or eras within your geographic choices interest you and why?

3. Identify types of history that interest you.

Do you prefer political, cultural, social, gender, economic, military histories? Why?

4. Identify events, people, ideas that interest.

What events, people, or ideas interest you? Why?

5. Brainstorm questions.

What questions do you have about the historical era/eras? What are you curious about? Just brainstorm, do not worry about phrasing.

6. Refresh your memory on the history of the era/eras.

What are some of the important events, people, ideas etc of the era? Did you stumble across events, people, or ideas that you had forgotten or did not realize were part of this era/eras? Would any of these interest you?

If you follow these steps, you can narrow down research topics and hopefully feel less overwhelmed, after all, in theory the entire history of the globe is a potential topic! So, if you are struggling a bit, that's perfectly natural.



Additional factors you should contemplate to select a topic:

Select a topic that will sustain your interest not only for the historiographic essay but also for Capstone Research and Writing Seminar (History 390). In Historical Thinking and Methods (History 290), you study the secondary sources; in Research and Writing, you craft an interpretation predominantly drawing upon primary sources. **If you cannot locate or get access to primary sources on your topic for History 390 there is no point in doing it for History 290.**

In pondering topics, most students identify obvious, well-known events or eras (the Civil War or the Holocaust immediately come to mind). However, in selecting these topics you will easily, and understandably, become overwhelmed. Yet you still have options.

- **One option:** if you are interested in a topic that attracts vast amounts of attention, consider exploring how the event was perceived, responded to or shaped by a local community, region, or state. For example, a historical question to explore for Research and Writing: How did Philadelphia Public Schools respond to the Supreme Court decision of *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954)? Your Research and Writing paper might exploit local newspapers, local and national magazines, published edited collections about the Supreme Court decision, and you may be able to locate public records from Philadelphia. Your historiographical question would have two parts: How have historians interpreted the impact of *Brown vs. Board of Education* in the United States and specifically Pennsylvania? Your historiographic essay would definitely identify and evaluate any Pennsylvanian and Philadelphian histories that might address the topic entirely or partially. Then you would place those works into the larger context of seminal interpretations at the national level.
- **A second option:** let's say that you are interested in the origins of the Holocaust. This is a massive, over-whelming topic for an undergraduate student to study especially if you do not read the German language, but you could explore related topics. For example, would you be interested in exploring how the American public or American government officials perceived the persecution of European Jews? While this question is still too broad, it could be narrowed down. For your historiographic essay, you might explore how historians have written about German-American relations during the Nazi era; US immigration and refugee policies; the American press and radio in the 1930s-1940s; or the US State Department in the 1930s-1940s. In Research and Writing, you might explore public opinion as evident in newspaper and magazine publications, published laws and government policy statements, congressional investigations or debates, etc. . . .
- **A third option:** if you are interested in well-known topics, for example the military history of the Civil War or the tension between Martin Luther King's non-violent tactics and Malcolm X's Black Panther movement, a cultural or social history approach to the events allows for some originality. In historiography, you might encounter some difficulty in narrowing down your reading list, but early consultations with history faculty will benefit you greatly.
- **A fourth option:** once you have narrowed down your interests to an era, event, location, consider building a focus by identifying newspapers, magazines, diaries, memoirs, and/or congressional investigations. Newspapers and magazines are often under-exploited primary sources. Diaries and memoirs generate numerous historical

questions from a micro-history perspective. In addition, the ready accessibility of Congressional Records through Andrus Library makes them a rich source.

Certain topics attract an inordinate number of "popular or amateur" histories because of their titillating subject matter (e.g. Kennedy assassination conspiracies or identification of Jack the Ripper or Hitler's suicide or Freemason conspiracies); **stay away from these topics**. You are being asked to explore a historical problem as a professional historian would. Professional historians do not routinely attempt to solve a mystery or arrive at definitive interpretations of past events (even though secretly they might wish to; who does not like a good mystery?). What is more, the titillating topics with unsolvable mysteries will create challenges to building a bibliography. You will have to sort through a lot of amateur histories that frequently lack bibliographies, do not discuss available evidence, and rarely point out what other historians or scholars have written. Moreover, there is NO attempt to understand these events in larger context. The authors are trying to solve the historical puzzle with certainty; professional historians repudiate this approach. You will not get approval for these kinds of topics. By the way, sometimes it is necessary to review amateur histories depending upon how your project develops (local histories come to mind such as the Johnstown flood or Stillwater conspiracy). Best advice, consult your professor.

Sometimes the event is too recent to have been analyzed by professional historians who have been trained to place events and people into historical context. Historians operate on the unwritten assumption that recent events cannot be treated "historically". What does this mean? Historians do not agree upon the notion of what "recent" is. Is it ten or twenty or thirty years? Or if the historian had lived through the time, then does that make it recent? Although historians will not agree upon the meaning of recent, we recognize that more practical limitations prevent us from writing "historically" on the recent past: the availability of evidence. The more recent the event, the greater the likelihood that document collections are not available because they have not been declassified by governments, private individuals have not made them available, or archivists have not collected them. Undoubtedly some sources will be available, e.g., newspaper accounts, magazine articles, electronic media, and perhaps memoirs, but professional historians often deem these sources as insufficient. Still, to some extent it depends upon the historical question that you are posing.

Another challenge in undertaking "recent" historical events for a historiography project is that patterns have not had time to develop which might make building a bibliography for historiography more difficult. You will find that the earliest "histories" are written by journalists, political scientists, or sociologists, who were reporting on current events or exploring the event for its contemporary political or social implications and to shape public

policy. These authors may have had only limited access to documentary evidence. Indeed, given the timing of their work, journalistic and social science publications may be primary evidence.

So, should you avoid "recent" events when contemplating a topic? Not necessarily. If the purpose of the historiography is to determine an agenda for your research and writing paper (History 390), and if you determine in advance that sufficient primary sources are available and accessible to meet the standards of the profession (and specifically your professor), then you might get approval. If this criterion is met, then you may have far more "amateur" histories and polemical works to study than students who select topics in which professional histories are more abundant. **Again, consult your professor. Communication is essential.**

Whatever topic you select in consultation with your professor, be prepared to narrow it down or expand it depending upon what you discover and what is practical to accomplish in a semester.

Reminder

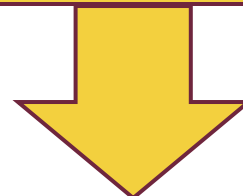
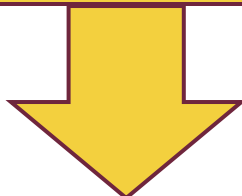
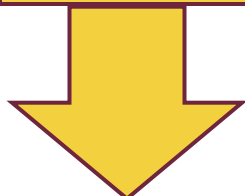
Your goal in writing the historiographic essay:

Identify patterns, account for why the patterns exist, and evaluate the plausibility of the interpretations to identify new directions in research or unanswered, valid historical questions.



Where do you begin?

Tackle the challenge in three ways simultaneously:



Learn the **facts** about the event, the person, or ideas that you want to study. Make timelines and write down essential facts, then periodically test yourself on these details. You need to learn the history. As you read more and more secondary sources about your topic, you will realize that the factual details will often remain relatively constant. **Pay attention:** how historians "use" those facts will differ!

Begin looking for **primary sources**. Search the Web, CU library databases, and "mining" secondary bibliographies for what other historians have researched. This is the goal of the Primary Source Collection Project.

Begin to build a **bibliography of secondary sources**. My Research Videos (YouTube) will help you tackle this challenge. In addition, "mine" secondary sources and reference materials for recommended readings.



As you tackle the challenge, expect to refine your topic but be sure to consult your professor. Common errors at this stage:

1. Your search terms are too broad and you become overwhelmed with the possibilities.
2. Your search terms are too narrow and you become convinced there is "nothing on your topic."
3. If you have been fulfilling your responsibilities as a student and completing the Research Videos, be sure to seek out my help, other history faculty, and library faculty.

Building a Working Bibliography

- Complete the Library Database Tutorials and develop your library research skills to locate secondary sources.

Secondary sources are **monographs** (a book format), a learned, detailed study of a single subject or theme, and **journal articles**, scholarly, refereed essays or case studies that are published by institutionally sponsored periodicals with editorial

boards, who keep advertisements to a minimum to prevent advertisers from interfering with content.

- Search the following databases for monographs and journal articles:
 - Use the Library Catalog of [Commonwealth Library](#) avoid the excessively broad “search everything.”
 - WorldCat which is located under W in A-Z Databases.

Wikipedia, Google, Chatbots? When I am first trying to learn about a subject, Wikipedia, and specifically its references, are a starting point for me.

WorldCat 

(Tip: there is a public, free version of WorldCat, but you will have more reliable results from the version accessed through the university.)

- America History and Life-Historical Abstracts (AHL-HA) located in [Databases at Commonwealth Library](#).
- Find recent scholarly books and journal articles on your subject and pull titles and authors from their bibliographies and/or footnotes. (Tip: also make note of documentary evidence.)
- JStor (Tip: Jstor appears convenient because of immediate availability of articles, however, it is not as comprehensive as AHL-HA and it is difficult to narrow searches.)

□ **How many monographs and articles should you try to find?**

Truthfully, you should find ALL scholarly books or articles that appear relevant even though you won't likely study them all. For your essay, you have to meet a gateway requirement: minimum of fifteen scholarly secondary sources with at least five titles being monographs. These publications should be dispersed over time since the event happened.

- Monograph titles and journal articles must originate from across the span of time since historians (preferably professional) began writing about the subject (some subjects such as ethnic histories, women's history, popular culture may have only gained attention from professional historians in the 1950s). Subsequently, your book titles and journal articles should originate from within ten or twenty years of the event through to the present.
- You should attempt to select scholarly works produced by professional scholars or historians, not amateurs or undergraduate student essays (see next point).
- The earliest publications, during or immediately after an event, are often written by journalists or amateur historians who may not have sufficient access to a variety of sources or lack the training and expertise to conduct historical research that abides by the [standards of the American Historical Association](#).

- Whether or not to include amateur histories in your historiography should be determined in consultation with your instructor.
 - Your bibliography should largely be focused on your topic, but you should also familiarize yourself with patterns of interpretations about your topic in broader studies. In some cases, so little is published on your immediate topic, that you must explore how larger studies interpret or ignore your topic. For example, how civilians experienced the battle of Gettysburg is not written about extensively compared to the military histories.
 - It is better to have identified too many monographs or articles than not enough; you will not be expected to read everything that you identify.
 - Identify and record potentially relevant secondary sources (no primary sources, no tertiary sources e.g. encyclopedia articles, internet web sites, survey textbooks).
 - Scholarly eBooks and journal articles secured through the internet are acceptable.
- Record the bibliographic details either on 3x5 cards or in an electronic format:**
- Dedicate one 3x5 (or 4x6) card to each secondary source.
 - I am open to some form of electronic record keeping rather than note cards. But you need to develop a system that is reliable, allows for sorting, be efficient, and allows you to retrace your steps.
 - You will have an assignment, that asks you to provide the essential information including the database that you searched.
 - The following essential information must be recorded:

Essential information for book titles:	Essential information for each article:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ author's/authors' full name(s) ✓ complete title of book ✓ city of publication ✓ name of publisher ✓ date of publication ✓ edition if not the first ✓ how you located the source (see Working Bibliography for directions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ author's/authors' full name(s) ✓ title of article ✓ title of journal ✓ volume and issue number ✓ month (or season) of publication ✓ year of publication ✓ extant page numbers of article ✓ how you located the source (see Working Bibliography for directions)

- Format to follow for each bibliography card: Record the bibliographic cards accurately according to Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (9th edition) chapters 15.1-16.4.2 and 17.1-17.2 (pp. 135-161 & 166-185).

Sample bibliography card:

Kelley, Donald R. Fortunes of History: Historical Inquiry from Herder to Huizinga. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2003.

CU ; Subject Search: historiography

BU +
D
16
K26
2003

Or Inter Library Loan (ILL)

Tip: when we handwrite a book title or the title of a journal, we underline the title. When we type, we italicize.

This note indicates that the book is at Andruss Library (BU+) and the call number. If the book is electronic, you should be able to copy and paste the URL.

Makes notes on the database, type of search (e.g. subject, keyword), and term or phrase by which you searched.

I make notes if I have requested the item through CU's Interlibrary Loan service.

Use back of card to record short notes about relevance of source to project.

Electronic format:

More recently, I keep track of my working bibliographies as a Microsoft word document (s). In that case:

- You still provide the same information listed above.
- You might copy and paste details from bibliography records or do screen shots.
- You might include a URL that links directly to the article or book.
- Develop a list of tags that allow you to search for titles. For example, if I were building a bibliography about the Sand Creek Massacre, in which the Cheyenne and Arapaho people were massacred by the Third Colorado Cavalry on 29 November 1864, I might create the following tags or headings/subheadings: Biography, Colorado State Histories, Native American Histories, Federal Treaties, etc.

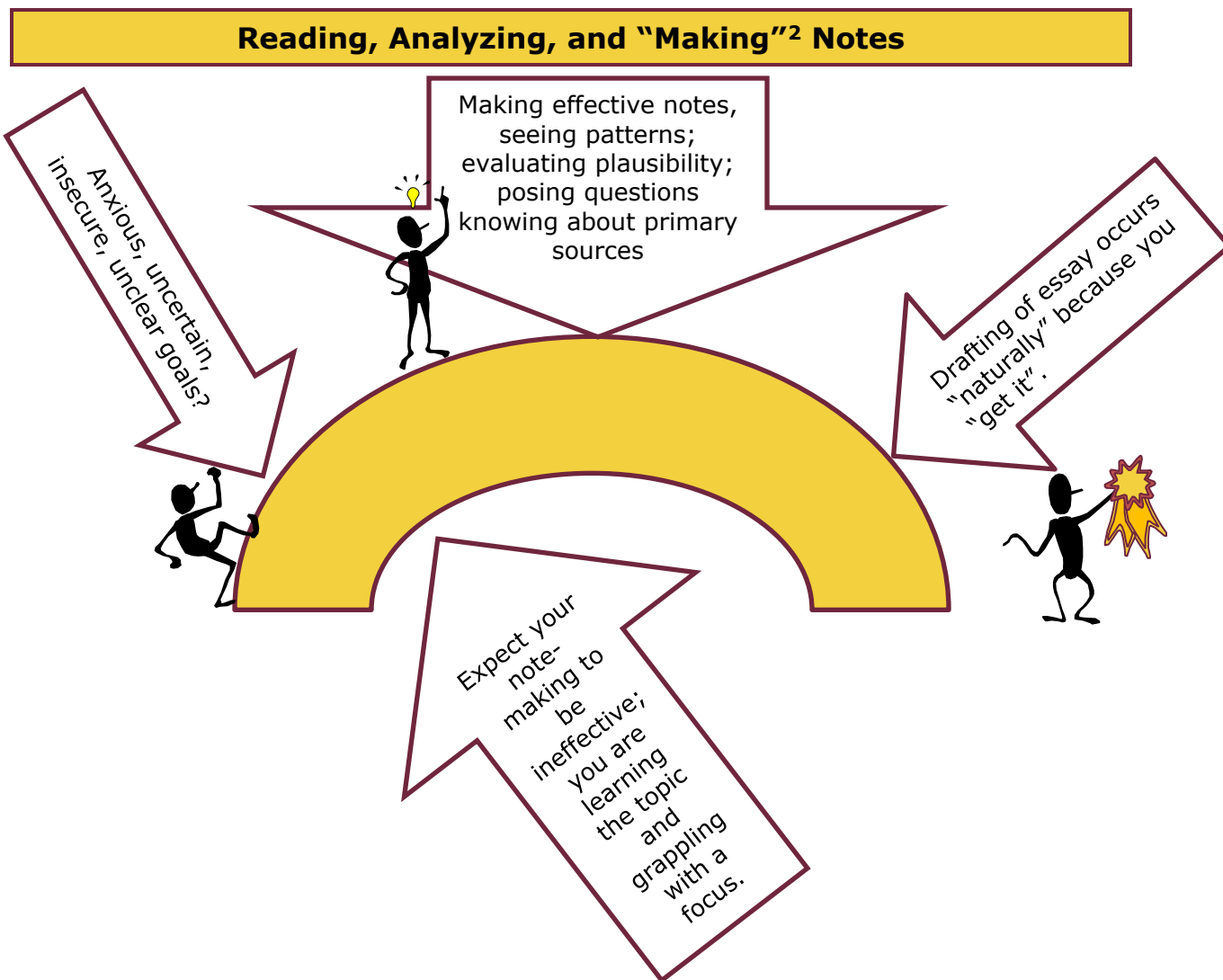


As part of Commonwealth University, we have history faculty on three campuses whom you may consult about your topic. Schedule an appointment in a timely manner and be prepared with the bibliography that you have already identified. You may be afraid that they will tell you about more books and articles to read, but they may also steer you away from some reading as well. Be sure to take notes during the meeting and be prepared to ask questions.

If books or journals are not available at Commonwealth University's Andruss Library, then pursue an [Inter-Library Loan request](#). Your request rarely takes more than a few days. Journal articles are usually delivered as PDFs,

while books must be picked up and returned at Andruss Library This service should never cost money.

What should you read? Narrow down the working bibliography for reading by inferring from titles, Library of Congress subject headings, and abstracts to determine your priorities in reading. Priorities must also be determined by selecting a representative sampling of publications over time. Priorities can also be determined by consulting professors who research or teach on your subject.



All learning occurs on a curve, and your historiography project is no different. Students worry that they write too many or too few notes. I always make more notes than I "use" to write a historical essay. Keep your historiography question in mind as you make notes. These should be **authentic paraphrases or accurate summaries** of (1) the author's

² Phrased inspired by Robert Leamson, "Learning (your First Job)," 2002.

http://orgs.bloomu.edu/tale/documents/Leamson_Learning_StudentsFirstJob.pdf

theses or major points and (2) how they support the thesis even noting what specific documents, not just type, were cited. Making time to take notes forces you to think through the readings and improve your recall. What is more, making notes helps you keep the varieties of interpretation organized. So, the key is to have a clear purpose when reading and making notes.

Always remember the following: "... knowing how to read something results almost automatically from knowing why we are reading, and without some purpose, reading is an aimless activity."³



You will encounter two predominant types of writing style in monographs and journal articles: narrative and analytical or a combination of the two.

Narrative Style: The narrative style relies upon describing what happened; the facts speak for themselves so that they can tell a story. Narratives may appear value neutral but they are not. The authors' intent, motives, working assumptions or potential biases are sometimes evident in the following ways: word choice that hint at tone or judgment, selection, omission, and arrangement of facts, prefatory or introductory passages, a conclusion that elaborates on the importance of the work, author's explanation for why they believe the topic should be discussed, and the sources consulted. Paragraph structures in the narrative style are worded and organized to tell a story in a logical progression from beginning, middle, and end.

Novice readers have difficulty recognizing the difference between fact and interpretation in a narrative style for three reasons. **First**, they get drawn into the story telling without thinking critically. **Second**, they need to acquire more knowledge about the topic to realize that even facts can be manipulated to advance interpretations that may or may not be plausible. **Third**, they assume that a story does not have a thesis. However, if they realize that a story is a pattern that was shaped from the facts and evidence, the pattern is the thesis; the thesis may be simplistic, but it exists. The thesis could be as simple as Franklin Roosevelt was the greatest president of the twentieth century, and that the author unveils the reasons why by simply describing the president's accomplishments. Although we tend to associate narrative styles with amateurs, professional historians may also write in this style.

Analytical Style: The analytical style will include narrative, but the author explicitly puts forth an argument. The author's intent, motives, working assumptions, potential biases can be manifest in the same way as in the narrative style. Their theses are more easily recognizable: located in prefaces, introductions, conclusions of their articles or books. Chapters

³ Katherine Gottschalk and Keith Hjortshoj, *Elements of Teaching Writing: A Resource for Instructors in all Disciplines* (New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2003), 124.

within the monographs and article sub-sections might offer theses as well. They are more likely to mention alternative interpretations within the text of their work, in a preface or introduction, or in explanatory footnotes. In fact, paragraph structures are worded and organized to advance the arguments, not tell a story *per se*. The analytical style is more frequently found in works produced by university-trained historians who are expected to meet the standards of the profession. During the twentieth century, narrative accounts became less popular in academia, though they remain popular with the public.

Authors are not required to put forth their theses in an introduction whether writing in either the narrative or analytical style, but it makes the readers' task easier if they do. Knowing that theses can be hidden in concluding paragraphs or individual chapters, you might jump ahead to these portions if you struggle with locating a thesis. You should also expect to re-read if you are unfamiliar with the content or the rhetorical style of the author.

WARNING: some students use the index to find their topic and read only those sentences, paragraphs, and pages referenced. In doing so, whether the writing is narrative or analytical, you risk losing the context in which the topic appears, and you will fail to pick up on working assumptions (or frameworks) shaping the author. You acquire knowledge about the event, but you are unable to evaluate the plausibility of the historian's interpretation because all you see are facts.

General Tips



Know what your reading goals are.

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



Before reading a book, study the front matter (i.e. preface, introduction, even acknowledgements), introductory and concluding chapter. If written according to the standards of the profession, the author will explain their thesis, what is original about their scholarship, and compare themselves to other historical interpretations in one or all of these portions of the book. Look for biographical information and publication records that provides insight on the author's expertise, working assumptions, perspective, etc. However, be aware that you can at best make inferences.



Be prepared to read one or two of the most significant books in their entirety and revisit the most essential parts as your reading proceeds. Also, as you learn your topic, be willing to "gut" the book: after you have become familiar with the historical facts of your topic, take time to study the front matter to determine the author's perspective, then target your reading to the essential parts relevant to your topic. In doing so, be sure that you do not take the author's ideas or interpretations out of context.



Be forewarned about a common rhetorical technique that will confuse novices in analytical interpretations. Some historians painstakingly explain alternative interpretations which they then argue against. So, be alert to transitions or else you might risk misinterpreting or misrepresenting the author.



If you are reading a journal article, read the abstract that frequently accompanies the citation or comes at the beginning of the article. If the author has written the article according to the standards of the profession, then they will explain their thesis in the first section or paragraph of the essay. The title of the journal article often suggests a thesis. Historiographical notes are sometimes buried in footnotes. Look for biographical information and publication record that provides insight on the author's expertise, working assumptions, perspective, etc.



When reading books and articles, you must have a **note-Making system**. Either you **must** take notes on 5 x 8 index cards or you **must** create files on your computer that have a logical organization and that the documents should include tags (a.k.a. slugs) that allow you to search and arrange like the 5 x8 card. You will be asked to prove that you have a note-making system when we have individual consults so we can discuss potential strengths and weaknesses.

Sample of a 5 x 8 note card

Most likely my notes would be handwritten.

These notes are a summary of the chapter and I note the chapter thesis.

Subject slug and subordinate subject; may become more exact and sophisticated as you learn more. On 3 separate notecards, I examined her evidence for each of the three professors. So I had a subject slug: Shaping Nazi Conscience: The Professors: Heidegger, etc

Author, abbreviated book title, year of publication (written on each note card).

Shaping Nazi Conscience: The Professors

Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (2003)

Koonz devotes a chapter explaining how three professors, Martin Heidegger, a philosopher, Carl Schmitt, political theorist, and Gerhard Kittel, theologian, came to support Nazism (pp. 46-68) She claims that they “stepped in to translate the Nazis’ crude slogans and repellent images into intellectually respectable justification not only for dictatorship but also for anti-Semitism.” (p. 68) [Her use of the word “stepped” suggests that they served in this role willingly].

Quotation marks around verbatim passages.

She convincingly portrays how these men converted to Nazism by interpreting their writings and how individuals remembered them. She chose these men because of their “paper trail”. She also gives some biographical information on each man that suggests a certain type of academic found the Nazis attractive. (pp. 46-49)

Page ranges of summarized content

She does not believe that each man was attracted to Hitler or Nazism for the same reason. Heidegger – “Hitler was authenticity personified”; Schmitt – Hitler was a “decisive leader”; Kittel – Hitler was a “Christian soldier” (p. 48).

Page number of verbatim word choice; do the same for quotations.

[Koonz really helps me understand how these three men converted to Nazism, but not as effective in proving their impact. How did they make Nazism respectable? Their publications???? How many people read these works. In another context, she spoke of ideas floating like miasma, so I need to review her introduction where she explained that. How does Koonz compare to John Weiss’ work?]

I put notes to myself in brackets so I can later distinguish between summaries or paraphrases and my observations or thoughts.

Brief note about Koonz’s methodology; why she chose these three professors

Full disclosure: This example comes from my own work. Given the depth of my knowledge about the topic, it is easy for me to summarize an entire chapter. If the information is new to me, I tend to record more passages verbatim, and I will have more than one card devoted to the same subject slug and author. I just staple them together. As I learn more and my topic narrows, I begin re-reading all my note cards, especially the early ones, I place some aside and paraphrase the original notes if they are still potentially relevant.



Making notes when reading monographs and articles:

Determine each Author's Point of View (or perspective):

- Who is the author (education, expertise, gender, ethnicity, political affiliation, when they lived, where they lived)? What else has the author published? What category might their history fall under (e.g. intellectual, political, social, etc.)? Does the author make use of prominent historical theories (e.g. Marxist, progressive, social science theories, etc.)? What does the bibliography and evidence reveal about the author's methods of research?
- Does the author speak about what motivated them?
- Sometimes a thesis may not appear original because it has become conventional by the time that you read it. You may fail to appreciate why it might have been original at the time it was published.
- Look for reviews of the monograph.

Determine Goals and Thesis (plural: Theses):

- What are the authors' stated goals, questions, problems, topics, that they plan to address?
- A thesis can mean many different things but in the field of history, the thesis is the answer(s) to the historical question(s) raised by the author. What is the author's answers to their historical question(s)? In short, what are their interpretations?
- Is the author's thesis or theses convincing?
- If the author has largely written a narrative history, i.e. telling a story, you may struggle with locating the thesis anticipating that it should appear in the form of an argument. Even when writing narrative histories, the historian's selection and arrangement of detail involves choices, judgment and reveals goals and theses.
- Your notes should primarily focus on the parts of the journal article or monograph that are most relevant to your topic.

Analyze Evidence:

- What type of evidence or examples did the author provide to support their thesis? Do they present the evidence to support their interpretation in a plausible way? What makes an interpretation plausible is complex and ambiguous. So, be prepared to struggle, though as you deepen your familiarity, you will improve your ability to judge.
- Note what kinds of primary or secondary sources the author cites in footnotes or in the text of the work. If examples are used to illustrate the argument or facts are offered, summarize the

information in your own words. Note what does or does not convince you and why.

- Sometimes an author is convincing for reasons that go beyond evidence or examples. Rhetorical skills and clarity of argument can be equally persuasive. For example, historians who show that they understand counter arguments are using a rhetorical device to gain the reader's trust.
- As a novice reader of monographs, you might gain confidence in judging historical works if you read book reviews to determine how professionals assessed the work. Consult Historical Abstracts, America: History and Life, J-Stor, *Book Review Digest*, and www.h-net.msu.edu (h-net is selective and useful for books published in the last twenty-five years). By the way, not every historical publication is reviewed.

□ **Comparison, Evaluation**

- As your study progresses, note similarities and differences between the monographs and articles. Are the same primary and secondary sources being exploited by more than one author? What can you infer from these observations?
- Because the goal of this historiography paper is to identify some possible research questions or issues that have not been satisfactorily answered, or to identify primary source collections that can be exploited, be sure to devote notes simply to this purpose.
- Take notes from your notes as your knowledge of the historical writing becomes more sophisticated.

□ **Avoiding Unintentional Plagiarism when Making Notes**

- Read a paragraph, section, or chapter, then attempt to summarize what you just read in your own words by closing the page. Then revisit the paragraph, section, or chapter to verify the accuracy of what you have summarized.
- You should also try to paraphrase, but if the author's passage is not easy to paraphrase write the words verbatim on your note card and encase them with quotation marks. This way you avoid accidentally plagiarizing when you revisit your note cards at the writing stage.
- ALWAYS RECORD PAGE NUMBERS whether you are paraphrasing, summarizing, or quoting directly. Clearly record the page number after the relevant notes or quotation.
- ALWAYS RECORD AUTHOR, ABBREVIATED TITLE, AND DATE OF PUBLICATION on upper right-hand corner of index card. In the rush of drafting your essay, you do not want to lose time trying to recall this sort of information. If you fail to record information accurately, you will be more inclined to invent it when time is running out.



Pre-Writing



Note-making can be a form of pre-writing.



Composing thoughtful progress reports that follow the assignment guidelines amounts to pre-writing.



Reviewing and summarizing your notes is pre-writing. In doing so, confirm that your subject is manageable (not too narrow or too broad). Is it answering your historiographical question? It is always easier to narrow your focus, rather than to be told that your research is insufficient with only a week left before the assignment is due.



Conduct preliminary writing exercises, listing questions, listing main ideas, listing evidence/examples to support major ideas, take notes, jot ideas, write paragraphs but do not concern yourself with paragraph topic sentences, word choice, etc. – Just get ideas onto paper.



Break down your writing tasks into manageable discrete portions. As patterns emerge, make notes. If you find a pattern of competing schools of thought, then divide your notes into those schools of thought. If you find generational differences in the patterns of interpretation, divide your notes accordingly and pre-write. If the major pattern is defined by different methodologies, then organize your notes that way and pre-write.



Do not start your writing with the introductory paragraph. Have you ever sat at the computer with the blank monitor glaring at you? It is so difficult to know where to begin. In addition, as you write, you will think through the material and your thesis usually becomes more articulate and well-defined as you compose the body paragraphs. So, draft the body paragraphs first.



When you are ready to move from the pre-writing stage to the writing or drafting stage, start writing the body paragraphs. Do not initially concern yourself with effective paragraph topic sentences. Make sure the paragraphs are coherent, then refine topic sentences, sentence segues, word choice, etc.



Write your concluding paragraphs even before you write your introduction. At this point in the drafting, you will now recognize what is relevant to say in your introduction and your thesis will be more fully

developed. In a historiography, the thesis will tell readers what the patterns of interpretation are.



You may be asked to turn in all these random writings, rough drafts, etc. when you turn in your final paper or demonstrate in the week leading up to the deadline that you have notes, etc....

Write and Re-Write or Draft and Re-Draft



Unfortunately, most students write their first draft as their last draft though they might proofread for superficial errors (grammar, syntax, spelling). Or you may identify with this Cornell University student: "It's exactly like building a wall. You can't take anything out once you've put it in. I think that each sentence is something I really wanted to express, and just to take it out is like ... like breaking the wall down."⁴ If you can relate, you will most likely not submit your best effort if you submit your first draft. Writing is a process of drafting and re-drafting.



Common content difficulties:

- Over-generalizing (e.g. you say many historians, but only offer one or two examples)
- Writing history, not historiography (the reader finishes knowing much more about the topic than about the patterns of interpretation and the evidence used to support the interpretation)
- Failing to analyze historical works in context in which they were written
- Reporting interpretations, but not analyzing them
- Absent thesis
- Ineffective paragraph topic sentences
- Incoherent paragraph structure
- Failing to explain future direction(s) for research
- Failing to meet "gateway" requirements.



Through writing, you allow yourself more time to think about the subject matter. So, allow plenty of time to write and re-write.



Give yourself time to set aside your paper and create emotional and intellectual distance. Writing a rough draft or final paper the night before it is due is a disservice to yourself and a waste of my time.



I am available for "free reads" of partial or complete drafts, however, I will only be reading for content, not grammar, spelling, and so forth. In

⁴ Gottschalk and Hjortshoj, *Elements of Teaching Writing*, 65.
Historiographic Essay Manual, updated 12 August 2023

other words, I am not proofreading your paper. "Free reads" will be suspended 12 hours before the paper is due.



Be sure to review History Writing Tutorials & Mini-Lectures and consult me for help with your writing challenges. We all have our strengths and weaknesses. I am here to help you develop awareness and suggest ways to improve.



Make use of the Writing Center (WALES) on campus though be prepared to schedule an appointment.

Overview of Structural Content Requirements

Introductory Paragraph

- Provide essential background on the subject that defines the topic.
- State your thesis in the last sentence of the introductory paragraph.

Sample thesis statement for a historiography essay offered by Mary Lynn Rampolla:

Historians have held dramatically different views about the importance of European colonial rule in Africa: Marxist historians, along with others who focus on economic issues, have tended to see the colonial period as an important turning point, while cultural historians have maintained that the impact of the West on ancient cultural traditions of Africa was superficial.⁵

Body of Paper

- Each paragraph must begin with a topic sentence that clearly states the main goal of the paragraph and is linked to your thesis.
- The paragraph topic sentence will be derived from the main points that you want to make.
- Use transitional words, phrases, and sentences to make clear connections between ideas.
- Do not wander off the subject.
- The body paragraphs should contribute to your historiographic thesis.
- Do quote to gain the reader's confidence and to persuade.
- Frame quotations effectively and efficiently.
- Provide and discuss convincing examples/evidence of the patterns of interpretation in each body paragraph.
- Explanatory footnotes can guide the reader to additional evidence of the patterns.

⁵ Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, 2nd ed., 18. Historiographic Essay Manual, updated 12 August 2023

Two Concluding Paragraphs

- The first** concluding paragraph restates your thesis and reminds readers of how each paragraph proved the historiographical patterns.
- The second** concluding paragraph identifies questions/issues that have not been effectively addressed and what specific kinds of available evidence you plan to explore. You should specifically mention what primary sources you plan to explore given your questions. Consult your Primary Source Curation Project and additional primary sources you may have uncovered during the research. This paragraph helps set the stage for your Research and Writing Essay in History 390.

Details for Submitting Final Draft

Specific requirements

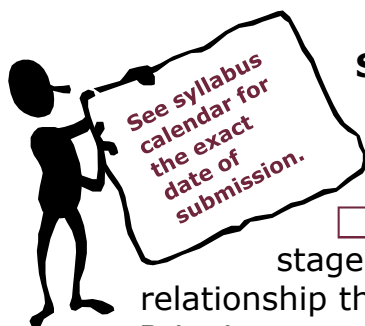
- Verdana 10 point font OR Calibri 11 point font are preferred, but not a deal breaker.
- One-inch standard margins
- Double-spaced
- Footnotes are single-spaced and 1-point font smaller than the body text
- Page numbers in upper-right hand corner (except first page)
- Title page with name, date, and paper title
- Footnotes correctly cited according to Turabian, chapters 15-16 ("N" entries in chapter 16 refers to footnotes; "B" entries refers to how they appear in the Bibliography)
- Works Consulted Bibliography, alphabetically arranged by authors' last names, correctly cited according to Turabian, chapters 16-17 (pay particular attention to "B" entries in 17.1-17.2)
- Approximately seven-ten pages in length (not including footnotes); this is not a magic number.
- Clarity of expression. Have the reader's experience front and center in the final draft. If lacking clarity makes it difficult for the reader to understand patterns of interpretation, then your draft was not yet ready for prime time. No essay will be error-free. At issue is whether the punctuation errors, ineffective word choice, weak segues or transitions cause the reader to struggle or create a distraction from the content. Effective framing of quotations improves the reading experience. Neat footnotes correctly following Turabian garner trust. Spelling and capitalization errors distract the reader and leave the impression of carelessness or unprofessionalism. (These topics are discussed in Turabian, Chapters 20-25)

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, misrepresenting circumstances, impersonation, obtaining an unfair advantage, aiding and abetting of academic dishonesty, falsification of records and official documents, and unauthorized access to computerized academic or administrative records or systems. For detailed definitions of these examples of academic dishonesty, consult Bloomsburg University's: <https://www.bloomu.edu/prp-3512-academic-integrity-policy>

Artificial Intelligence, Chatbots and Academic Integrity

- My policy on the use of AI is still evolving. Much like I cannot prevent a student from Googling to look for “inspiration” in their writing, students can also use Chat GPT, Google Bard, etc. If students are resorting to these web-based tools because they have not been doing their research and making notes, then drawing upon AI is a violation of academic integrity. You are not engaged in the learning process, but simply trying to complete an assignment to earn points.
- Be aware that the material generated by AI may be inaccurate, incomplete, and otherwise problematic. In the instance of a historiographic essay, the “knowledge” being drawn upon from the internet is unlikely to reveal the complexity and ambiguity in the patterns of historiographical interpretation.
- Most written work for the course lacks absolute right or wrong answers, and chatbots and googling do not handle ambiguity well.
- A gray area in the use of AI: have you been trying to make sense of the content, and you are struggling? Do you have a learning disability and AI helps you organize your thoughts? In these cases, it makes more sense to consult the professor for additional support or visit WALES and seek help on writing, than using AI or Googling. But if you resort to AI or Googling, you must submit the chatbot text as a separate file with the assignment in Brightspace.
- The goal of the course is to successfully develop and complete a major project which prepares you to join the “real world.” The skills you are developing to complete the project are what is essential, and not to earn a passing grade *per se*. Having played with Chat GPT and Google Bard, the results of questions posed in the chats are inferior to the assigned materials that we read and the bibliography for your project. The chat is predictable, common, and not making effective, persuasive use of the assigned readings and lectures. Indeed, the vocabulary is atypical for most undergraduates.



Submission

- A rubric will be provided in advance that will make expectations clearer.
- I hope that by the time we have reached the final stage of your historiography, we have developed a working relationship that demonstrates you did the work and not a chatbot. Bringing notes to individual conferences helps substantiate that the work being submitted is yours.
- I will not be collecting your notes, but I do hope to see them on a regular basis throughout the semester.
- Your historiography essay is submitted through **BRIGHTSPACE's Assignment Folder** and in **hardcopy**.

