

## Paper Guidelines

**Please note that the information on this page applies to every paper, regardless of which topic you choose.**

### Important Dates

**Monday, September 27 – Monday, November 23:** Students will talk to me either via email or in person about their paper topics. If you would like to meet with me in person, which I strongly recommend, just stop by my office. I will be available at the following time (in addition to my regular office hours):

Monday, November 23: 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m; 8:00 p.m.- 9:00 p.m.

If you choose the email option, you must send me a message that tells me what specific topic you will choose (i.e. “Television – Star Trek”). You are not off the hook until you have an email back from me that says this message has been received. So, if you are going to choose email, then I recommend you contact me before the deadline, so you have time to e-mail me again if necessary.

**Monday, November 23, 11:59 p.m.:** Deadline for telling me your paper topic. If I have not either met with you in person by this time, or received an email explaining what you plan to discuss, you will be penalized five points a day, up to a maximum of 20 points.

**Tuesday, December 8, 11:59 p.m.:** Cutoff for receipt of drafts. Note that submission of a draft is OPTIONAL. If you would like feedback before you turn your final paper in, you are welcome to email me with a draft anytime before the cutoff time and I will email you back with feedback. Note that I will also be available to discuss drafts/outlines/ideas in person at the following time:

Monday, November 30: 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m; 8:00 p.m.- 9:00 p.m.

Wednesday, December 2: 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m; 8:00 p.m.- 9:00 p.m.

**Thursday, December 10 11, 11:59 p.m.:** Final drafts due to me via email. I will email you back to confirm receipt; it is your responsibility to make sure you receive this confirmation. On Friday at noon (in other words, the morning after the deadline), I will begin subtracting five points a day (from the 80 points possible) for papers I do not have, regardless of the circumstances.

### Formatting Requirements:

- 1,000 words minimum. No maximum.
- Bibliography (only if you use any external sources)
- Parenthetical citations. Examples:
  - President Bush said, “I will fight until the end.” ([www.whitehouse.gov/speeches.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/speeches.html))
  - President Bush said, “I will fight until the end.” (Smith, 133)

### Important Notes:

- Failure to meet the length requirement will result in a penalty of ten points (from the 80 points possible).
- As noted above, failure to meet with me, either via email or in person, will result in a penalty of five points a day up to a maximum of 25 points.
- As noted above, late papers will be penalized at a rate of five points per day or fraction of a day.
- Make sure that your paper is YOUR work. Do not borrow from the work of anyone else without indicating that you are using a quote.
- I am open to students developing their own topics, particularly if something you are especially interested in was not addressed in class. If you wish to do this, however, you must meet with me in person.

### Tips for an A paper:

- Dig deep. It's a good start for you to see that N.W.A. is talking about race relations, or that *Sex and the City* is about gender issues. But it's even better if you can dig deeper, and say something more detailed and substantial.
- Change over time. If you can perceive change over time, that's very good. For example, you might observe that the kind of love the Beatles sing about in 1963 and the kind they sing about in 1968 are very different. Or if you interview a Vietnam War veteran, you might see that their perception of the war and yours are very different, and you might explore why that is.
- Theme. If you can develop a central theme, that's also good. A whole paper about what we can learn about gender issues from the songs of Madonna, or modern-day views of politics and politicians as reflected in *The Simpsons*, to take two possibilities.
- Connections to class. If you can bring in relevant material from the course lectures it will generally strengthen your essay. For example, you might connect the portrayal of scientists in *Star Trek* to the Cold War, or you might connect what you see at the Nixon library to what you hear in the lecture on modern politics, or you might use what you learn from the lecture on America's consumer culture while discussing your bus trip.
- Comparisons. Most of these topics ask you to make one choice—one band, one museum, one show. If you would prefer to do a comparison—portrayal of women in *I Love Lucy* vs. *Roseanne*, the music of Elvis vs. the music of Eminem, etc.

Note that not all of these suggestions would be appropriate for every paper topic. Note also that they are just suggestions—it is possible to do none of these things and still be successful.

## Paper Topic #1: Television

Select a television show from the list below, and watch at least four episodes. Then, analyze the show as a reflection of the times in which it was created. What can we learn about that historical era from the show you have chosen?

Here is the pre-approved list of shows:

1. *I Love Lucy* (1950s)
2. *The Twilight Zone—Original Series* (1950s)
3. *The Andy Griffith Show* (1960s)
4. *Star Trek* (1960s)
5. *The Dick Van Dyke Show* (1960s)
6. *All in the Family* (1970s)
7. *M\*A\*S\*H* (1970s/1980s)
8. *Three's Company* (1970s)
9. *Family Ties* (1980s)
10. *The Cosby Show* (1980s)
11. *Cheers* (1980s/1990s)
12. *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1980s/1990s)
13. *Roseanne* (1990s)
14. *The Simpsons* (1980s/1990s/2000s)
15. *Seinfeld* (1990s/2000s)
16. *Friends* (2000s)
17. *The Family Guy* (2000s)
18. *Sex and the City* (2000s)
19. *The Sopranos* (2000s)
20. *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* (2000s)

Note that you may get approval for a show that is not on this list, but you must speak to me or email me first.

Here are some questions to help guide your thinking:

1. How does the show handle race relations? Are people of color even present? What does this tell you about the era in which the show was created?
2. How does the show address gender issues? Are women equals? Are they dominant? What does this tell you about the era in which the show was created?
3. Does the show reflect any of the political issues of its era? The Cold War? Political corruption? The war on terror? Gay rights?
4. How does the show handle religion and/or religious issues? What does this tell you about the era in which the show was created?
5. Is any of the show's characters meant to be a metaphor or a symbol for an entire group of people? What group of people? Why do you think so?
6. Do the show's characters evolve over different seasons? Why do you think this is? What does this tell you about the era in which the show was created?
7. What kinds of jokes are made? What kind of jokes—if any—are off-limits? What does this tell you about the era in which the show was created?
8. What audience(s) do you think this show is/was aimed at? Does it tell you anything about that particular audience? Say, men in the 1950s? African-Americans in the 1970s? Young people in the 2000s?

Please note that these questions are just suggestions. You may use all of these questions, some of them, or none of them. You may add your own. As long as you make certain to use the show as a historical document that teaches us something about the era in which the show was created.

## **Paper Topic #2: Music**

Select a musician/band from the list below, and examine at least five songs by that artist. Then, making reference to those five (or more) songs, discuss the artist as a reflection of the times in which they were most influential. What can we learn about that historical era from the music of this artist?

Here is the pre-approved list of musicians:

1. Elvis Presley (1950s)
2. Chuck Berry (1950s)
3. Frank Sinatra (1950s/1960s/1970s)
4. Ray Charles (1960s/1970s/1980s/1990s)
5. The Beatles (1960s)
6. Bob Dylan (1960s/1970s/1980s)
7. The Beach Boys (1960s)
8. Johnny Cash (1960s/1970s/1980s/1990s)
9. Aretha Franklin (1960s/1970s/1980s)
10. Led Zeppelin (1970s)
11. The Sex Pistols (1970s)
12. The Ramones (1970s)
13. U2 (1980s/1990s)
14. Michael Jackson (1980s/1990s)
15. Madonna (1980s)
16. N.W.A. (1980s)
17. Nirvana (1990s)
18. Eminem (2000s)

Note that you may get approval for an artist that is not on this list, but you must speak to me or email me first. Note also that I know that many of these artists are not American. However, they all found a large audience in America, and you should consider them from that vantage point.

Here are some questions to help guide your thinking:

1. What are the main themes in the work of this artist? Why do you think this is? What does this tell you about the era in which the music was created?
2. How does the artist address issues of race? Gender? Sexuality? What does this tell you about the era in which the music was created?
3. What political issues are raised in the songs of this artist? Which ones are avoided? Why?
4. What type of people listened to this artist? Why do you think this is?
5. What symbols/imagery/metaphors does the artist use in their songs?
6. Was this artist a commercial success? An artistic success? Both? What does this tell you about the era in which the music was created?
7. Are any themes, words, issues, or anything else off limits in the artist's songs? Why do you think so? What does this tell you about the era in which the music was created?

Please note that these questions are just suggestions. You may use all of them, some of them, or none of them. You may add your own. As long as you make certain to use the artist as a means of teaching me something about the era in which they recorded.

**Important Notes:** While your paper may mention or consider key events in the career of this artist, you should not make them the focus of the paper unless you intend to analyze them. For example, you might talk about the censorship of Elvis on the Ed Sullivan show, and what that says about American society in the 1950s. But do not simply give me summary of key events in Elvis' career. I want analysis here, and not an

encyclopedia article. Also note that why an artist says they wrote a song is not generally important to me. What is important is what messages you think the audience heard and why you think the audience responded to that song. For example, U2's "Sunday, Bloody Sunday" is about the civil war in Ireland. But that alone tells me very little about why the song was popular among Americans in the 1980s, many of whom had no idea a civil war was even going on in Ireland.

### **Paper Topic #3: Museums**

Visit a historical museum, and discuss how it presents history. In particular, you should address three questions: (1) What audience(s) is the museum trying to reach? (2) What message(s) is the museum trying to send to its audience(s)? Or, to put that another way, what are they trying to teach? (3) What are the advantages/disadvantages of learning history at a museum?

Here is the pre-approved list of museums:

1. The Museum of Tolerance (Los Angeles)
2. The Japanese-American National Museum (Los Angeles)
3. Richard Nixon Library and Birthplace (Yorba Linda)
4. California African American Museum (Los Angeles)
5. Chinese American Museum (Los Angeles)
6. El Pueblo (Los Angeles)
7. Korean American Museum (Los Angeles)
8. Ronald Reagan Presidential Museum (Simi Valley)
9. Autry Museum of Western Heritage (Los Angeles)
10. Museum of Jurassic Technology (Los Angeles)

Note that you may get approval for a museum that is not on this list, but you must speak to me or email me first.

Here are some questions to help guide your thinking:

1. What audience(s) do you think the specifically trying to reach? Why do you think so? Does the museum have different messages for these audiences? If so, what are the messages?
2. What things has the museum chosen to emphasize? Why so you think this is? What things has the museum chosen to ignore or downplay? Is anything obvious that you would expect the museum to cover missing? Why do you think this is?
3. What is the formal title of the museum? Why did they choose this title? Is it significant? Is there another obvious title that they have decided not to use?
4. In what ways is a visit to the museum better than a lecture or a book? In what ways is it worse?
5. How does the museum manipulate light, design, color, use of space, etc. to accomplish its goals? Does the museum's design reflect a particular set of values? Is it reminiscent of a particular culture?

Please note that these five questions are just suggestions. You may use all of them, some of them, or none of them. You may add your own. As long as you make sure to analyze the museum's presentation of history (rather than just tell me what you saw, and whether you liked it or not.) This is an analytical paper, not a review.

## **Paper Topic #4: Bus Ride**

Board a bus that travels at least five miles down a major street. Observe what you see, both inside and outside the bus. What does this teach you about modern American society?

Here are some questions to help guide your thinking:

1. Can you detect class/race divisions in the city? How?
2. Do you see different neighborhoods? How can you tell when you have entered a new neighborhood? What differences do you see?
3. What differences do you see between the people on the bus, and those not on the bus? What do you make of this?
4. Can you sense the influence of money in various places? How? Can you sense the absence of money? How?
5. What advertisements do you see? What do they tell you about American culture in the present?
6. What kinds of cars do you see? How do people use their cars? How do they decorate them? What does this tell you about American culture?
7. Can you tell who has the power in the city? Who is it? How can you tell?
8. Think about the issues raised in *Fast Food Nation*. Can you see any of these problems in action?
9. Can you detect the influence of the rise of consumer culture?

Please note that these questions are just suggestions. You may use all of them, some of them, or none of them. You may add your own. As long as you make sure to analyze what you see (rather than just giving me a list).

## **Paper Topic #5: Oral History**

Select a person—relatives are OK—who lived through and was substantially affected by an important historical event and interview them about their experience. Then, write a paper that does two things: (1) Gives a brief (200-300 word) overview of what you learned/heard in your interview, and (2) discusses what the advantages/disadvantages are in learning history in this way.

### **Here is a list of historical events you might discuss**

1. World War II
2. The Korean War
3. The Vietnam War
4. The September 11 attacks
5. The L.A riots
6. Hurricane Katrina
7. Woodstock
8. The moon landing
9. The assassination of John F. Kennedy and/or Martin Luther King, Jr.
10. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War

These are just possibilities; there are naturally countless other events you could discuss. In particular, I am open to events that aren't as specific as these—you could talk about the experience of immigrating to the U.S., for example. Or the experience of living through the 1960s as an African American. Note also that your paper will tend to work better if the person you are interviewing was personally affected in a meaningful way. For example, you could interview someone who was in Los Angeles for the September 11 attacks, but that will tend to lead to a weak paper. It would be better to talk to someone who lived in New York, or someone whose relative perished.

### **Here are some questions to help guide your thinking:**

1. Do you detect any biases/prejudices (not necessarily racial) in the memory of your subject?
2. Is the passage of time detectable in their account of the event? How? Is this a problem?
3. Is the individual's political viewpoint affecting their account? How can you tell?
4. Does the individual have a sense of the big picture? And if so, do you think they did at the time, or did they figure out the big picture later?
5. Do you detect the influence of the media on their memory? How?

Please note that these questions are just broad suggestion designed to point you in some possible directions for research.

## **Paper Topic #6: Soldiers**

You've read many different letters and other documents from soldiers this quarter, spanning a total of five different wars (Spanish-American, WWI, WWII, Vietnam, Iraq). What can you learn about the soldier's experience in the 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> century from these letters?

Here are some questions to help guide your thinking:

1. Are all soldiers the same, or do you detect a difference over time?
2. Can you detect the influence of technology? Do soldiers like or dislike technology?
3. Do volunteer soldiers feel differently than draftees?
4. Do soldiers care about the broad political issues of the wars in which they fight (for example, saving the world from the Nazis/Communists/terrorists)?
5. Is there a difference between serving in a popular war (like WWII) and an unpopular one (like Vietnam)?

Please note that these questions are just broad suggestion designed to point you in some possible directions for research.

Also, please note you are free to use additional soldiers' letters/diaries besides the ones I assigned (such documents are plentiful on the Internet, for example). If you do so, just make sure to cite them.