

INSTRUCTIONS FOR POSITION PAPER

HI 204-01, WATSON

75 POINTS EACH, 225 POINTS TOTAL

1. **Topic.** Write an essay that argues for one of the positions for the particular debate. You can choose either position, but pick one and stick to it. You are NOT required to turn in a position paper on the day that you are debating in front of the class. Please see the debate assignment sheet for the date and topic of each debate.
 - a. The object of the paper is to prove that your position is the correct one and to demonstrate your understanding of the material. You must take a stand and stick to it (even if you do not believe that it is correct outside of the paper assignment). Do not attempt to argue both positions.
 - b. You **must** make direct references to course readings through paraphrased content and/or direct quotes that are effective and accurate as well as correctly cited. Do not consult resources outside of course materials. You should rely on primary source documents whenever possible (in other words, refer to the writings of people who were present at the time, rather than modern-day historians).

2. **General Presentation of Findings.** Papers should be clearly and concisely written, well organized, and presented in your own words with no long quotes and only a few shorter ones. This essay should have an introduction, thesis, a main body, as well as a brief conclusion that sums up what you have said and assesses its significance. Your paper should be between 2-4 pages.

3. **Final presentation and mechanics.**
 - a. Papers are due by the **beginning of class** on the day of each debate.
 - i. Papers will NOT be accepted over email.
 - ii. Late papers will not be accepted without prior approval.
 - b. Your papers must be between 2-4 pages in length and include page numbers.
 - c. Your paper must be stapled.
 - d. Your paper must be double-spaced with 1 in. margins on all sides (the default is 1.25", so you must change them)
 - e. Use only Times New Roman 12 pt. font.
 - f. Proofread carefully. Sloppy papers with misspellings, typographical errors, and grammatical problems will weaken your argument and lower your grade
 - g. This is a formal essay, so please make sure that you avoid informal language and slang.
 - h. Use a consistent verb tense. Historians typically write in the past tense.
 - i. All historical data and information that is not common knowledge **MUST BE CITED in the text.**
 - i. Your in-text citations must include page numbers whenever possible.
 - ii. You MUST include a Works Cited page. You may cite the chapter as a whole rather than the individual primary sources.
 - iii. You may use an accepted citation style of your choice, but please be consistent. If you need assistance with citations or citation styles, please let me know.

4. **Assessment.** You will be graded on the following
 - a. Content – the strength and logic of your argument.
 - b. Presentation – the effectiveness of your organization, clarity, and proper citations.
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How to achieve clear, concise, and effective writing:

1. Introduction

- a. Provide the reader with necessary historical background to the essay.
- b. Purpose: State the **thesis**. What do you intend to prove? What counterarguments did you reject, and why? Remember, your job is not that of a storyteller; rather, you are more like a lawyer trying to convince a jury about a particular point. Thus, your point (thesis) must be made "crystal clear."
- c. Procedure: explain how you plan to achieve your purpose. What direction will your argument take? What types of evidence will you employ?
- d. State the major points you will use to convince the reader about your thesis.

2. Body

- a. Plan for the points logically to follow each other, so that you can see a smooth transition and thus achieve some sense of unity and continuity.
- b. Utilize topic sentences to guide the reader through your argument.
- c. Support your points with references to the readings.

3. Conclusion

- a. Wrap up your argument and be firm
- b. Restate your thesis and supporting points.
- c. Answer the "so what?" question (in other words, analyze the importance of what you have proved to our understanding of American history).