

## History Department Junior Term Papers

Unlike previous years when students wrote a single research paper on a topic of their choosing, in the junior year, the assignment and the skills required for mastering the assignment necessitates a change in the research paper. Building on the research and analytical skills that students gained in their previous term papers, the junior year term papers emphasizes historiography, the skill of identifying, differentiating, and critiquing the arguments of works of history. As students complete the sequence of papers detailed below, they will gain critical thinking, writing, and research skills that will aid them in the future historical and other academic endeavors.

In the first semester, students will write a 1000-1250 word essay using articles and primary source documents that their teachers provide them. As this assignment focuses on understanding the arguments offered by historians and then using documents to evaluate those arguments, no additional research required. The first goal of the assignment is for the student to be able to identify the thesis of each article and to explain, briefly, how the author supports the thesis. As students make the transition from textbook reading to monograph reading, the ability to isolate an argument and to identify the key themes and evidence that supports it is an essential skill. The second goal of the paper is to have students weigh the relative strengths and weaknesses of the various arguments that they read using the primary source documents to support their conclusions. Students will craft a thesis stating which historian presents a more persuasive argument for their position and then support that thesis with a careful analysis of primary source documents.

In the second semester, students will combine the skills they learned in the first paper with the research skills that they learned in previous years. For this 1250-1500 word paper, teachers will present students with two articles presenting conflicting interpretations of an historical problem. Students must research primary source material and craft a thesis which maintains why one of the two assigned pieces is more persuasive based on careful analysis of the documents that they find. This capstone project blends the skills that students have acquired in previous grades with the new skills that they have learned this year.

While students may discuss these materials in class and are, as always, invited to speak with their teachers about them outside of class, students are not to discuss the articles, sources, or papers with any current or former students. Students are not to share sources.

Individual teachers will assign students the articles to read in both semesters and the documents in the first semester. Individual teachers will instruct students about note-taking requirements, outlines, and drafts.