Tips for Succeeding in this Course

1. Read carefully and understand this syllabus and all assignments in it.
2. Attend all classes and take note of my instructions and advice.
3. Pay attention to rules of grammar, proofreading, and good writing.
4. Take advantage of the offer to have the GTA read drafts of your papers.
5. Read and understand all the comments made on your assignments when they are returned to you. Do not make the same mistakes again.
6. Take all the quizzes, and turn in assignments on time.
7. Take responsibility for your actions.

NOTE: This is a highly structured and demanding course. If you do not commit yourself to doing everything required in this class, you will not succeed. Do not fool yourself into thinking that late or mediocre work will enable you to pass the course. I will not assign a passing grade simply because you need a certain grade (at least a C—not a C-minus or lower) to graduate or to remain a history major.
REQUIRED READING

- Michael J. Galgano et. al., *Doing History: Research and Writing in the Digital Age*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Wadsworth, 2013), paperback. This book can be rented from publisher for $10.99. See www.cengage.com and search for “Galgano.” Choose the second edition. (Referred to as DH in schedule.)
- Articles and chapter extracts from books are available on Scholar (Resources/Course Documents).

GRADING FORMULA

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<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Grade value</th>
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<tr>
<td>1  Relevance of history</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 &amp; 3 Primary resource papers (8% + 10%)</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<td>4  Active voice and citation exercise</td>
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<td>5  Archival resources</td>
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<td>6  Internet resource assignment</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<td>7  Book review</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<td>8  Preliminary outline</td>
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<td>9  Preliminary presentation to class</td>
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<td>10 Top-ten mistakes</td>
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<td>11 Final presentation to class</td>
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<td>12 Final outline</td>
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<td>13 Final research paper</td>
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<td>Miscellaneous (based on attendance, participation, Writer quizzes, etc.)</td>
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<td>In-class quizzes (1% each)</td>
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SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENTS

Grading

To encourage compliance with the terms of each assignment, I will grade as follows: I will read each assignment and give it a tentative numerical grade based on its content, interpretation, writing style, etc. Then I will deduct points if certain specific guidelines have not been followed. The deductions are listed as part of each assignment and in the “General Instructions” section below.
1. Using History to Help Understand Recent Events

The Princeton University historian, Julian Zelizer, frequently uses historical examples to elucidate recent events in American politics. In this brief essay, you will go to Dr. Zelizer’s web page (http://www.princeton.edu/~jzelizer/) and obtain a sense of his writing by reading a few of his articles. For this paper:

- Summarize just one of the articles, describing the current event and the historical event used by Dr. Zelizer.
- How does he use the approach of analogy (or any other approach) to make his point? (Maybe, you will need to read up on what “analogy” means.)
- Does the author seem to have a political bias? In other words, from reading some of his articles, do you think he tries to sway the reader to a Republican or Democratic (or independent) perspective? Provide evidence.

This first paper will give me an idea of your writing and analytical skills. It will also demonstrate to you how some historians employ history for “real-world” purposes. Due on the second day of class, Jan. 26, the paper should contain only 250 words (plus or minus 25 words); it will count for 2% of your grade. Carefully read the “General Instructions” sections of this syllabus so you understand how papers in this course should be written and formatted. (Don’t forget to include a word count, for example.) It wouldn’t hurt if you also read my “Writing Tips” at http://www.history.vt.edu/Hirsh/writtips.html.

2 and 3. Primary Source Document Interpretations

You will read a few primary source materials and answer questions based on your reading and a small amount of outside research. These exercises will give you experience identifying and interpreting primary sources. They should also help you develop critical skills. In other words, you should not necessarily believe everything you read, even if you discover reputable sources.

2. Read “The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb” by Henry Stimson and “Why the United States Dropped the Bomb” by Gar Alperovitz (both available on Scholar). Write an integrated essay that describes the arguments made by Stimson and the counterarguments made by Alperovitz. In the process of writing the essay, answer all the following questions. Include an introductory paragraph that gives the reader a sense of the documents and the major points of your essay. (By the way, the Alperovitz piece summarizes research he presented in other forms, such as in a book and in research articles. Assume that all his claims have legitimate references and are well documented. You may disagree with his arguments, but know that they draw on real source materials. Additionally, you may also gain insight into Alperovitz’s article by reading his piece, “Hiroshima: Historians Reassess,” also available on Scholar.)

- What was Stimson’s job during World War II? What role did he play in the decision to use the atomic bomb?
- When did Stimson publish this article? What were the circumstances of his publication? To answer this question, find other information to describe the nature of the debate soon after the end of World War II concerning the use of the atomic bomb. Use footnotes (employing the “Chicago” style) to credit your sources.
- According to Stimson’s article, why did the American military use atomic bombs against Japan?
- According to Alperovitz’s interpretation, why did the American military use the atomic bombs?

Resources
You will be using the library frequently in this course. If you are unfamiliar with the library, take a tour offered by librarians early in the semester. While in the library, get acquainted with reference librarians, who are invaluable (and generally cheerful) resources. Mr. Bruce Pencek, the College Librarian for Social Sciences, provides wonderful assistance. He can be reached at bpencek@vt.edu for appointments. Mr. Pencek produced a useful guide to library resources, which can be found on the course Scholar site under “Syllabus & Other Useful Information.” Also feel free to take advantage of the resources offered by the Writing Center in Newman Library. (See http://www.lib.vt.edu/spaces/writing/) Writing Center personnel will help you craft better papers. You can call the Center for appointments at 231-5436. Don’t forget that you can also make an appointment with this course’s GTA to help you prepare your papers. Finally, take a look at my “Writing Tips” at http://www.history.vt.edu/Hirsh/writtips.html. The site provides ideas about writing better papers. Since I will be grading your papers, you will definitely find my advice worthwhile! In fact, I suggest you refer to the website whenever you write a paper for this class.
Given the evidence presented in the articles (and any other research you may have performed in writing this paper), whose arguments (Alperovitz’s or Stimson’s) appear most convincing? Why? Ensure that you use evidence (and not just “gut” feelings) to support your argument.

Paper length: 400 words. Due date: Feb. 2.

3. Read the speech given by John F. Kennedy on "Urgent National Needs" (Congressional Record—House, 25 May 1961, p. 8276), which can be obtained on Scholar. I want you to focus on section IX, "Space," but you need to read the entire speech to get a sense of Kennedy's goals. (The website contains an 8-minute sound excerpt of the "space" section of the speech. Read it, and listen at the same time if you like.) Write an integrated essay that answers all the following questions. Include an introductory paragraph that gives the reader a sense of the document and the major points of your essay.

- Explain briefly the historical framework for the speech. What was the "Cold War" all about? Who were the "adversaries of freedom" that the United States fought against?
- Why did Kennedy make such a big deal about American accomplishments in space? What space event occurred on 12 April 1961 that probably spurred Kennedy into action on space? Who was "astronaut Shepard," and what feat had he accomplished? (And when did he accomplish the feat?)
- What goal did Kennedy propose for the new space program? Did the United States accomplish this goal? When?
- What other geopolitical/military event occurred (on 17 April 1961) that may have motivated Kennedy's speech and his desire to do something spectacular in space? (The answer is NOT given in the speech. Try to determine the answer based on the date clue and a modest amount of research.)
- Why do you think Kennedy portrayed the proposed space program as he did, without referring to other geopolitical concerns?

Paper length: 400 words. Due date: Feb. 16.

4. Active voice and citation exercise.

This assignment will help you become more familiar with good historical writing using active voice (rather than passive voice) and avoiding the verb “to be.” It will also introduce you to proper “Chicago” (a.k.a. “Chicago Manual of Style” or “CMS”) footnote and bibliography styles.

- Download (from Scholar, Resources, Assignment 4 downloadable files) the “Passive-to-Active Voice and Citation” exercise sheets (in .doc format) and follow the directions listed on them. (I have provided the file as a PDF document in case you can’t read the .doc file.)

Due date: Feb. 18.

5. Archival Resources

Archives often contain important and unpublished primary source materials that provide novel ways of understanding historical subjects. This assignment will give you experience in locating and interpreting archival resources, some of which you may use for your presentations and final paper.

- Use a finding aid to obtain information. A good way to begin includes searching the database of the Virginia Heritage Project at http://www2.lib.virginia.edu/small/vhp/. (Select Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University as the repository.) Do a search on your basic subject. Look at the results and then delve deeper by looking at the available finding aids, which will tell you about resources that can be found in the Special Collections at Newman Library (on the first floor, next to the coffee shop). Then go there (physically)!
- Find a box of documents that might have useful information for your project. Look at three or more documents and summarize their contents in about 100 words for each (by explaining the reason for creation of the documents and the information they provide). Also explain how the documents could provide useful insight and information on a research topic.
• Context is critical. Who wrote the documents you are investigating? What made him or her significant? Write a one-paragraph (about 100-word) biography of the person associated with the documents and explain the circumstances in which he or she produced the archival documents. You may need to do extra research to provide information about the context.

• Include a bibliography of the sources you have located. At minimum, you need to employ a style that includes the following elements:
  • Author or creator’s name
  • Title of the work (or a short description of it, such as “Letter from ABC to DEF”)
  • Date
  • Publication information (if document has been published)
  • Collection name
  • Box and folder
  • Repository name and geographical location (such as the university name, city and state).

(Source of this list, which I modified slightly: J. Blair, “How to Cite Archival Sources,” Michigan Technological University, http://www.lib.mtu.edu/mtuarchives/Brochure-CitingArchivalSources.pdf. Also see “Chicago Manual of Style,” section 14.232, for more information about archival citations. Use Summon on the VT library site to search for the manual.) Optional: if you have a camera (on your phone, for example), take pictures of interesting pages of your documents and include them at the end of the assignment.

Paper length: 400 words, exclusive of bibliographic citations (for which no limit exists). Due date: Feb. 25. Note: You should start on this project early since some collections are not maintained in the library building itself. Instead, they are held in an off-campus storage site and need to be transported to the library, a task that can take up to two days. Hence, don’t wait until the last minute (or last day) to start work on this assignment. Also realize that the special collections office is only open during weekdays, typically from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM and NOT on weekends. Plan accordingly.

You will need to use some archival resources for your final project. If you cannot find anything useful in Virginia Tech’s Special Collections, you may find resources at online archives, such as those listed below. Get approval (in person or by email) before you use these archives instead of those located at Virginia Tech. You will need the same prior approval for using archival sources for your final research paper.

NASA HQ Historical Reference Collection, at https://historydms.hq.nasa.gov.


Nuclear weapons history, at Trinity Atomic website (transcribed documents), http://www.abomb1.org/.

6. Resources from the Internet

Good historical research often depends on the creative use of resources. Happily, many of these resources now reside on the Internet. In this assignment, you will locate some relevant primary resources (most likely newspaper articles) that relate to your research project. The assignment will help you become familiar with some online databases and (if nothing else) enable you to find good primary resources for your final research paper. The assignment will also give you experience in finding useful secondary resources from proprietary databases.

• List the topic of your research (i.e., “Topic: The Political Response to Sputnik”).

• Use the “News & Newspapers databases: Proquest” database (search “proquest historical” and then select “News & Newspapers databases” to search several papers at once) and find at least two articles (primary sources) that relate to your research topic. These articles can be either “straight” news stories or editorials/op-ed pieces from the period you are studying.
  o List the articles using proper “Chicago” bibliographic (not footnote) style.
o Write a two-sentence annotation for each article explaining the content of the article and its value for your research paper.

• Use any other proprietary academic database (through the VT library website) to find at least two secondary sources that provide insight to your research topic.
  o List the articles using proper “Chicago” bibliographic style.
  o Write a two-sentence annotation for each article explaining the content of the article and its value for your research paper.

Due date: Mar. 16. No word count requirement.

7. Book Review Assignment

Using whatever resources you choose, locate and read one book in either of the two research fields. Choose a book that will give you a quick understanding of some broad aspect of the history of space exploration or the history of atomic power. You will then write a review of this book. This assignment should help you refine ideas that you can pursue in your final research paper.

Choose a book that concerns the history of atomic power or space exploration. Though not required, the book can be one that you will use for your research paper.

The review should contain the following components:

1) Bibliographic information listed at the beginning of the review. (Do NOT include this information as part of your word count.) You can use Chicago footnote style for this citation, even though it’s not a footnote.

2) A statement of the book's contents. This statement can be integrated into the entire review and not simply offered in the review's initial paragraph.

3) A description and analysis of the book's "message," thesis, or interpretation. You’ll need to provide evidence and examples from the book to fulfill this part of the assignment. Use comparisons with other books or articles also. (See #7 below.)

4) An evaluation of whether the author succeeds in doing what he or she proposes to do. (A good author will state the book's purposes in the preface or introduction.)

5) A thoughtful criticism of the book in two or three sentences (minimum). Though professional reviewers do not always need to point out a book’s deficiencies, I want you to consider (and write about) some features of the book that you did not like. Did the author write with a dull style (using too much passive voice, for example)? Did he or she neglect to consult some important sources or misuse a valid historical methodology? (You may become sensitive to these deficiencies by reading other similar books or articles. See #7 below.)

6) A well-reasoned recommendation (either positive or negative) for your audience or a special subgroup of it. (“This book will benefit readers within the community of XYZ scholars because…”)

7) A list of at least 3 other books or historical articles that relate to the same subject. These sources may be those that you used to make an informed assessment of the reviewed book. (DO NOT include this information as part of your word count. Use Chicago bibliography—not footnote—style to list these books or articles.)

8) A catchy title for the paper that will grab your reader’s attention. Look at book reviews in the popular press for ideas of how to title your review.

Note: While summaries of books from Amazon.com and other online sources may be useful, ensure that your review contains MORE than just similar summaries. Your reader will know quickly whether you have carefully read the book or whether you have cobbled together a review of the book’s contents from such summaries.

Purpose of a Book Review

A book review is a standard way for an academic to analyze and criticize the work of other scholars. It is not, however, a "book report," which simply retells the story contained in the book. The review should summarize the book's contents, but more importantly, it should review the book's thesis and interpretations.

The purpose of a review is:

- to analyze the validity of the work's main concepts;
- to criticize (positively or negatively) the book's main thesis. For the scholarly community, the review serves as a major tool by which research is assessed.

The student must not be afraid to evaluate a respected author even though he or she appreciates the effort that has gone into a major work. One can evaluate a book by many methods, of which comparison is the most common. In other words, the reviewer can compare one work to another which has a related thesis, interpretation, or subject matter. Praise or criticism should be backed up with relevant support from these other works.

You will benefit by reading other book reviews in periodicals and on the Web. Even reading movie reviews will help you understand the structure and goals of this type of writing. A simple Web search for “How to write a book review” will also provide useful advice.

I want you to master techniques for writing a historical research paper—your final assignment. However, you should not wait until the end of the course to begin work on it. To help you get “into” your work, you will prepare preliminary and final outlines and present your ideas to the class.

As we will discuss, the historian tries to interpret past events in a way that makes sense and offers meaning to other people. He or she uses many forms of evidence and may employ explanatory techniques from several disciplines (psychology, economics, etc.). In short, historians ask questions that have broad significance to others; they seek evidence to help them answer questions; they develop theses to help them understand events; and they present evidence and interpretations within an analytical framework that has relevance to others.

8. Preliminary thesis statement and outline

For the first assignment relating to the research paper, you will provide the following information:

- A preliminary thesis statement (or hypothesis) of your topic. The statement can be phrased in the form of a question or as one or two sentences, and it will describe your paper’s major research thrust. (No thesis statement: 5-point deduction.) For assistance, see Writer's Guide/Writing/Strategies for Writing/Thesis Statements/How Do You Craft a Thesis Statement?
- Detail the chronological parameters (i.e., the dates) of your research topic, and explain how you chose the periodization. (Lack of periodization will result in a 3-point deduction.)
- Write a full (though admittedly tentative) introduction in one or two paragraphs. The introduction should provide some background to your subject area and explain the historical significance of your research. Why would anyone be interested in learning the answer to your question? (An inadequately detailed introduction will cost you 3 points.) Also include a similarly tentative conclusion (one or two paragraphs long).
- Provide an outline of the proposed paper. To be sure, this early outline will be provisional, but it should force you to develop a systematic approach for advancing your thesis. The outline should contain at least five Roman numeral headings, including an introduction and conclusion. Make sure you employ sub-headings that provide more detail about each heading. (Note: Good practice consists of including at least two items under each heading.)
- Provide an annotated bibliography (using “Chicago” style) that lists your primary and secondary sources. (Separate your listings as primary and secondary. Failure to do so will result in a 5-point deduction.) Explain in one or more sentences what each source will offer to your study by explaining the strengths and weaknesses of each piece of evidence. (See Chapter 5 of WH for more information on forming a hypothesis and writing an annotated bibliography. Chapter 5 will help you build an outline.)

Due date: Apr. 6. (Bonus: Students volunteering to do preliminary presentations before this due date will benefit from comments made by the professor and class members. See Ass. 9.)

9. Preliminary presentation

In the class presentation:

- Explain your thesis statement and amplify upon the significance of the thesis.
- Describe your research to date by telling your "story." Also describe how you plan to pursue the research (what kind of resources you are using, etc.). The rest of the class will comment upon your presentation.
- Make copies of your preliminary outline (Ass. 8) and list of sources for distribution to other students. (Deduction for failure to make copies: 5 points.) If your presentation occurs before the due date of preliminary outline, the outline you distribute can be a little more tentative than one you will turn in later. In fact, by doing your presentation before the due date, you can get good advice that you can incorporate into the submitted outline. If your presentation occurs after you have received comments on the preliminary outline, incorporate
the comments on this outline to make for a more impressive effort. To reduce copying expenses, feel free to use small fonts and margins, and print on the back side of the page to cram everything onto one sheet.

- Make your presentation as stimulating and interesting as possible. Incorporate pictures, audio, and video into your presentation if appropriate.
- Please use your own laptop computer, if possible. If you do not have a laptop, try to make arrangements with another presenter so you can share one. As a last resort, contact me ahead of time so I can bring a computer for your use.

The presentations should last about 15 minutes. (Deductions for length of presentation: 12 to 18 minutes-0 points; 10 to 11.9 minutes-5 points; 7 to 9.9 minutes-12 points; etc.) Presentation dates will be assigned randomly if students do not ask for specific dates. The order of preliminary presentations will determine the order of final presentations.

10. **Top-ten mistakes**

To help you prepare for writing a masterful final research paper, you will review every submitted paper and put together an annotated list of the top ten mistakes you have made. Read the in-line, marginal, and final comments of each paper, and list the mistakes you’ve made. Explain the mistake (grammatical, organizational, interpretive, footnote-related, etc.) in a numbered list, and provide examples from earlier submitted assignments. Due date: **Apr. 27.** No word count requirement.

11. **Final presentation**

The final presentation will take the same format as the preliminary presentation, but it should include information from your final thesis outline and should show evidence of serious thought and effort. The same guidelines apply for this presentation as for assignment 9, the preliminary presentation assignment.

12. **Final thesis statement, outline, and paragraphs**

For the final thesis statement and outline, you will prepare a document similar to the preliminary thesis statement and outline (Ass. 8). However, you will add information on how your research program has changed since your initial presentation. You will also include a few draft paragraphs.

Use the same guidelines as in assignment 8, and add the following:

- In an additional paragraph, describe new pieces of information that have altered your view of the subject. How has your thesis statement changed, if at all?
- Explain your conclusions and how your research led to development of new questions and possibilities for further work.
- Aside from the introduction and conclusion, revised in light of new research, you must also include two or more paragraphs of ANY section of your research paper. I want you to start writing.
- Follow the rules for good writing of the draft paragraphs (except for the word count requirement) as discussed in class and listed below in “General Instructions.” Due date: **Apr. 29.** No word count requirement.
13. **Research Paper**

The final research paper should reflect your learning experiences during the entire term. It should be organized around your final outline.

**Guidelines**

To aid the reader, the paper should be divided like your outline. In other words, the first section should be headed "Introduction." The body should contain two or three sections with appropriate titles, and the final section should be headed "Conclusion." Sometimes, an author ends (or begins) an introductory paragraph with an explicit statement concerning the paper’s argument, such as “This paper will explore…” or “In this paper, I will explain…” By doing so, the author alerts the reader to the main thrust of the paper. Please write such a statement in your paper’s introduction. (A missing statement will cost you 5 points.)

References to other works must be cited with footnotes using the Chicago style. For the body of the paper (i.e., the part of the paper exclusive of the introduction and conclusion), you should use at least two reference notes per paragraph. The absence of notes suggests plagiarism, which constitutes a violation of good historical standards as well as the Virginia Tech Honor Code. Missing and inadequate notes will result in large point deductions (10 points or more) and possible Honor Code sanctions.

Only use direct quotations of sources when they add greatly to your own commentary. Writers often use quotations to suggest understanding, but they more frequently offer evidence of one’s misunderstanding of a concept. Paraphrase what the author has written. You can probably say it better in your own words. An eight-page paper should have no more than one long (block) quote. (Deduction for more than one long quotation: 5 points each.)

Your bibliography must include 15 or more sources that are credible, reliable, and authoritative. (See Writer’s Guide/Research/Evaluating Sources.) At least 4 must be primary sources. You also need to include at least two additional archival primary sources using the same standards as required in assignment 5. (Feel free to use the same sources from that assignment if appropriate. Deduction of 5 points per source below the minimum in each group.) Though you may consult encyclopedias, do not include any in the bibliography. For the final paper, do not include the annotations that accompanied your presentation outlines. List your primary, archival, and secondary sources separately in the bibliography. (In other words, list your primary sources under the heading “Primary Sources,” your archival sources under the heading “Archival Sources,” and your secondary sources under the heading “Secondary Sources.”) Among other things, this exercise demonstrates your understanding of the difference between the types of sources. And don’t forget to get prior approval from me if you use online archival sources. Please ensure that more than half of your bibliography’s secondary sources come from proprietary library databases (JSTOR, Project Muse, etc.). I want to see that you’ve mastered the ability to go beyond the open, free Internet to obtain information. [Summary of source requirements: at least 4 published primary sources and at least 2 archival sources; the balance of resources (to get to a minimum of 15) can be secondary sources, of which more than half must come from proprietary databases.]

Remember to follow all the rules listed below in “General Instructions.” You would also benefit by looking at the one-page document, “How to Tell if You’ve Written a Good History Paper,” in Scholar (under “Syllabus & Other Useful Information”).

The final research paper, due on the final exam date, May 13, at 12:05 PM, should contain 2,000 words (about 8 pages), exclusive of the bibliography, notes, and pictures (if used). (Deductions: 5 points for each increment of 200 words fewer than 1,800 or more than 2,200.)
**Quizzes**

Short in-class quizzes will include simple questions that be easily answered if you read the assigned materials. No makeup quizzes will be offered unless you can document a valid excuse for your absence.

**Pearson Writer quizzes:** To demonstrate that you’ve looked at the Writer topic, please take a screenshot of the quiz (included in the “Core Concept” of the section) after doing the last question and submit it on Scholar with a file name in the following format: LastName-Quiz-Topic.jpg (or png). Ex: Jones-Quiz-EvaluatingWebsites.jpg. I don’t care (too much) how well you performed on the quiz. I simply want to make sure you’ve done the exercises before the quiz and have learned something from them. (See below for more information about Pearson Writer.)

**Pearson Writer assignments**

This course uses Pearson Writer to help you do better research and write more effectively. You can use both the website and app versions. Purchase access at [www.pearsonwriter.com](http://www.pearsonwriter.com). Make sure you look at the tutorials and read the FAQs in the Student Support section. You will need to produce screen shots of quizzes and of other elements of the lessons and submit them to Scholar. (The quizzes come at the end of the “Core Concept” section under each heading.) If the GTA or I indicate (in comments on your submitted assignments) that your paper exhibits problems such as “faulty parallelism” or “shifts in verb tense,” you will need to read the Writer section on the topics and submit screenshots of the corresponding quizzes. The product contains some great services, such as assistance in finding sources, citing sources, and evaluating the grammatical quality of your assignments (though don’t count on it too much; I don’t think its overall assessment is very good). See support topics and videos at [http://www.pearsonhighered.com/writer/support/support-for-students.html](http://www.pearsonhighered.com/writer/support/support-for-students.html). Get familiar with this product. We will use it a lot.

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

**Good writing style.** As university students, you should already know how to write competently. "Competently" means that you employ rules of good grammar and capitalization, you write effective arguments, and you spell properly (or at least use spell-checkers). Because I want to focus on teaching how to perform historical research and how to communicate rather than things that you should have learned years ago, I will **ruthlessly** deduct points for grammatical mistakes, spelling blunders, typos, and other errors that appear on papers. If you have problems with basic writing skills, you should seek help from the Writing Center and exploit other resources. (See "Resources" box.) Feel free to ask the GTA and accomplished writers (in and out of the class) to read drafts of your papers as a way to discover errors, poor organization, etc. Pearson Writer (and sections of the books we use in this class) will help you remember grammatical rules and overcome common writing problems.

**Word counts.** Include a word count at the end of each written assignment except assignments 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12. (Missing word count: 5 point deduction. A word count beyond plus-or-minus 10% will result in a 5-point deduction for each 10% increment.) This strict word-length requirement will help you write clearly and concisely—something greatly appreciated in the "real world."

**Using "to be" and “this.”** In each of the shorter assignments (400 words or fewer), you will lose 0.5 point for using the verb "to be" in any of its forms more than twice. ("To be" is the infinitival form of “am,” “is,” and “are” in all tenses.) In longer assignments, you may use the verb three times per 500 words. (Hence, in the final 2,000 word paper, you can use the verb 12 times without penalty.)

Why do I make such a big fuss about the verb “to be”? The readings by Good and Wheeler will help answer that question, but to be brief, I argue that by consciously avoiding “to be,” you will choose more active verbs that yield more interesting papers. You also won’t fall prey to writing in the passive voice—the scourge of historians who need to accentuate the role of actors in past events. Of course, your efforts to eliminate the “to be” verb constitute an academic exercise, but you may surprise yourself by discovering how much better your papers read when you write without “to be.”
Likewise, I want you to learn to avoid using the word “this” as a pronoun. Too often, writers refer to something in a previous sentence or paragraph by using the word, but the pronoun remains unclear and undefined. Instead of just writing something like “This demonstrates the value of…” write “This methodology demonstrates the value of…” Sometimes, you may need to rewrite the previous sentences to make them clearer as well. Your paper will benefit from both improvements! Penalty for each use of “this” as a pronoun: 1 point.

You can easily avoid losing points for these mistakes after writing your papers by doing a search for the forms of the verb “to be” and for “this.” If you find instances of these words, change them. Easy!

**Spacing, fonts, margins, pagination, titles, and possessives.** Double-space (or 1.5-space) all documents. Use type fonts of at least 12 points and margins of about 1.5 inches on all sides of your text. Put page numbers—and your name—at the bottom or top of each page. Also, every paper should have a title, even a simple one, such as “Using History to Understand Politics.” (Five points will be deducted for failure to abide by each of these rules.) Lastly, incorrect use of possessive forms of words (such as improper or missing employment of possessive apostrophes) will cost you 1 point per instance. You should know how to use possessive apostrophes by now. (See [Writer’s Guide/Grammar/Mechanics and Spelling/Possessives](#) if you have questions.)

**Online submission of written assignments.** Please submit all assignments in electronic format (doc or docx) to the Scholar drop box. Name your files using the following format: Your Last Name-Assignment Number.docx. Example: Jones-Ass3.docx. If you encounter difficulties uploading your files, send them to me via email.

**Bibliographic and footnote reference style.** For notes and bibliographies in all your papers, use the "Chicago Style" of citation, discussed in chapter 7 of DH, Writer, and elsewhere. For more assistance in writing notes in Chicago style (in “notes and bibliography” style), see the “Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide” at [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html). Please recognize the difference between note style and bibliography style. Do not depend on online automated citation makers; they often don’t conform to the proper style. Incorrect use of Chicago style in notes and the bibliography will cost 5 or more points in each situation. For research assignments in which you use several resources, I expect to see at least one reference per paragraph. (The final paper should contain at least two references per paragraph.) Use full and proper citations for Internet resources; don’t just provide the URLs.

**Due dates.** Due dates for assignments are strict. Late work will be penalized 10 points per calendar day (weekends included) unless extenuating circumstances have been discussed with me before the due date. Obviously, some extenuating circumstances cannot be foreseen. I will deal with these on a case-by-case basis. But please realize that a disk-drive failure that destroys your paper does not constitute an extenuating circumstance. Make sure you keep backup copies of your work on memory sticks, CDs, in the cloud, etc. Put due dates on your calendar and plan your lives accordingly.

Exception to the date due rule: If your presentation date coincides with another assignment (quiz or paper), you will be allowed one extra class period to complete it. In other words, I prefer that you spend time working on your presentation and not worry about another assignment.

**The Internet.** In recent years, the Internet has become a marvelous resource of useful information. Through Virginia Tech, we have access to subscription-only (proprietary) databases as well as free sites open to anyone. Please realize that not everything "published" on the Internet is reliable! Use your critical skills.

**Don’t delete it!** You will benefit from looking at my comments on assignments, especially at the end of the course when you write your final paper. Assignment 10 also will require you to evaluate your past mistakes. In other words, do not discard your graded assignments.

**Honor code.** The honor code will be strictly enforced in this course. All assignments submitted shall be considered graded work unless otherwise noted. All aspects of your course work are covered by the honor system. Honesty in your academic work will develop into professional integrity. The faculty and students of Virginia Tech will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty.
Disabilities: I am happy to make accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Please contact me privately so we can discuss your situation.

Peer (and GTA) review. I encourage you to employ colleagues (and the GTA) to read drafts of your papers before submitting them. An extra set of eyes may catch some errors or alert you to poor logic, bad grammar, etc. Of course, to benefit from such a review, you cannot wait until the last minute to write the paper, so plan accordingly.

Prohibited use of electronic devices in class: To ensure that you do not become distracted from important lessons and advice in class, you are prohibited from using computers, cell phones, tablets, etc. Bring some paper and a writing utensil so you can take notes the old-fashioned way instead. Please bring a laptop with you, however, when you do your Powerpoint presentations during the second half of the course. (I will make exceptions to this rule on an individual basis.)

Email communications: Please regularly (and frequently) check your official VT email account for messages from me. I will send messages about assignments, changed schedules, etc. through Scholar, which delivers to your vt.edu address. I will not send nor respond to texts or tweets. Email is so late-20th century, but that’s what we will be using. Sorry.

For the fun of it! It may be difficult to believe, but good writing can be fun—and funny. Go to the website, http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com, and read (or listen to) commentary on writing by Grammar Girl. She uses a witty style to answer questions about writing, the origins of words, neologisms, the proper use of “y’all” and “all y’all,” serial commas, and lots of other neat things.
TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Jan. 21.  Introduction to class.


Feb. 2 (Groundhog Day!). History of Atomic Power II lecture. Reading: DH, ch. 6. Ass. 2 due.

Feb. 4. Elements of historical analysis and plagiarism. Read Marius and Blum pieces and DH, ch. 3. Submit quiz on Writer's Guide/Writing/Argument and Persuasion/Legical Fallacies/Legical Fallacies.


Feb. 11. Using archival resources. Meet at Special Collections (first floor, near coffee shop, in Newman Library). Special speaker: Marc Brodsky.

Feb. 16 (Presidents’ Day). History of Space lecture. Ass. 3 due.

Feb. 18. History of Space lecture II. Ass. 4 due.

Feb. 23. Multiple Causality in History. Read Furay, "Multiple Causality.” Quiz 3.


Apr. 1. Preliminary Presentations.


Apr. 20. Final Presentations.

Apr. 22. Open discussion or presentations. Read WH, chs. 5-7. Quiz 7.

Apr. 27. Final Presentations. Read Gilderhus, “Reading, Writing, and Research.” Quiz 8 and Ass. 10 due.

Apr. 29. Final Presentations. Final thesis statement and outline, Ass. 12, due.

May 4. Open discussion or presentations. Read WH, chs. 8-10. Quiz 9.

May 6. Final presentations and conclusions. Read Furay, "Interpretation" PDF file Quiz 10. (If you want the GTA to review your draft paper, turn it in before this class. It will not be reviewed during exam week.)

May 13. Scheduled Final Exam time. Instead of an exam, submit the final paper, Ass. 13, by 12:05 PM.
Look at lots of other topics in Writer’s Guide/Research/Research Papers, such as “How to Write Research Papers,” “Revising Research Papers,” and “Drafting Research Papers.”

Writer’s Guide/Research/Chicago Documentation: Do sections on “Chicago Style (overview),” “Books in CMS Style,” “Periodicals in CMS Style” and quizzes for each section (all three).


Writer’s Guide/Research/Evaluating Sources: Do sections and the two quizzes dealing with print sources and online sources.

Writer’s Guide / Writing / Strategies for Writing / Thesis Statements / How Do You Craft a Thesis Statement?


Writer’s Guide / Research / Using Sources / Using Quotations from Sources / How do you introduce quotations and source materials?

Writer’s Guide / Writing / Types of Papers / Reviews / Reviews

Writer’s Guide / Writing / Reports, Proposals, and Other Academic Papers / Slide Presentations / Slide Presentation

Writer’s Guide/Writing/Argument and Persuasion