

History 20: Comparative World Civilizations – Spring 2016

Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays 8:00-9:15am

Location: SO 208

Schedule # 40422

Instructor: Michael Eissinger

Office Hours:

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Course Description: This course will survey the history of the world's major civilizations from their beginnings thousands of years ago, to the very beginnings of the industrial revolution in the 17th Century. Through lectures, readings, your writing and discussion, we will introduce some of the major political, social, economic and cultural transformations that have shaped the world over the past several thousand years. Of all the history courses offered at FCC, this is by far the most general. As such, we can only cover the bare outline of the infinite variety of the human experience; therefore, we will be concerned mainly with the "big picture" stories of world history. Think about the last century from the perspective of someone a thousand years from now. What will matter? What will be remembered? Why will some things be remembered and not others? Such a thought experiment gives you some idea of what we are doing in here.

As we make our way through this story, several major themes, concerns or processes will come clear:

- 1) the creation and maintenance of the state as an organization that governs societies
- 2) the role of technological change in the shaping of human communities
- 3) the ways humans have interacted with their environment to change their world
- 4) the various ways humans have understood their world through religion, science and philosophy
- 5) the interactions between societies that have shaped the world
- 6) the connections between this story and the world and our role in it at this moment

Course Goals: Perhaps the best way to get at the goals of this course is to emphatically state what they are not. This course is NOT about filling your heads with a fixed amount of content and then pronouncing you "educated" on this subject if you can regurgitate more than 70% of it on some test. Studying history this way is not only dull and mechanical, but it is also irrelevant, and *literally* meaningless. Familiarizing you with some of the people and events of world history *is* necessary (and you will be expected to be familiar with them), but it is only a means to an end. Think of the names and dates of history as lumber and nails. We want to build a house.

We will look at the narrative of world history and critically examine the processes of historical change and the interactions between societies, and think about what it all means. It is my goal that you will cultivate in this class the intellectual skills you will need to use your historical knowledge and interpretations in dealing with present concerns. After all, we cannot understand contemporary problems unless we have some idea of how we got here in the first place. I want to encourage you to begin to view today's world not just as "the way it is," but as the way people in history have made it, and how you and I continue to make and remake it every single day. In short, this course should promote your development of a "critical historical imagination."

Required Texts/Materials: *(available in FCC bookstore)*

Strayer, Robert W. & Eric W. Nelson, *Ways of the World*, Vol. 1. 3rd Edition, 2016.

Boston/New York: Bedford St. Martins

1 bluebook (for midterm)

1 *Scantron 95945* (also referred to as a *Scantron Test Sheet 50 W/W*) (for final)

Course Requirements:

Attendance: State law requires that attendance be taken at each class session. **Students who are absent from class for two successive weeks prior to October 14th must be dropped from the class (unless there are extenuating circumstances and I am informed of them).** I will drop you from the class. So, obviously, you should show up to class if you want credit. If you want to drop the class and you do not want an F, you should not count on me dropping you from my roll.

More importantly, we will often be taking a good part of the class period on Thursdays to discuss particular readings and lecture topics. If you're not here to discuss – to share with us your thoughts – you won't be getting all that you could out of the class. Your absence deprives the other students in the class who rely on you to help foster an atmosphere of intellectual exchange. Attendance also includes being attentive during lecture; no sleeping, talking, reading, etc. during lecture.

Rigorous reading of assigned text and handouts by the dates noted and good note-taking: I have assigned only one book, but I will also occasionally give you a handout, or show a video. You are responsible for all of it. It is essential that you keep up with the reading assignments; lectures and class discussions will be much more useful if you come to class **having already read** and thoughtfully reflected upon that week's assignment. Also, since lectures are much more than a simple re-hashing of the text, you should come to class prepared to take extensive notes.

Please refer to the "Format for Papers" section of the syllabus for details.

Grades: All testing of students, whether through essay exams, papers, or multiple choice (despite what the people at the SAT want you to think) is inherently subjective; grading requires me to make some judgment about the value of your work. That is not to say that grades are arbitrary; rather, they are based on your ability to demonstrate to me a level of understanding and critical engagement with the material. I have very rarely had complaints about grades and students have typically found my judgments fair. **You will never compete against each other in this class and there will be no curving of grades.** If you all do mediocre work, you will all receive Cs. If you all do excellent work, you will all get As.

That said, grades usually are not difficult to assign. If you do not do the work, or do it very poorly, you will fail. If you do the work, but done sloppily and without care or thought (this is not hard for me to discern), you will receive a D. If you do the work, but it is mediocre, you will receive a C. If you do all the work well, exhibiting original critical thought, and presenting it in a convincing manner, you will have earned a B. Finally, if you do the work exceptionally well, demonstrating a thorough command of and critical engagement with the material, and presenting your ideas in a consistently well-written and convincing argument, you will have earned an A.

There are 400 total possible points in this class. The breakdown is as follows:

A: 360-400, B: 320-359, C: 280-319, D: 240-279, F: 0-239

Class Schedule

Start	End	Week	Tuesday	Thursday
1/11/2016	1/15/2016	1	Introduction & Syllabus Review	Movie: History of the World
1/18/2016	1/22/2016	2	NO CLASS: Martin Luther King Day	Movie: Ancient Egypt
1/25/2016	1/29/2016	3	WOW: Chapter 1	Movie: Ancient India
2/1/2016	2/5/2016	4	WOW: Chapter 2	Movie: Idiot Abroad (Petra) DUE: Paper 1
2/8/2016	2/12/2016	5	WOW: Chapter 3	Movie: Ancient Greece
2/15/2016	2/19/2016	6	NO CLASS: Presidents' Day	Movie: Idiot Abroad (China)
2/22/2016	2/26/2016	7	WOW: Chapter 4	Movie: Ancient China Study Guide for Midterm
2/29/2016	3/4/2016	8	WOW: Chapter 5 Movie: Ancient Rome	MIDTERM Turn in Film Journal
3/7/2016	3/11/2016	9	WOW: Chapter 6	Movie: Pillars of Faith
3/14/2016	3/18/2016	10	WOW: Chapter 7 Movie: The Buddha	Movie: The Buddha (cont)
3/21/2016	3/25/2016	11	Spring Break	
3/28/2016	4/1/2016	12	WOW: Chapter 8	Movie: The Celts
4/4/2016	4/8/2016	13	WOW: Chapter 9	Movie: Teotihuacan
4/11/2016	4/15/2016	14	WOW: Chapter 10	Movie: 500 Nations (Ancestors)
4/18/2016	4/22/2016	15	WOW: Chapter 11 Movie: Secrets of Lost Empires: Inca	Movie: Mayans & Aztecs DUE: Paper 2
4/25/2016	4/29/2016	16	WOW: Chapter 12	Movie: Samurai Japan
5/2/2016	5/6/2016	17	Movie: An Idiot Abroad (class choice)	Movie: The Life of Muhammad (pt. 1)
5/9/2016	5/11/2016	18		FINAL Turn in Film Journal

You will take two (2) exams over the course of this class. Each will cover specific chapters, as indicated on this syllabus. Exams will be held on the Saturday of the week specified. I will provide you with a study guide in advance of each exam. You will use a bluebook for the first exam. This test will consist of two (2) sections. The first will include a number of short IDs or definitions. This will be worth half of the points for the exam. The second portion of the exam will require you to select two essay prompts from a list and write two, well thought out, essays. These essays will comprise the remaining portion of your grade.

On the days of the midterm, you will bring in a blank bluebook which you will give to me. I will then pass out your exam, along with a new, marked bluebook. The mark on the bluebook that I give you varies from class-to-class and from semester-to-semester. I would prefer that you take your bluebook exams in pen, not pencil.

The final exam will not require a bluebook, but will, instead, be taken using a *Scantron* 95945 (also referred to as a *Scantron Test Sheet 50 W/W*). This test will include fifty (50) multiple choice, matching, or true/false questions and you will select one (1) essay from several options.

Paper Prompts

You will write two (2) 3-4 page papers (with the possibility of a third, extra credit paper) for this class. Each of these papers will be in response to a specific question (see below), formatted as specified in this syllabus. Each paper, including the extra credit paper, is worth 25 points.

For each of the paper assignments, you will select one prompt from each section, below. For example, for paper 1, you will select one of the paper 1 prompts (1a, 1b, etc.), for paper 2, you will select from the paper 2 prompts (2a, 2b, etc.). The papers are due on the Friday of the week in which they are assigned. I **do not** accept late papers, except in dire circumstances. If you are going to be late with a paper, you must clear it with me *before* it is due. If you are unable to turn the paper in during class, on the due date you may take it to the Social Sciences office by the end of the day (no later than 4:30), and ask the office staff if they would be kind enough to put it in my box. This is your responsibility.

Citations required on ALL written assignments

You will be required to cite all sources (quoted, paraphrased, referenced, or used) throughout all written assignments. You will **ONLY** use the in-line citation format known as the Chicago or Turabian style (word will automatically format these for you) and you will include a Works Cited page (not a Reference or Bibliography page) at the end of each paper – again, using Turabian bibliographical format. Any paper that does not include in-line citations will receive a zero (0) for that assignment. Any paper that does not include a proper Works Cited page will receive a zero (0) for that assignment.

Paper 1 Prompts (Chapters 1-3)

1a: Describe the evolutionary process through which *Homo sapiens* emerged. Be as specific as possible given the current evidence. Was it a linear progression? What are some of the more significant adaptations?

1b: Examine the advantages and disadvantages of agricultural production versus nomadic foraging. How were agricultural or pastoral communities different from those of hunters and gatherers? Be specific. Provide examples.

1c: Describe how cities in Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, and Egypt differed from small village communities across the globe. Why did cities emerge in relatively few places between 3500-2000 BCE? What were some of the factors that gave rise to the establishment of cities in these regions?

1d: Compare and contrast city-state structures in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Why was Egypt more politically unified than Mesopotamia? Be sure to cite specific examples to support your thesis.

1e: Define the term *territorial state*. In what areas of Afro-Eurasia did this new form of political organization emerge and thrive. Provide specific examples to illustrate your definition.

Paper 2 Prompts (Chapters 4-7)

- 2a: Migrating populations paved the way for greater cultural integration across Afro-Eurasia after 1200 BCE. From where did the migrants originate and to where did they move? How did they shape the regions into which they settled.
- 2b: Explain the function of hereditary status, clans, and religious beliefs in Vedic society in South Asia during the first millennium BCE. To what extent did these beliefs and values maintain a culturally integrated and distinct world in the absence of political unity?
- 2c: Compare and contrast Buddhist and Confucian philosophies. What problems and issues did they address, and what solutions did they propose? Be sure to be specific and provide examples of both issues and solutions.
- 2d: Explain the broad cultural features that characterized Olmec and Chavin societies in the Americas in the first millennium BCE. To what extent did each cultural group leave an imprint on its region? As always, provide specific examples to illustrate your answers.
- 2e: Describe the influence of Hellenism on societies outside the Greek homeland. What aspects of Hellenistic culture held broad appeal for diverse groups (provide specific examples)?
- 2f: Explain how South Asia became a melting pot for the intellectual, political, and economic currents sweeping across Afro-Eurasia between 350 BCE and 250 CE. How did this development affect Buddhist doctrine?
- 2g: Compare and contrast the labor systems in the Qin and Han dynasties with that of the Roman Empire. To what extent did each rely on forced labor?
- 2h: Describe the process through which the Roman city-state created a vast empire in the Mediterranean world. How did Roman attitudes toward military service influence the empire's growth? Be specific and provide examples to support your answer.

Extra Credit Paper Prompt (Chapters 8- 11)

- EC1: Describe the connections between the growing power of Christianity and the political reconfiguration of the Roman Empire. What was the appeal of Christianity in the Roman Empire?
- EC2: Describe how the Song Dynasty reacted to the military strength of its nomadic pastoral neighbors. How did these relationships foster a distinct Chinese identity?
- EC3: Explain how the Black Death, or bubonic plague spread throughout Afro-Eurasia. What human activity facilitated its diffusion? Additionally, describe the long-term consequences of the plague for the Afro-Eurasian world. What were the plague's social, political, and economic ramifications in various parts of the landmass?

Film Journal: I show many films in this class. I do this to provide visual, cultural, and historic context for the topics we discuss in this class. The book takes a comparative approach that links the cultures we discuss, and I wholeheartedly support and encourage that approach, however, we risk the possibility of losing depth in favour of breadth with this approach. Therefore, the films I have chosen, many of which come from an educational film company in the UK, go beyond the depth in

the book. Together, the book, my lectures, and the films should provide you with a good picture of the cultures we examine, as well as the links and comparative points between them. To help you focus on the content of these films, you will be maintaining a film journal that you will turn in twice throughout the course of the semester (see the schedule). That journal will consist of you writing up each of the films. In that write up, you need to include the key points of each film. You need to note and describe the key elements of the culture or society discussed, including any supporting material you think necessary to make the point.

You can download a blank film journal for this class at <http://www.meissinger.com/courses-history.html>. Scroll down to the *World History I* section of that tab, and download and print the PDF.

Most importantly, after the first few films, you **must** draw connections between the current film and earlier films, as well as lectures and the textbook within the journal to indicate your understanding how all this information fits together.

Twice during the semester—at the end of February, and the last class session—you will turn in your journal. The journal is a cumulative document. Each film should add 1-2 pages of material to your journal (this requires essentially a short paper on each film, it is not an outline, it is a paper). In other words, each film should result in about a full page to add to your journal. Do NOT write more than two pages on any individual film. Cumulatively, the journal is worth 100 points. In February, turn in the journal entries for all of the films, to that point. At the end of the semester, turn in the ENTIRE journal (including those already graded).

Format for Papers – VERY IMPORTANT: All written assignments must be typed, 12-point, with one inch margins, and preferably in Times New Roman font. For your essays, just type your name and a short title at the top of the first page. I have included a sample format for your essays at the end of this syllabus – FOLLOW IT! **Do not** include a title page. **Essays must be double-spaced.**

Written assignments must also be proofread and spell-checked. Ideally, they should have **no spelling errors or grammatical mistakes**. I cannot emphasize this enough. If your writing skills are not very good, you should seek help **immediately** at the writing lab. If your paper has too many errors (if it is not up to college writing standards) you will receive an F on it. You may hand in rough drafts before the due date, and I will give it a preliminary grade.

Classroom Etiquette: This class is scheduled for Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 8am. I will begin *and end* on time. **I expect students to be on time, too.** Late students entering the classroom are a distraction to other students and to me, so please be courteous and **be on time**. Sometimes lateness cannot be avoided, but being consistently late is simply rude and is unacceptable. Also, I expect that you will not leave class early. It is very disruptive. If this is going to be a problem, talk to me about it immediately.

In discussions, the basic rules of courteous communication apply. We can have spirited discussions without resorting to raised voices, insults, or vulgarity. This helps foster an open atmosphere in which people feel free to express themselves. Remember, politeness or “civility” does not necessarily mean agreement with me or other students. If you don’t agree with something in discussion, speak up, make your argument. I have never had a problem with this and I don’t expect

to. Also, when you come to class, **turn off your cell-phones! Turn off, and put away your laptops!**

Academic Misconduct: Cheating and plagiarism are contrary to the mission of the college and are never tolerated. Do not copy your fellow students or any other source. You must present your own work. If you do not, penalties range from a 0 for the assignment to an F for the course. Other, more severe punishments are listed in the College's policy manual. I take this *very* seriously.

Disabilities: If you have particular needs arising from a disability, please notify the office of Students with Disabilities immediately so we can make reasonable accommodations for your needs.

The Syllabus: *****This document is your guide to the course – what is expected of you and when. The schedule and procedures for this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. Any changes will, of course, be explained to you.

Name
Course
Date

Centered Title

Keep the header block simple and small. Single space your identifying information, at the top (either corner). MLA requires that to be double-spaced, but in a short paper, headers eat up the first half of the first page. The rest of the paper should be double-spaced, with the first line of each paragraph indented. Make your paper look like this sample! *Do not insert blank lines* between paragraphs. Either click on “don’t add space between paragraphs of the same style” or have your “after paragraph” spacing set to zero. The first paragraph should include a well thought out thesis statement. This paragraph should clearly state the main point contained within the reading and identify the selection (author, title, etc.).

Subsequent paragraphs should include arguments to support your initial thesis statement. Remember, paragraphs have to include more than one sentence.

Any analysis you provide should not be just an opinion, you need to support your ideas with other sources, facts or other supporting material. This paper should be close to the maximum length. This should provide ample space to provide support for your thoughts. Make sure you properly cite all sources, however.

Your last paragraph should restate your thesis and summarize your proofs and arguments in a clear and well thought out fashion. It is often best to write the body of the paper first, followed by the conclusion. Once those are done, you can paraphrase the conclusion for a solid introduction, knowing what you wrote in the rest of the paper. Make sure that you include a works cited page, after the last page of your essay. Tell me where your ideas come from.

Paul Gilmore's Handy Guide to Common Problems to Avoid When Writing History Papers
Paul Gilmore, History Instructor at City College provided the following several years ago.
This is one of the very best collections of advice for writers of history.
I share this (with Paul's permission).

In the papers I have received over the years, there have been several common problems; you should use this list of explanations of those problems as a guide to future assignments. Some items may seem obvious, but they are so common that I have included them. Although excellent papers require more than technical proficiency, you will be well on your way to writing much clearer and better organized papers if you avoid these mistakes.

I write quite a bit on your papers to explain where I think your paper is strong or weak. If the grammar is poor, I typically correct it for the first paragraph or two and then give up, trying to pay attention only to your arguments. Frankly, when I read a poorly written paper, I find it hard to understand the arguments. This means that poorly written papers get poor grades.

If you want to cultivate the skills of a very good writer, you should develop the habit of reading newspapers, magazines, nonfiction, and especially novels. Novelists sometimes break the rules of grammar, but they typically follow them. Through a steady diet of reading, you will become familiar with the written word even without consciously studying the rules. More importantly, great novelists know how to pack their sentences with meaning. The words may be unfamiliar and the sentences may be complicated, but you will find that once you learn their words, good novelists are exact, clear, and profound. I make no claims to being a good writer, but I *know* that I have improved immeasurably since I started reading fiction.

Paper Format

Refer to the syllabus for the basic format of your papers. You should begin at the top of the page, not three or four inches down; you need at most two inches for your name and title. Also, do not leave blank spaces between paragraphs. Instead of working to stretch out a few words, you should be struggling to pare down your essay and fit your ideas into the word count requested.

Common Problems

- 1) Since you are the author, I know that your paper is an expression of your thoughts. Therefore, there is no need for phrases like "I think," "in my opinion," "I have to say," or "I feel." These phrases not only clutter your papers, but they also give your writing an uncertain tone and weaken its persuasive power. They act as constant reminders of your authorship; as such, they turn the reader's attention away from the quality of your arguments to questions of your authority to offer your opinions. You should eliminate these phrases, except on the very rare occasions when they are absolutely necessary.
- 2) Do not use "you" unless you are directly addressing the reader. I address you, the readers, throughout this guide, so I use "you." Many of you wrote statements like: "History is so boring that you fall asleep in class," but although I once fell asleep in my mother's English class I, never fell asleep in history class; *you* did.
- 3) When writing numbers the basic rule is to write out simple numbers and use the number keys for more complex numbers. Examples: Ten, twenty-five, three hundred, one million, 945, 1,986, 53,432.

- 4) Leave two spaces between sentences. This may seem trivial, but it is quite important; the period and the spaces are visual cues that the author has finished his or her thought.
- 5) If a sentence begins with the word “what” or “it,” you may want to revise it. These words should be a hint that much of your sentence conveys no meaning. What I often find is that when I begin writing a sentence, I start with many unnecessary words. For instance, in the last sentence the words, “What I often find is that,” are useless. In fact, the entire sentence should be revised to: “I often begin sentences with many unnecessary words.” Try to cut one-half of the words out of your sentences.
- 6) There are too many punctuation problems to list them all, but a few quite common ones are worth mentioning.
 - First, never use ellipses (. . .) unless they signal some missing text in a quotation. They should not be used, as they often are, to denote a meaningful pause. For example, it is incorrect to write a sentence like, “History is boring . . . really boring.”
 - Second, when words in quotation require punctuation, the punctuation marks must almost always be placed inside the quotation mark. The use of quotation marks in this guide should provide you with plenty of examples of correct punctuation.
 - Third, do not use contractions unless it is absolutely necessary. Can’t should be cannot; don’t should be do not; who’s should be who is, and so on. The only apostrophes should be those that denote possession.
 - Fourth, remember that some words sound the same or close to the same but have different meanings. Make sure that you write the right word. Here are some very common examples: to, too, and two; there, their, and they’re; your and you’re; then and than; its and it’s; and who’s and whose. If you avoid contractions, you will also avoid most of these problems.
 - Fifth, you must write in complete sentences. Note how in this sentence I have used a semicolon to combine two clauses that could stand alone as sentences; this informs the reader that both convey one basic idea. If you want to string together clauses into one sentence, you must use proper punctuation. Incorrect punctuation as in this sentence often muddles, the Meaning of words in addition your sentence will tend to Ramble on and lose; its force like this one which is a run-on sentence. Sentence fragments are groups of words that do not contain a subject and a verb, but the writer treats them as a sentence. Like this group of words. This is not the place to go over all the rules concerning the combination of clauses, but if you are unfamiliar with them, I suggest you buy and use one of the manuals listed below.
- 7) If you have written something once, try not to say it again. This is redundant. Sometimes, to make yourself clear, you will need to re-state something from the introduction, but such restatements should provide some important clarification of the original idea, not merely repeat the previous line.
- 8) Do not quote the dictionary. The only exception to this rule would be a paper about different dictionaries’ interpretations of words. I understand that many people quote the dictionary, but they should not do it; they are only substituting the authority of a guy named Webster for their own judgment. I do not care what *Webster* thinks. I care what *you* think, and I assume that we both know the meanings of words. That said, a good dictionary is a wonderful reference tool to keep next to you as you write. If you are not sure that the word you are using conveys exactly what you mean, then the dictionary will help you find the correct word.
- 9) Avoid the passive voice. Sentences are made lifeless when the thing that is acting is not identified. The previous sentence is an example of the passive voice scourge. Who or what is

making, acting, and not identifying in this sentence? The sentence should read: Authors write lifeless sentences when they do not identify the actors. Historians, especially, should avoid the passive voice. Identifying actors is an important part of our job. “The law was passed” provides less information than “The state legislature passed the law.” In addition, the passive voice sometimes hides our assumptions. In the above example, rewriting “the law was passed” as “the state legislature passed the law” should encourage the historian to dig deeper and ask more questions about actors. Perhaps the statement should read: “Officials of Standard Oil bribed the state legislature to pass the law.” You can get rid of the passive voice by searching your document for forms of the verb, to be (is, are, was, were), and then trying to eliminate them. The verbs “was” and “were” hardly excite the imagination anyway.

- 10) Avoid some prepositional phrases. “He wore jeans of blue” should read: “he wore blue jeans.” “He ran over the roof of the house under the bridge with the cars on the road over the river” is an awkward sentence.
- 11) Avoid clichés; they are substitutes for original and insightful comments. We all hear quite a number of clichés every day. They are the language of advertisers and business in general, and in government, they are the language of an unthinking kind of patriotism. The use of clichés assumes that the reader already understands the author’s meaning when, in fact, these phrases, precisely because of their repetition, lack any definite meaning. They have no explanatory power. For instance, the statement, “striving for excellence in history gives me a well-rounded education,” sounds like a straightforward statement until we realize that the phrases “striving for excellence” and “well-rounded education” are exactly the terms that require explanation. You should always ask yourself exactly what you mean; if you cannot answer clearly, perhaps you have used clichéd language to hide your own confusion. I cannot emphasize this enough. Check especially the beginning and end of your paper and ask yourself if you are using clichés.
- 12) Boring is boring; it is not a very descriptive word, and it stops discussion exactly where it should begin. When you get the urge to write this word, ask yourself what you mean by the term, why you feel that way, and then write your answer.
- 13) Avoid slang and conversational language. Many people wrote statements like: “I mean really!” This expression of exasperation is perfectly acceptable, if not very illuminating, in conversational English, but it should not be used in written English. Really, what do you mean? I want to know. Written English follows different and more formal rules than conversational or e-mail English. Your personality can still come through in your writing, but you should follow those rules.
- 14) Do not abbreviate terms. Do not use etcetera, or etc.
- 15) Avoid making circular statements or stating the obvious; statements like “history is history,” or “history is the study of the past” do not add much to your paper. “Since the beginning of time” or “throughout time” do not add to your paper either. These phrases explain nothing. Everything happens “throughout time” so the statement is meaningless. They are some of those clichés you should be on the lookout for.
- 16) Do not to tell me that the historical explanation for an event is “human nature.” This is not very meaningful and cannot be proven. In the past, appeals to human nature have justified just about every kind of atrocity. Usually, when students appeal to human nature, I disagree with their understanding of the term. We can have a philosophical argument about human nature, but it does not help us understand history. Appeals to human nature should be especially suspicious in a history class. We discuss differences and changes over time. How can something that is presumably unchanging (human nature) be an explanation for change over time? How does something common to all human beings explain differences between them?

- 17) Be certain that your adverbs (these are usually the words that end in “ly” and precede verbs) convey necessary meaning. You should almost never use the words “really,” or “basically.”
- 18) Make your subjects and verbs agree in number. If your subject is plural (people), then your verb should be plural (were, not was). To avoid the awkwardness of using the generic “his/her,” I try to make my subjects plural, or I alternate the use of his and her. For instance, instead of writing “a historian loves his books,” I write “historians love their books.”
- 19) Use “literally” correctly. “I literally died of boredom,” conveys exactly the wrong impression. If you wrote that, you stated that you are, literally, dead. What you mean is, “I figuratively died of boredom,” which is awkward and probably an overstatement of your condition, but it is at least the correct use of the word.
- 20) When mentioning an author, you should use her full name when you first introduce her, but only use the last name thereafter.
- 21) There is no excuse for spelling mistakes. You will get rid of the vast majority of spelling errors by simply using the spell-check function on your computers. There will still be some correctly spelled words that are the wrong words, so you must re-read your paper too.
- 22) Finally, you should take more time than you think you need to write a good paper. You should proofread and revise several times. I write quite a bit and it took me seven hours to write this guide.

The Three Questions

Once you finish your first draft, you are not even half finished. When I write papers, I go over it again and ask three questions of every sentence.

- First, is this clear? Your paper is a vehicle which conveys ideas in your head into your reader’s head. If something is not clear on the page, it may not be clear in your head. Your writing should be a conversation with yourself before it ever becomes communication with your reader. Try to understand your own ideas exactly, and then put exactly what you think on the page.
- Second, does this lead anywhere? Your sentence may be a clear expression of an idea, but that idea may have absolutely nothing to do with the purpose of your paper. Your readers should be able to follow your argument. Your sentences are crumbs left for your readers on a pathway to your ideas. Do not lead them astray.
- Third, can it be written in half as many words? Asking this question will bring you around to the first question and start the process over. I have often found that that which once was fairly clear can be made even clearer with fewer words. Fewer words often clarify things.

Here are some reference works that every student should own or have access to: *The Chicago Manual of Style* or Kate Turabian’s, *A Manual for Writers*, and a good dictionary. If you are not a particularly strong writer, you should seek help at the Writing Center in the library today.