Modern World History Research Paper Prompt (Luffman 2018)

Your Task: This year we will cover a lot of material but will inevitably miss many fascinating topics and leave some questions unanswered. This project is meant to give you the opportunity to explore and answer a question of your choosing. You will answer this question in a 9-10 page research paper (double-spaced, including footnotes). While we will give you work time in class, we planned this project with the expectation that you will work on it each school night (30 minutes per night) until it is due. It is your responsibility to stay on top of due dates, look up instructions, and double check that your work meets all necessary requirements -- everything you need will be here and on the web site. Here is an outline of the steps we will take:

1. Choosing a Topic, Preliminary Research, Formulating a Question: You will pick your topic (with approval) for this project. It must be broad enough to answer in 9-10 pages (so “When was the Revolution of 1848?” doesn’t work), but not so big that it is unanswerable (don’t try “where did evil come from in history?”). The only parameters are that it must be within the scope of the 18th-20th centuries, and must qualify as “world history” (ie not “American” history, which you’ll explore next year). To be sure that you pick a topic you enjoy and that has sufficient available material, you will explore 3 topics at the tertiary source level. You will turn in an exploration worksheet for your first topic tomorrow (Day 2). The other two (for a total of 3) will be due Friday 9/21. For specific instructions, please see the attached “How to do a Topic Exploration”.

Once you have explored three topics on the surface, you will do initial research on the one that looks most promising. This process should begin as soon as possible. This is the step in which you will start collecting materials for your possible topics as well as formulate a research question that looks at how or why something happened in history. This step will be due during class on Friday 9/28. For specific instructions, please see the attached “Directions for the Statement of Research and Research Question”.

2. Developing a Plan for Research: I will conference with you regularly to help answer questions and offer insight on your ideas. Remember that at its core, this paper is an argument, not a simple report on a historical event, idea, or person. You will write a working thesis and use it to craft a “Question Outline” to help drive your research. Directions for “How to write a Question Outline” are attached. This is due when you arrive in class on 10/8.

3. Research: For your paper you will need to cite at least 8 primary and secondary sources (tertiary sources may be used for guidance, but not cited in the paper). At least four of your cited sources must be actual printed books. Research shows that one of the best ways to teach meaningful research skills is to break down sources onto note cards that can be manipulated to help form coherent paragraphs. There are specific directions for your note cards attached (see “How to create Research Notecards”) so you can start as soon as you find primary/secondary sources as part of the statement of research process. Note cards are a time-consuming process initially, but doing them properly and accurately will save you considerable time later as you begin to write. We have spaced out your due dates to give you time to locate, critically read, and break down valuable sources, but this is a good time to work ahead.
10 notecards (and reflection): when you arrive in class on 10/18
30 notecards (and reflection): when you arrive in class on 10/25
60 notecards (and reflection): when you arrive in class on 11/2

4. Outline: Next, you will create an organizational outline for your whole paper. This will guide your writing and be a good checkpoint to ensure a) that your argument makes sense and b) that there aren’t significant holes in your research. **Instructions for how to create an organizational outline will be given in class. This is due on or before 11/6.**

5. Writing the First Draft: The final step of first semester will be writing your first draft. Note that though it is “first”, it shouldn’t be “rough.” It needs to be **entirely complete**, including a finalized thesis, all paragraphs, and properly formatted citations and bibliography. You will earn your grade based on completion for the 1 and 5 page checkpoints, with a holistic grade (assessing how well requirements are met as well as overall quality) for the full draft.

1 page: **end of class on 11/12**
5 pages (with an extra credit point for each additional full page of text): **end of class on 11/16**
Complete draft (including bibliography): **end of class on 11/20** (this is the last day before we leave for Thanksgiving Break. There will be no extensions except for a medical or family emergency. If you are leaving early for holiday travel, you will still be held to this due date so please plan accordingly.)

6. Final Paper: Your teacher will provide you with ample feedback on your rough draft before you leave for Winter Break. Your final draft should reflect the comments that were made on your rough draft by demonstrating serious revision, and progress. Please be sure to check it against the grading rubric. **Your Final Draft is due when you walk into class on 1/28.**

7. Reflection: The final step of your paper is to reflect on the entire process: what lessons you learned, what you would do the same, and what you would do differently. This is a time for honest thought on how you progressed, there should be some positives and some clear indication of areas of improvement. You will receive directions as we get closer.

We will have a number of workdays in class but DO NOT WAIT FOR THEM. Additionally, your teacher and the librarians will be your biggest helpers during this process; reach out to them early for the most success.