Modern World History Research Paper Prompt

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 a bit each night (10-30 minutes) 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:

- **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 “what is the meaning of life?”). 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. The other two (for a total of 3) will be due Friday 9/21. For specific instructions, please see “How to do a Topic Exploration” on page 4.

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 “How to do a Statement of Research and Research Question” on page 6.

- **Developing a Plan for Research:** Your teacher 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 on page 7. This is due when you arrive in class on 10/8.

- **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 (in “How to Do Research” on page 8) 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

- **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.**

- **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. Your teacher will 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): beginning 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 should still turn the paper in early, so please plan accordingly.) See How to Turn in Your Research Paper on page 9.

- **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.**

- **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 (which your teacher will keep you updated on), 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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>What’s Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday, 9/21</td>
<td>Topic Exploration Mind Maps (for 3 preliminary topics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, 9/28</td>
<td>Statement of Research and Research Question for chosen Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, 10/8</td>
<td>Thesis and Question Outline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3, 10/17 or 18</td>
<td>10 Research Note Cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3, 10/24 or 25</td>
<td>30 Research Note Cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, 11/2</td>
<td>60 Research Note Cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2, 11/6 or 7</td>
<td>Organizational Outline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, 11/12</td>
<td>One written page (not page 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, 11/16</td>
<td>Five written pages (plus optional extra credit pages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, 11/20</strong></td>
<td><strong>Finished First Draft of Research Paper</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks of 12/10 and 12/17</td>
<td>Individual Conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday, 1/28/19</strong></td>
<td><strong>Final Paper</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How to do a Topic Exploration

We would like for you to explore three different topics of interest to you so you get a sense of what is out there in terms of content and resources. We are going to have you make your own mind maps for this (modeled after the example below). After this step, you will narrow your options down to your final topic for the remainder of the paper process.

You are free to do this by hand or use a computer, just make sure it is legible!

Step 1: Begin a mindmap with your idea at the center. Example: *The Reformation of the Catholic Church in Europe*

Step 2: Begin filling in the connected pieces with sub-topics or avenues to explore within the larger topic. Examples: Martin Luther, Lutheranism, Anglicanism, Wars of Religion, Catholic Responses.

Step 3: Keep going with sub-topics for your sub-topics (THIS IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR TERTIARY SOURCES). If there is a thread that excites you, KEEP GOING! If there is a thread that dead ends (either because of your lack of interest or lack of information), NOTE THAT!

Important note: a 9-10 page research paper is going to need a lot of detail (sub-topics of your sub-topics). If your mind map is bare, you either need to do more reading to figure out relevant sub-topics or find a new direction.

Step 4: Once you think you have finished your mind map (so you can’t go any further in your thoughts or research), find 2 places that can later help you find primary/secondary sources about some of your sub-topics (or sub-sub-topics). These must be specific locations (so Google, Brittanica, or Gale/Infobase don’t count). Example: the *Modern History Sourcebook* and *Eurodocs.*
How to do a Statement of Research and Research Question

You will complete the following for your most promising topic from the previous step. During this stage, you may only use primary and secondary sources (just like you will for the remainder of the RP process). For your statement be sure to include:

1. Your name
2. Your topic (as the title)
3. A paragraph indicating:
   a. What happened?-2 pts
   b. When and where?- 2 pts
   c. Who were the prominent figures involved?- 2 pts
   d. What is interesting/surprising about your topic?- 2 pts
4. A research question that gives direction to the rest of your research that begins with “how” or “why”- 2 pts
5. The bibliographic information (in Chicago style) for 2 sources that you used to write your statement of research- 1 pt each

Total: 12 pts

Be sure your work is thoughtful and complete- remember that the more work you put in now, the better off you will be down the road.
How to Write a Question Outline

Unlike an organizational outline, which we will write later and helps you structure the writing of your paper, a question outline helps you structure your research. We do this step so you essentially create a checklist for yourself of the information you need to figure out ahead of time in order to effectively prove your argument.

Step 1: Write your research question as your title

Step 2: Write your thesis at the top of the page- remember that your thesis should directly answer your question and have a “so what?”. This will be edited over time so it is more important that it is complete than linguistically flawless.

Step 3: Break down your thesis into as many answerable questions as you can, starting at the beginning and list them all. Use section headers to help organize.

For instance:

Research Question: Why did Martin Luther’s Reformation succeed, when previous attempts to reform the Catholic Church had failed?

Thesis: Martin Luther’s reformation succeeded because many in the Holy Roman Empire had political or economic motives to break from the Catholic Church, in addition to religious ones.

Martin Luther’s reformation succeeded:

Many in the Holy Roman Empire had political motives to break from the church:

Many in the Holy Roman Empire had economic motives to break from the church:

In addition to religious ones:
How to Do Research

Strategy:

- Start with broad overview sources (i.e., *Africa: A History* or *Early Modern Europe* or *A History of Asian Art*) that can give you the “big picture” of your topic in just a few pages.
- Use your question outline to guide you— that’s why you made it!
- The information you need for a paper like this is most likely to be found in published books— professional historians don’t give away their work for free online. Don’t be afraid to use the USN library, the Nashville Public Library, and (maybe most importantly) the Vanderbilt Library.

Process:

You will keep track of your research by writing facts and bibliographic information on note cards. You should keep your note cards in a plastic envelope. This process will help you keep track of and organize necessary information so that it easier for you to write later. There are deadlines to help you pace your research, but don’t churn out useless note cards just to meet those deadlines—you’ll waste a lot of time.

Research Notecards should follow these guidelines:

- They should record FACTS, not other historians’ interpretations.
  - Descriptions of events, names, dates, numbers, quotes
- Notecards should reflect answers to the questions you created for your question outline
- Just one fact per note card
- ALWAYS record the source and page # on the note card.
- Your notecards should have all information present in the model
- Don’t code your note cards—just write out the topic at the top

Model Research Note Card: 1 per fact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>October Days 1729 Relevant Subtopic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About 17000 people (mostly women) reached Versailles, evening of Oct. 5 and attached the National Assembly, asking for bread and punishment for those who had insulted the revolutionary one and their symbols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DQ or P? P paraphrased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days 122 Author and Page Number</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Model Bibliography card: 1 per source

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Fischer, Fritz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Germany’s Arms in the First World War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How to Turn in Your Research Paper

When you turn in your paper, you should turn in two things: (1) the Paper itself and (2) your Research. Here’s what that means:

➢ The Paper itself should be in the following order:

  o A title page with a title, your name, and the date. Have fun with the title, if you want.

  o A clean (i.e. not one that I graded and returned), up-to-date organizational outline that reflects the structure of the paper as it is written

  o The text of the paper (9-10 pages), including:

    ▪ Footnotes at the bottom of each page
    ▪ Page numbers at the bottom of each page (the first page of text—not the outline or cover page—should be Page 1)

  o Any appendices you may have (optional)

    ▪ If, in your paper, you refer to photographs, works of art, graphs, charts, etc., you should include those here, and label them as necessary. These pages are not included in the 9-10 page count.

  o A clean final bibliography in Chicago Style

    ▪ Please separate the sources into primary and secondary categories (NoodleTools won’t do this by itself!) and then put them in alphabetical order by the first word of the entry.

  o All of these should be bound in a plastic presentation cover with a pull/slide off spine. These can be found at any office supply store or the USN bookstore.

    ▪ Please do not staple or hole punch/brad any pages together, even inside the cover.

➢ Your plastic research envelope with all of your bibliography and research note cards and any other graded steps (outlines, rough draft, etc.)

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1 The paper should be ready to hand to me when you walk in the door. Please do not ask me if you can go print it, or run to the bookstore, etc.