

Fall 2005  
313 Clough, 2:00-3:15  
Office location: Clough 303  
Office phone: 843-3584

Dwain C. Pruitt  
e-mail: pruittd@rhodes.edu  
Office hours: TTh 10:00-11:00  
and by appointment

## History 371: The African Diaspora: Voices from Within the Veil

W.E. B. Du Bois' 1903 classic *The Souls of Black Folk* opens with a haunting question: "How does it feel to be a problem?" According to Du Bois, being black in America was to be "an outcast and a stranger in mine own house," separated from the majority culture by a "veil." This reading-intensive seminar examines how Du Bois and other major black theorists from both sides of the Atlantic addressed the "problem" of blackness, racial identity and race relations in the nineteenth- and twentieth centuries.

### REQUIRED TEXTS:

James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*  
Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*  
Marcus Garvey, *Selected Writings and Speeches of Marcus Garvey*  
Sam Greenlee, *The Spook Who Sat By The Door*  
Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*

All other assigned readings indicated below have been scanned and made available in my Public Folder on the Academic Departments and Programs server at:  
\\fileserver1\Acad\_Dept\_Pgm\History\Pruitt\_Dwain\Public\African Diaspora

### COURSE GOALS:

History 371 has four equally important components.

- 1) **NARRATIVE:** The course will provide a general history of the African Diaspora from the slave trade through the modern period. The course will address major developments in Africa, Brazil, the Caribbean and the United States.
- 2) **ANALYTICAL:** It seeks to introduce students to the thought and writings of key African and African-American intellectuals of the nineteenth- and twentieth centuries. We will be reading short essays, short stories, speeches and treatises, using these primary sources to engage contemporary debates about race, racial identity and blacks' place in the western world and how black attitudes changed and did not change over time.
- 3) **HISTORIOGRAPHICAL/INTERPRETIVE:** The course also will introduce students to some of the major areas of scholarly investigation and historiographical debate relating to the African Diaspora.
- 4) **PEDAGOGICAL:** Helping students learn how to present material coherently and effectively is one of this course's major goals. This will be accomplished in several ways. Students will be asked to open discussions on

several occasions throughout the semester, framing class discussions of assigned readings with their introduction and proposed questions for discussion. These initial efforts will culminate with the final course project. Students will produce a final course project based on extensive primary and secondary research and then be required to present their findings to their classmates in a formal teaching presentation.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

All work turned in for this course is to be completed in accordance with Rhodes' Honor Code. Students are expected to be familiar with the requirements of the Code and to conduct themselves accordingly.

With these goals in mind, final grades will be determined by the following:

- 1) **CRITICAL RESPONSE PAPERS:** Students will submit two (2) seven- to ten page analytic book reviews/response papers. These essays will account for 20% of the final grade. Each essay will be a response to a unit's reading as indicated below. **Each essay will be due by 5 PM on the date indicated.** These essays may be turned at the individual student's discretion. Students may either rewrite **one** essay or opt to do **one** additional essay to improve a low grade. All papers must be typed in either an 11- or 12-point font. Students may either rewrite **one** essay or opt to do **one** additional essay to improve a low grade. A preliminary guide to how these papers should be approached is appended to this syllabus.
- 2) **CLASS PARTICIPATION:** Students will be expected to participate in all in-class discussions and activities. A seminar is only as effective as students' active participation and interest make it. As a result, participation grades will also be assigned for regular class attendance. Class attendance/participation will account for 40% of the final grade. See below for further commentary on effective class participation. **The instructor also reserves the right to administer unannounced reading quizzes in any format that he deems appropriate. These quizzes will be graded and considered as part of the final class participation grade.**
- 3) **COURSE RESEARCH PROJECT:** Students will submit a 20-page final semester project on a topic approved by the instructor. The final project will determine 40% of the final grade. It is due on Monday, December 12 by 8 PM. See pages 9-11 below for more information.

## GRADE DISTRIBUTION:

Two critical essays	20%
Class participation	40%
Final course project and presentation	40%

**GRADES:** Students will receive numeric grades based on Rhodes' grade point system as represented below:

A	4.0	C	2.0
A-	3.7	C-	1.7
B+	3.3	D+	1.3
B	3.0	D	1.0
B-	2.7	D-	0.7
C+	2.3	F	0.0

**ATTENDANCE:** Students will be allowed three absences without any form of explanation required. **The fourth and any subsequent absences must be excused.** Valid excuses for missing class include but are not limited to religious observances, College-sanctioned academic or athletic travel, personal illness or injury, family illness or injury or bereavement. **The instructor will decide what constitutes an acceptable excuse.** Infrequent class attendance will negatively impact class participation grades. **Students will not receive a class participation grade higher than the percentage of classes that they attend except under extremely mitigating circumstances.**

**CLASS PARTICIPATION:** Simply coming to class, however, will not be deemed sufficient evidence of class participation. **Regular class attendance with little to no active involvement in day to day activities will result in a participation grade no higher than a C.** Students should come to class having read all assigned readings at least in part and ready for discussion or prepared to ask questions for clarification. Students are not necessarily expected to understand everything before they come to class, so there should be no shame in admitting to being confused. Talking in class is, of course, the easiest way to demonstrate engagement with the course material. No one should feel obligated, however, to babble incessantly to prove engagement. Quality is better than quantity. The instructor is aware, however, that some students are uncomfortable with speaking in class and wishes to respect that (though such students are strongly encouraged to attempt to speak in class in order to grow in confidence). Stopping by during office hours to discuss course materials or submitting rough drafts of papers and acting on the instructor's comments, for example, also demonstrate interest in the subject and course participation.

**SUBMITTING PAPERS:** Papers may be submitted either as hard copies or electronically as file attachments. Electronically submitted papers, however, must arrive on time. Date and time are recorded on all incoming e-mail messages and the time recorded by the system will be considered the official time at which your paper was submitted. See course policies on late papers below.

**PAPER FORMATTING:** Papers should conform to the following standards. Each paper should have a title page that includes all of the following information: the student's name, the paper's title, the course title, the date, the Honor Code pledge and the student's signature. For electronically submitted papers, students should "sign" by typing their name or scanning in their signature. Papers must be double-spaced in 11- or 12-point font. Use the default margin settings in your word processing software. No margin should be less than 1 inch or greater than 1.5 inches. Pages should be numbered. Students are expected to use footnotes when citing sources. A handout

on proper citation form is attached to this syllabus. **Papers that do not conform to these standards will be penalized.** Grades on papers will be assigned using the following criteria: 60% of the grade will be based on the content and analytical quality of the paper. The remaining 40% will be assigned based on stylistics (grammar, spelling, punctuation, use of appropriate fonts, margins, citation forms, etc.). **PROOFREAD** your work carefully!

**PAPER GRADES:** Grades are not negotiable. The instructor will not discuss grades on any assignment for at least 24 hours after the paper is returned. Discussions after this time period has elapsed will be limited to computational errors that the instructor might have made and ways in which a student's performance might have been improved.

**LATE PAPERS:** Unexcused late assignments will be penalized by one letter grade for each day late. A paper due on Monday that is turned in on Wednesday, for example, would be penalized twenty points (10 points for Monday and 10 points for Tuesday). A paper due Monday at 5 PM that is turned in at 5:01 PM is **LATE** and will be penalized accordingly. Late work will be accepted in accordance with the above policy outlining acceptable excuses for missing class meetings. Late papers will be required at the beginning of the next class period.

**PLAGIARISM AND THE HONOR CODE:** Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. There are two forms of plagiarism, direct and indirect. Direct plagiarism refers to copying another person's language without placing it in quotation marks and without appropriate citation. This is the easiest form of plagiarism to recognize and most students avoid it fairly well. Indirect plagiarism, however, is somewhat more difficult to identify for some. Indirect plagiarism refers to those instances in which students paraphrase or take major ideas from another person's writing without citing the original inspiration. Using another person's ideas without attribution also constitutes plagiarism! Students who attempt to use others' work as their own will receive a failing grade for any offending paper and be referred to the Honor Council for further sanction. **Ignorance can only explain academic dishonesty; it cannot excuse it.** Students are advised to refer to the Rhodes Writing Center's web page on plagiarism located at: [http://www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter/group\\_b/plagiarism.html](http://www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter/group_b/plagiarism.html).

**LEARNING CHALLENGES:** Rhodes College makes provisions for students who face learning challenges. The instructor will honor reasonable accommodations needed by students once they have been approved by Student Disability Services. Request for accommodations that do not come through Student Disability Services will not be honored.

**ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT:** Students owning cell phones, pagers or any other electronic devices that could prove to be disruptive during class are asked to either turn them off upon entering class or simply leave them at home.

## PRELIMINARY COURSE SCHEDULE:

Th Aug 25: Introduction to the course, discussion of methods, expectations and goals.

### UNIT ONE: CREATING THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

What was ancient Africa like? How were Africans' relationships with one another and outsiders determined? When, why and how did massive slaving begin in Africa? Who controlled this trade and under what terms was it conducted? Who enslaved Africans and where did enslaved Africans go?

Tu Aug 30: Africa Before the Slave Trades

Th Sep 1: The Oriental Slave Trade

For SEP 8: Read Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin D.G. Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World" (Patterson and Kelley African Diaspora.pdf)

Tu Sep 6: The Atlantic Slave Trade

For SEP 13: Read Earl Lewis, "To Turn as on a Pivot: Writing African-Americans into a History of Overlapping Diasporas," in Darlene Clark Hine and Jacqueline McLeod (eds.), *Crossing Boundaries: Comparative History of Black People in Diaspora*, pp. 3-23 (Earl Lewis.pdf)

Read Thomas C. Holt, "Slavery and Freedom in the Atlantic World: Reflections on the Diasporan Framework," in Hine and McLeod, 33-43. (Thomas Holt.pdf)

### UNIT TWO: THEORIZING THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

What exactly does the term "African Diaspora" mean? What *should* it mean? Was there a common black Diasporan experience? If so, what constitutes such commonality? If not, how might one meaningfully conceptualize the African Diaspora? In other words, is there such a thing as black people?

Th Sep 8: Conceptualizing the African Diaspora: How Should One Understand the Term?

For SEP 15: Read Excerpts from Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Excerpts from Paul Gilroy.doc)

Read Dwayne E. Williams, "Rethinking the African Diaspora: A Comparative Look at Race and Identity in a Transatlantic Community, 1878-1921," in Hine and McLeod, 105-120 (Dwayne Williams.pdf).

Tu Sep 13: The African Diaspora as a Slavery/Migrationist Model

For SEP 20: Read Allison Blakely, "European Dimensions of the African Diaspora: The Definition of Black Racial Identity," in Hine and McLeod, 87-104 (Blakely.pdf).

Th Sep 15: Paul Gilroy and The Black Atlantic Model

Tu Sep 20: The African Diaspora: Pan-African Culture and Identity

Th Sep 22: "A dollar's worth of skin color": Creating worlds in white and black

**ESSAY FOR UNIT TWO, DUE BY 5 PM ON OCTOBER 2:** Assess the three general models proposed for conceptualizing the African Diaspora. What are their strengths and weaknesses? Is one preferable over the others? If so, which one and why? Or do they all prove inadequate? If you find that these models are inadequate, propose a new working synthetic model.

### **UNIT THREE: THE BLACK WORLD FROM 1865 TO 1920**

**How did black communities evolve in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries? What explains the militancy that was so evident in the black world by 1920?**

Tu Sep 27: Library: Orientation and identifying useful resources for course research project

Th Sep 29: Blacks in the United States and Latin America, 1865-1920

For OCT 6: Read W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* excerpts (W.E.B. Du Bois Souls of Black Folk.pdf)

Read W.E.B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices Within the Veil* excerpts (W.E.B. Du Bois Darkwater.pdf)

Tu Oct 4: Africa, 1865-1920

For OCT 11: Read Alain Locke, *The New Negro* (Alain Locke The New Negro.pdf)

Th Oct 6: W.E.B. Du Bois

For OCT 20: Read Marcus Garvey, *Selected Writings and Speeches of Marcus Garvey*, Introduction, pp. 1-10, 14-23, 44-48, 82-92, 100-103, 111-125, 142-145, 181-183

Tu Oct 11: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance

Th Oct 13: The Origins of Pan-Africanism and Black Nationalism

For OCT 27: Read Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*

FALL BREAK

Th Oct 20: Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association

**ESSAY FOR UNIT THREE DUE BY 5 PM ON OCTOBER 30:** Compare and contrast Du Bois' Pan-Africanism and "the New Negro" with that of Marcus Garvey. How were their views on the nature of "the race question" and its appropriate solution similar? How were they different? In other words, how did each conceptualize the African Diaspora?

### **UNIT FOUR: THE FLOWERING OF PAN-AFRICAN PROTEST MOVEMENTS: AFRICAN INDEPENDENCE, THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND BLACK NATIONALISM**

**What social and political movements transformed the black world from the end of World War II through the 1970s? How were these movements positive? How were they negative?**

Tu Oct 25: Black Nationalism in Europe: Négritude

Th Oct 27: Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*

**ESSAY FOR UNIT FOUR, OPTION ONE. THIS ESSAY DUE BY 5 PM ON NOVEMBER 6:**

Evaluate Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* as both a Black Nationalist text and as a pan-Africanist commentary on whiteness. How does Césaire's conception of "the race question" compare with earlier interpretations by Du Bois and Garvey?

Tu Nov 1: African Independence Movements to 1960

Th Nov 3: The US Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1965

Tu Nov 8: James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*

**ESSAY FOR UNIT FOUR, OPTION TWO. THIS ESSAY DUE BY 5 PM ON NOVEMBER**

**19:** Evaluate James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* as an exploration of the African-American and American psyche. How does this work effectively capture the *zeitgeist* of America in the first years of the Civil Rights Movement?

Th Nov 10: The Black Nationalist Movement from Garvey to Malcolm X

Tu Nov 15: Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*

**For NOV 22: Read Sam Greenlee, *The Spook Who Sat By the Door***

Th Nov 17: The US Civil Rights Movement, 1965-1968: The Death of the Dream?

**For DEC 1: John McWhorter, *Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America*, Introduction and Chapter 1 (John McWhorter.pdf)**

**ESSAY FOR UNIT FOUR, OPTION THREE. THIS ESSAY DUE BY 5 PM ON DECEMBER**

**4:** What relationships do you see between the visions of race relations developed by Malcolm X and Sam Greenlee and those articulated by Black Nationalist and anti-colonial writers like Garvey, Césaire and Fanon?

Tu Nov 22: Sam Greenlee, *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*

**For NOV 29: Read Derek Walcott, "What the Twilight Says" (Derek Walcott.pdf)**

THANKSGIVING BREAK

## **UNIT FIVE: THE CONSEQUENCES OF BLACK NATIONALISM?**

Was Black Nationalism a positive cultural movement or did it create serious impediments to black progress? How do these two scholars' works possibly indict African and African-American nationalism for the seemingly intractable social problems that continue to plague global black populations? How do you respond to these commentaries?

Tu Nov 29: The Law of Unintended Consequences, Part One: Derek Walcott and the Problem of Postmodern Black Identity

Th Dec 1: The Law of Unintended Consequences, Part Two: John H. McWhorter, *Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America*

Tu Dec 6: Presentations

**FINAL COURSE PROJECT DUE BY 8 PM ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2005**

## COURSE RESEARCH PROJECTS FOR HISTORY 371

Upper-division seminars in the History Department expect advanced history majors and minors to conduct more sophisticated research involving the use of both primary and secondary sources, artfully blending the two together to create something new.

History 371's research project is an exercise in African Diaspora intellectual history. The course focuses on leading African- and African-American intellectuals and their extended reflections on the meanings of blackness, whiteness and how (or if) black people truly fit into a "white" world. Your final project will reflect this orientation.

Your final paper, to be approximately 20 pages in length, will address the thought of an intellectual or group of related intellectuals of your choice.

Your paper must do each of the following to be successful. It does not, however, have to follow the outline indicated below if you wish to do something more creative:

1. **ESTABLISH THE CONTEXT IN WHICH YOUR SUBJECT WAS WRITING:** History is the study of change over time. The moment at which your subject was working will explain the issues that he or she addressed. Your paper will need to demonstrate that you know what those issues were. For example, if you chose to do work on Ida B. Wells-Barnett and the anti-lynching campaign, you would need to establish the politics of the post-Reconstruction South in general and Memphis in particular. You would need to speak about the general political context and then discuss lynching specifically. This material should be drawn from secondary sources.
2. **EVALUATE YOUR SUBJECT'S/SUBJECTS' WRITING/SPEECHES:** Here you will need to read a good representative sample of his/her/their writing. If you were to work on Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, you would need to review several speeches and books like *Why We Can't Wait*. In other words, you will need to consult appropriate primary sources.
3. **REVIEW CRITICAL LITERATURE ABOUT YOUR SUBJECT:** A great deal has been written about black protest movements and the black intellectual tradition. You should use this literature to see what scholars have written about your subject. **YOU SHOULD NOT DO THIS BEFORE YOU READ THE PRIMARY SOURCES FOR YOURSELF.** This assignment is designed for you to evaluate these sources without outside influences. Once you know what you think about, for example, Eldridge Cleaver, then you should read what others have said.

An outline of this paper, then, *might* look like this:

- I. **Introduction:** Author A's 1930s fiction reflects the emerging pan-Africanist sentiment of the day through its satirical commentary on white America and its emphasis on black revolution.
- II. **Context:** Author A was born in 1895 in Memphis, TN. This is what was happening in Memphis, TN and the US South in his/her childhood. S/he moved to Harlem in the 1920s and became a part of the Harlem Renaissance. Here's a brief bit about the

Harlem Renaissance and its values. Here's how s/he fits into the general literature of the time period. This is what would have been going on around him or her.

- III. **The Author's Work:** Author A wrote four important novels: *Lynchberg*, *Black and Blue*, *The Bodies In Our Wake* and *The White Man's Got a God Complex*.<sup>1</sup> We can trace an important development/transformation in his/her work. The first book is the story of a black family living in a town ironically named Lynchberg and tells the story of a lynching. The story is clearly designed to elicit sympathy from the readers through its portrayal of the protagonist, Lonesome Mann. Here are 1001 examples. Here is what a brilliant critic said, underscoring my point. By the time s/he wrote the last novel, however, her/his fiction had become fixated on black retribution as is evidenced by the novel's gruesome plot: a black boy castrated for whistling at a white girl survives the cruel assault and exacts a grisly revenge. He leads an army of black zombies murdered by Klansmen into town and they slaughter the city's inhabitants. The story's theme is reflected in the protagonist's impassioned dialogue on page 25. Here are more critics on the subject.
- IV. **Conclusion**

## GENERAL GUIDELINES:

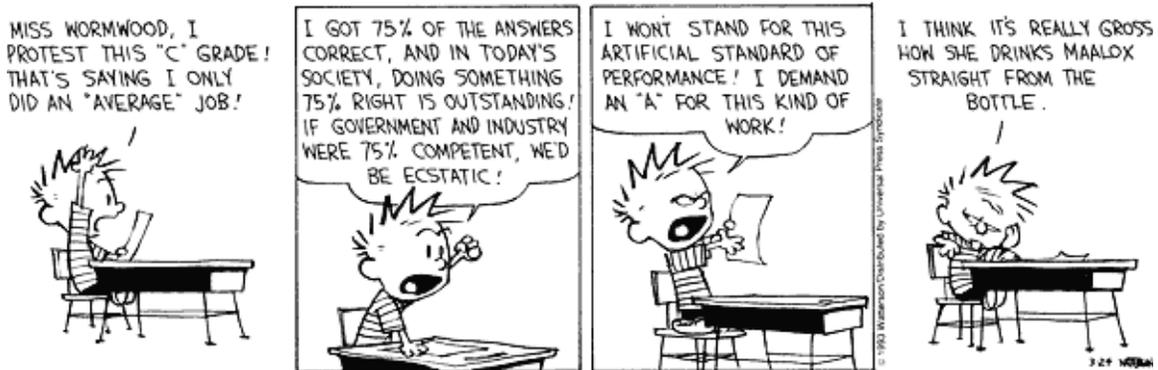
1. A good rule of thumb is that you should have approximately one source for every page in your paper. You need to consult as broad a range of sources as possible. While I am not insisting that you have 20 or more sources, do not try to build a 20-page paper from five sources. That will end up being a book report and will not receive a passing grade.
2. When building a bibliography, be sure to consult the databases to which we have access, especially scholarly databases like JSTOR (<http://www.jstor.org>) or the various African- and African-American research databases available through Rhodes' library's database page at <http://www.rhodes.edu/InformationServices/ResearchandCollections/index.cfm>. You have access to fantastic resources beyond the Barret's holdings, so use them!
3. If you choose an African-American literary figure, be sure to consult the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. The DLB contains good introductory information that will get you started.
4. I have no way of knowing what you do or do not understand if you do not include it in your paper. Write as if I know nothing about your subject. Tell me everything that I need to know to understand your topic.
5. Use your primary sources effectively. Part of being a good historian is learning how to tell a story. Do not rush through your analysis of a primary source. Describe its contents fully. Not only will this make your paper better, it will be longer.
6. **MAKE SURE YOUR PAPER HAS AN ARGUMENT.** History is about making arguments about the past, not simply recounting what happened. Do not simply give an extended book report. You need to say something about your subject and prove your opinion is valid. For example, you could say that much of 1960s' Black Nationalist literature was not about race as much as it was about black male sexuality and an underlying fear that black men had been neutered by white society. That would give you a much more interesting way to read Eldridge Cleaver's attacks on James Baldwin's homosexuality or his examination of sexual dynamics in America in *Soul on Ice's* "The Primeval Mitosis."

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<sup>1</sup> This is actually the title of a song by The Last Poets.

## A PRELIMINARY LIST OF POSSIBLE SUBJECTS:

W.E.B. Du Bois	Ivan Van Sertima
Booker T. Washington	Frances Cress Welsing
Martin Delaney	Molefi Asante
Alexander Crummell	Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
Sojourner Truth	Cornell West
Ida B. Wells-Barnett	Maulana Karenga
David Walker	James Forman
Frederick Douglass	Richard B. Moore
William Hannibal Thomas	A. Philip Randolph
Olaudah Equiano	Cyril Briggs
Ottobah Cugoano	Carter G. Woodson
John Jea	
John Marrant	
James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw	
Anna Julia Cooper	
Harriet Jacobs	
Shelby Steele	
John McWhorter	
Frantz Fanon	
Edward Blyden	
Léopold Sédar Senghor	
Kwame Nkrumah	
Rene Maran	
Marcus Garvey	
Amy Jacques Garvey	
Angela Davis	
William Wells Brown	
George Schuyler	
James Weldon Johnson	
Claude McKay	
Zora Neale Hurston	
Nella Larsen	
Richard Wright	
Ralph Ellison	
James Baldwin	
Martin Luther King, Jr.	
Malcolm X	
Elijah Muhammad	
Huey Newton	
Eldridge Cleaver	
H. Rap Brown	
Stokely Carmichael	
LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka)	
bell hooks	



## Grading Explanation

An **A** paper is a well-developed, sustained, clearly articulated argument supported by an accurate, creative interpretation and/or criticism of sources and readings. It maintains a sharp focus on exactly what the student has been asked to address. It evidences originality of thought, expanding on materials presented in class instead of simply parroting class lectures or discussions, demonstrating that the student has thought about the material outside of class. It demonstrates both depth and breadth of understanding. The student is able to read between the lines and tease out of the sources something beyond the immediately obvious surface details. An **A** paper will contain no factual errors. It will be well written, containing only minor grammatical problems, if any, such as typographical errors or simple word omissions. The difference between an **A** paper and an **A-** is usually a student's incomplete handling of a key element of analysis. For example, if an author makes four major points and a student writes brilliantly on three and does not consider the fourth point fully but does address it, that paper would receive an **A-**.

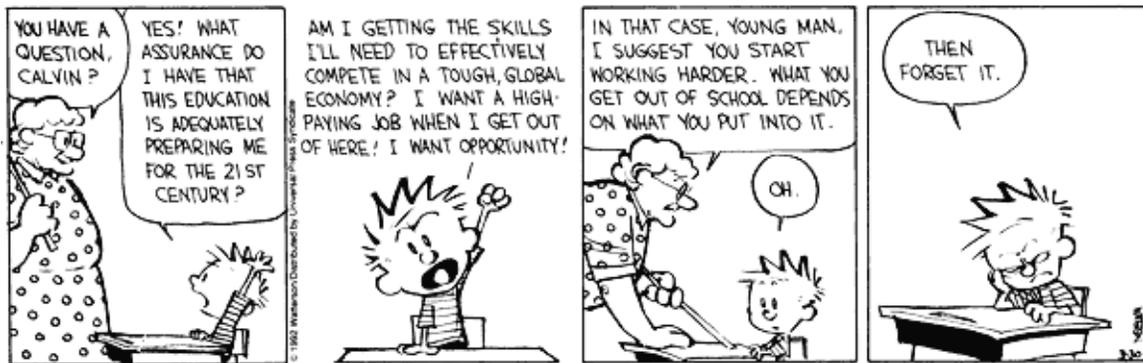
A **B** paper will contain most of the elements of an **A** paper. Its argument may not be as well-developed as that of an **A** paper, but the argument will be well-organized, coherent and clear. It remains focused tightly on the assigned topic. It will have a strong factual basis and provide strong analysis of the source materials, but it will not evidence the same degree of originality and creativity of thought as shown in an **A** paper. It will simply not penetrate as far beneath the surface. A **B** paper will contain interesting ideas that indicate the student has read and thought about the material, but his or her argument might be more problematic or not as fully/clearly supported and defended as the argument in the **A** paper. It will be well-written, but it will contain more problematic usages than the **A** paper. Its grammatical difficulties might include awkward sentence structures and mild incoherence in addition to comparatively minor problems like typographical errors or omitted words. The difference between an **A-** and a **B+** is usually in the quality of the analysis. If an author makes four major points and the student handles three well but misses the fourth point, that paper would receive a **B+**. A **B** paper demonstrates competent grasp of the material as indicated above. A **B-** paper has most of the elements of the **B** paper but is usually more summation and has more grammatical and/or stylistic problems.

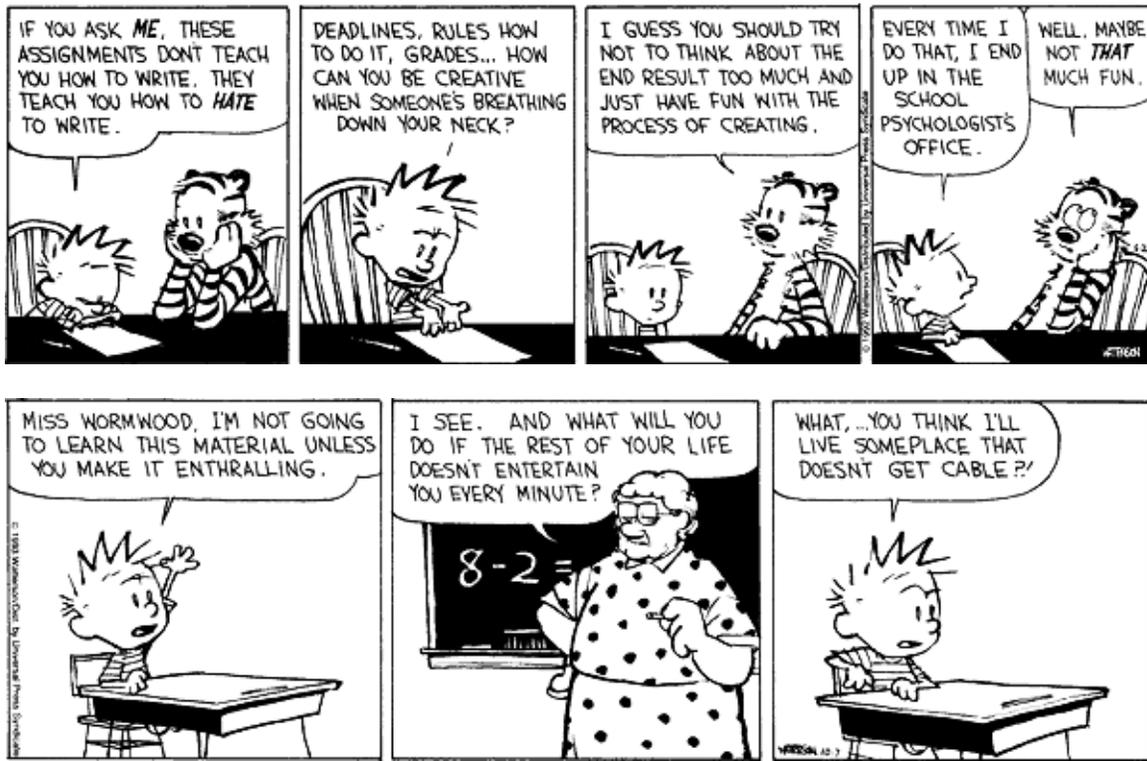
A **C** paper will be less well focused than the **B** paper as described above. Stylistically, it will feature more grammatical problems and in greater number than the ones in **B** papers. It will

evidence signs of compositional breakdown such as sentence fragments and run-on sentences. Its organizational structure will be far more chaotic than those of the **A** or **B** papers. It will seem choppy and poorly thought out to the reader. Its thesis will be vague. The argument will be equally muddy and, while the analysis will be largely correct, it may contain moderate to severe interpretative errors. Unlike the **A** and **B** papers, a **C** paper will evidence little to no penetration beneath the surface of the subject under consideration. A **C** paper will not demonstrate consistently that the student has given the topic under consideration much extended thought. Going back to the four -point model developed earlier, a **C** paper will likely get two points essentially correct but will summarize rather than analyze. The **C+** paper is essentially a **B-** paper with more writing problems. A **C-** paper will be plagued by significant grammatical problems and will be saved from a **D** only by its handling of one or two elements.

A **D** paper is even less developed than the **C** paper. Its structure and organization will be poor and confused. It will lack clear focus and it will take the reader considerable effort to determine exactly what its point is. Its internal logic will break down quickly. It will vaguely address the question being asked of the respondent, but will often stray from the topic into odd, inappropriate areas. Its grammatical problems will be even more severe than those of the **C** paper, being so bad as to be a distraction to the reader. A **D** paper will be confused in its handling of sources and even basic background information, misrepresenting source materials and arguments oftentimes grossly. There will be enough of the subject matter apparent for the instructor to see that the student has read the material, but there will be little sign of comprehension much less intellectual engagement. A **D+** paper would be a bad **C-** paper. A **D-** paper is a gift and should not be questioned.

The **F** paper is a complete disaster. Papers that earn an **F** based on content and not plagiarism will be incoherent, completely off topic, sub-literate, rife with grammatical errors and utterly inappropriate as responses to classroom assignments. It will fail at even the most basic levels to engage the material and will demonstrate that the student has either not read the assigned materials or has thoroughly failed to grasp their content.





## ESSAY WRITING GUIDE FOR HISTORY 371

The essay assignments in this course are designed to help students assess and expand the limits of their understanding of assigned readings; to allow students active, creative intellectual interaction with the textual and lecture materials associated with the class; and to provide students with instructive writing opportunities. Each unit's reading assignments center on one issue or, in certain cases, several related issues. It may prove challenging to organize your thoughts into coherent five to seven page papers, but learning to answer questions and tackle complex historiographical issues efficiently and clearly is the paramount goal of this course.

Here are some general guidelines for your papers:

- 1) State clearly what historical problem or problems the readings present. When dealing with books, this will be simpler to ascertain. When reading assignments span different authors and (possibly) countries, this may prove more difficult. You should identify what major themes or issues readings have in common and demonstrate how they are related. This initial work should be done as quickly as possible in no more than a paragraph or two. Then move on to analyzing the work or works in question.
- 2) Set the problem in its historical/historiographical context. What is the background of this question? Why is it important and relevant? As the semester progresses, you will be able to and are encouraged to refer back to previous readings and class discussions. These papers may also require some additional reading or online research. This is a

course about the arguments that historians make. Focus on authors' theses, not on supporting details or evidence.

- 3) Analyze—Do NOT summarize!—the argument or arguments in the readings. How do the authors organize their arguments? What answers do the assigned readings propose? What evidence bolsters the arguments? How strong is the evidence? Are there inconsistencies or flaws? Is it possible to sense bias on the part of the authors in question? Part of your analysis may also be critiquing authors' writing styles. Is the work clearly argued or is the style in which it is written problematic? If so, in what ways? Be careful, however. Do not lose the forest for the trees. Do not get bogged down in factual information. If you find yourself citing elaborate chronologies or discussing the course of events as you would in a research paper, you are moving away from what this course intends for you to do in your analysis of its readings.
- 4) Based on what you have read, what questions remain to be addressed? You are, of course, not going to be familiar with the depth and breadth of scholarship in this field. Try to think of the kinds of questions historians should be answering and the kinds of issues with which they should be wrestling that are not readily apparent in the assigned readings.

Here are some other considerations that I would like you to make in writing for this class.

- 1) Grammar, style and presentation say a great deal about you and the effort you put into your work. Grading on everything you give to me will assess your writing skills as well as the content of your argument. 40% of the grade assigned to your papers will be based on grammar, stylistic considerations and the quality and fluidity of your writing. Essays should be written in formal English. Do not use contractions or slang. Do not use first person pronouns. **Proofread your papers carefully!**
- 2) Your first paragraph must have a clear thesis statement that explicitly states your argument. Explain both what your thesis is and how you intend to substantiate your arguments. Make sure that every subsequent paragraph expands upon and clarifies your argument.
- 3) All essays should have a clear organizing principle. Effective organizational structures include chronological organization, thematic organization, organization by social group, etc.. Whatever organizational principle you choose, use textual or factual references to structure and clarify arguments.
- 4) Plagiarism is a serious offense that will result in a failing grade and referral to the Honor Council for possible disciplinary action. **Any person who uses a writer's ideas or phraseology without giving due credit is guilty of plagiarism.** Be sure to cite properly! Please review the attached plagiarism handouts. If you have further questions while working on assignments for this course, seek bibliographic help in the library or ask me.