

# HIST 297: History Colloquium

## Literature Review

Before doing work in primary sources, historians *must* know what has been written on their topic. They must be familiar with theories and arguments--as well as facts--that appear in secondary sources.

Before proceeding with their research projects, students too *must* be familiar with the literature: they do not want to waste time on theories that others have disproved, and they want to take full advantage of what others have argued (as well as facts they have presented and the sources they have used).

Your literature review will demonstrate your familiarity with your topic's secondary literature.

**MAIN TASK:** research and write a review of the literature on a Gilded Age/Progressive Era topic.

**LENGTH:** 7-10 pages (footnotes and bibliography are extra)—i.e., 7-10 pages of *text*.

With all required elements (see below), submission will likely run around 14-18 pages.

### REQUIRED ELEMENTS:

- Title page (not paginated)
- Abstract (not paginated)
- Essay (with footnotes) (paginated beginning with "1")
- Bibliography
- Honor Pledge

**NUMBER OF WORKS:** 6-8. This range is a guide. The number of sources (generally monographs, i.e., focused books) depends to a large degree on the literature and on the thoroughness of a student's research.

**REQUIREMENTS FOR CONTENTS:** Sources should be books; scholarly articles and other non-monographic sources may be included if they are critical to the literature.

**\*\* NOTE:** As the historiography for each topic will vary, consult with the instructor about the sources you have found and are considering using in your essay.

**\*\*** *The number and type of sources will vary from topic to topic.*

Works should be written by professional historians or by scholars in related fields. However, exceptions are quite possible.

## TIPS, EXPLANATIONS, AND REMINDERS:

### ORGANIZING/ARRANGING THE LITERATURE:

*As you uncover the literature (i.e., secondary writing) on your topic, you should determine how the various pieces relate to each other. As Prof. O'Brien advised a HIST 485 student: "See it. Describe it." Add to that: "Explain it." Your ability to do these three things will demonstrate your understanding of the nature and evolution of your topic's literature. (For a guide, reread the Martorelli article on "robber barons.")*

You might determine that the literature makes sense by time period, by methodology, by sources, etc. There is no "rule" on analysis and thesis—historians wrote their books without consulting each other and without considering whether they were making life easy for future students in HIST 297.

Whatever analytical arrangement you choose, you might be wrong. For the purposes of HIST 297, that is not particularly important. Your goal is to read and study the sources (*after using solid research to find them*) and come up with a logical thesis about them. You do not know all of the elements or facts affecting the literature, so any theory that you assert has a good chance of being incomplete, if not incorrect. **NEVERTHELESS, your effort should demonstrate solid research, solid thinking, and solid explanation.**

**STEP ONE:** Research.

**STEP TWO:** See what is there. (Consider a time line or simple spreadsheet to keep track of authors' i.d., arguments, dates, sources, etc. In other words, organize your sources so that you can see what is there and what you need to describe.)

**STEP THREE:** Figure out the most logical, clarifying angle and compose your thesis.

Do not arbitrarily choose points to name and discuss and then limit your analysis and discussion to them; use the ones that the literature reveals. How do you do that? For every source, you should note its thesis, date (and events surrounding it), author background, methodology, sources. Does a pattern appear when you consider such information from each of your sources??? (See STEP TWO.) If so, you have a possible thesis about the literature. If not, you should still have a thesis.

Consider: Are there missing elements in the literature? For example, no works published during a particular (usually fairly lengthy) time period? Do studies appear after long neglect of a topic? Do interpretations change at some point? Does the major methodology being used change? Do interpretations vary based on sources used?

Consider: Reasons for everything that you have noticed.

More specifically, for example: Does the literature change because of the availability of new documents? Does a new interpretation come after a major social event? Are changes in the discipline followed by a new interest in your topic? Is there disagreement that develops after a new theory is advanced? Are the authors of the works from different disciplines or different sub-disciplines?

**STEP FOUR:** *Describe* what you see. This is your essay.

## **CONTENTS OF LITERATURE REVIEW:**

The literature review is **a research paper** with three ingredients:

- 1) a brief discussion of the issue (the person, event, idea)

While this section should be brief, it is necessary to set up **your thesis** about the literature on it.

- 2) **your thesis about the literature**

Do more than provide a single-sentence statement. Explain your thesis so that readers know what to look for in terms of angles and development. This is often a second “introductory” paragraph.

- 3) a clear argument, using the works on the topic as evidence.

Obviously, these ingredients are presented in an essay with introduction, body, conclusion.

## **ARGUING YOUR THESIS:**

You should provide *essential* information about each work: the author’s i.d. and thesis, the work’s title and date, the author’s supporting arguments and major evidence. This information, however, will appear in different ways, with different emphases, etc. depending on your thesis and your evidence.

In most but not all cases, arranging the sources chronologically by publication date makes the most sense because earlier works influenced later ones in one way or another.

Reference to publication dates also indicates that you are aware of this significant historiographical element.

When discussing a particular work for the first time, you should refer to it by the author’s full name, the work’s title, and year of publication.

As in any piece of writing, information can be included in a variety of ways, e.g., date of publication: “David Smith’s 1965 text . . .” OR “David Smith’s *The History of*

War (1965) . . .” OR “David Smith’s *The History of War*, published in 1965 . . .” OR

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**As you discuss each work, DON'T FORGET WHY YOU ARE DISCUSSING IT:  
YOU ARE PRESENTING AND SUPPORTING A THESIS ABOUT THE LITERATURE.**

**\*\* You are NOT stringing together mini-summaries or mini-reviews of individual, albeit related, works.**

Your paper should always note sources’ *relationship* to each other, particularly in terms of your thesis about the literature (e.g., “Unlike Smith’s work, Mary Brown’s analysis reaches the conclusion that . . .” and “Anderson’s reliance on the president’s personal papers leads to an interpretation different from Barry’s”).

The various pieces of the literature are “related” to each other, so you need to indicate to the reader some of that relationship. THAT is what your literature review is about. (It helps the reader follow your thesis, and it convinces the reader that you know what you are talking about.)

### **CONCLUSION OF LITERATURE REVIEW:**

Your essay’s conclusion should not only reiterate your argument (thesis), but also discuss questions that remain unanswered by the literature, although some or all of these may have already been addressed in your paper (and this angle will likely be part of your overall thesis). What has the literature accomplished? What has not been studied? What debates need to be settled? What direction does study of the topic seem to be taking?

### **DOCUMENTATION AND BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

Each source you discuss in your paper must be documented. Providing author and title and date in the paper is *not* sufficient.

While historians use both footnotes and endnotes—and both are equally acceptable—for this assignment, you must use footnotes.

In addition, supporting but minor sources should be included in notes and must be included in the bibliography.

**\*\*** Sources listed in the bibliography but not discussed in the essay or presented in footnotes will have no meaning for readers trying to understand the literature.

ALL sources cited in the essay (i.e., including in footnotes) *must* be included in the bibliography.

Obviously, use correct Chicago Manual form.

TIP: Single space within notes and bibliography; double space between.

And indent correctly.

Simply title the bibliography “Bibliography” (without quotation marks or colon or underlining; center).

## Deadlines and Process:

NOTE: At some point (or points) during the following process, students must meet with the Writing Center. (See syllabus.)

**STEP 1: 4-minute presentation** on topic and key source for lit review (week of April 1). Talks will be taped and (a) must be reviewed with the Speaking Center before (b) meeting with the instructor.

**STEP 2: Final draft:** 1 paper copy is due at the start of class on **Friday, April 12**. Be sure to pledge and sign.

Each student will be assigned a classmate’s paper to review. **By 5 p.m.** the paper writer must send the paper by Slack as a Word attachment to an assigned classmate **and** the instructor – in same direct message.

Attachment title: last name “lit review” topic,  
e.g., Smith lit review immigrants

**STEP 3: Peer review:** Each student will have one paper to review. Peer review is due to the instructor—**not the paper’s writer**—as a Word attachment on Slack. Due on **SATURDAY, April 13 by 5:00 p.m.**

The reviewer must use the peer review form on the course website.

Attachment title: essay writer’s name “reviewed by” reviewer’s name,  
e.g., Betty reviewed by John

**STEP 4: Return of paper:** **Monday, April 15**.

**The instructor’s ability to review and return papers on this date depends to a large degree to how well students follow directions and meet deadlines.**

**STEP 5: Meeting with instructor:** Each student ***must*** meet with the instructor to review comments on the peer review and the final draft.

**STEP 6: Rewrite:** One hard copy in a two-pocket folder is due **Monday, April 22** at the start of class. An electronic copy (as Slack Word attachment) is due by 10 p.m.

Attachment title: your last name lit review topic rewrite,  
e.g., Smith lit review immigrants rewrite

Include original paper and peer review, as well as all materials related to the book review.

\*Use and include the same checklist submitted with previous papers, i.e., NOT a newly printed checklist.

**STEP 7: Posting:** *Revised* papers (or approved alternate) must be posted on each student's course website (and thus be accessible through the course website).

**STEP 8: 10-minute presentation:** The final course presentation (during the final exam period: **Monday, April 29** [12:00 MWF] and **Friday, May 3** [1:00 MWF]) will provide research/ analytical results.

Students ***must*** consult with the (a) Speaking Center and (b) instructor— (c) as well as practice with at least one member of the class—before the presentation.

**\*\* Grading:** Only the rewrite will be graded--***however***.

- Anything short of a “final draft” (i.e., one which includes all required elements and which is ready to be shared, reviewed, and “graded”) will result in a penalty on the rewrite.

A “final draft” means an essay with a title page, abstract, footnotes, and bibliography—and with those elements in finished form. Anything short of that should not be imposed on classmates or the instructor for review.

Do not think of or call your first paper a “*rough* draft.” Such papers are not acceptable. (See HIST 485 syllabus: “The first version of each assignment must be complete and polished, i.e., the first submission is not a rough draft.”)

- Peer reviews (including late returns) will affect the course grade involving “homework” and participation.
- Lateness on either the final draft or the rewrite will result in deductions from the rewrite's grade: 5 points per 12 hours (or part thereof).
- No meeting with instructor = 20-point penalty.