



Yale University
History Department
Senior Essay Handbook
HIST 4995, HIST 4996, & HIST 4997
Class of 2026

Senior Essay Director: Professor Vanessa Ogle
Undergraduate Registrar: Essie Lucky-Barros
This handbook is available online at <http://history.yale.edu>

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Welcome

Congratulations on having made it this far! The senior essay is the capstone of your undergraduate education. As you research and write it, you will experience the process of creating knowledge at a professional level. The History Department wants you to reach high with your senior essay. We expect an original, well-written essay that reflects knowledge of important background literature but grows principally from primary sources. We do not expect you to know how to accomplish this task when you begin. This handbook, your advisor, and our calendar of milestones and deadlines are here to guide you toward this achievement.

For many of you, the senior essay may be the most complex project you have yet undertaken. Learning how to manage information and workflow on this scale is another dimension of your educational experience. Your senior essay will change the way you read the results of other people's research. It will also teach you about yourself, and prepare you for your next great project, in whatever field you will enter upon graduation.

Vanessa Ogle
Associate Professor of History
Senior Essay Director

Two Terms or One

History majors are given the choice between a two-term or a one-term senior essay.

For most students, the two-term senior essay is the right option. Two terms give you the time to make a real contribution to the sum of historical knowledge, and to experience how to think and write as a professional historian. This is why we reserve distinctions in the major for students who choose the two-term senior essay.

That said, there are circumstances that may make the one-term senior essay an attractive option for individual students, and we offer it as an honored alternative that comes with similarly high expectations for the quality of your analysis and writing, even as we recognize that the scope of your research and your reading cannot be held to the same standard as students who had twice as much time. But again, students who choose the one-term option are not eligible for distinction in the major.

One-term senior essays are ordinarily completed in your penultimate term at Yale. You need special permission from the Senior Essay Director to complete your one-term senior essay in your final term.

In the following pages, you will find the calendars of milestones for the two different paths that we offer with two seasonal patterns each: (1) Two terms beginning in the fall, (2) two terms beginning in the spring (for students who plan to graduate in December), (3) one term in the fall, and (4) one term in the spring. You can of course skip the three calendars that do not apply to your chosen path.

A one-semester senior essay cannot fulfill the senior essay requirement for a double major. Students wishing to fulfill the senior essay requirement for two majors must complete a two-semester senior essay.

The Joint Senior Essay

Students pursuing a double major may opt to write a Senior Essay jointly with another department. Securing advisor/s and the length of a joint essay requires negotiation.

Length. A joint essay does not combine the word limits of the two departments: there is no such phenomenon as a “mega” essay. Current practice is for a joint essay not to exceed 18,700 words, or 75 pages. Shorter essays are acceptable with prior approval. If the second department **requires** a longer essay, then the student will have to negotiate with their supervisors and the Senior Essay director.

Schedule. The writer of a joint senior essay must adhere to the Department of History’s schedule of assignments.

Supervision. Supervision can be organized in one of three ways.

One: a faculty member of the Department of History can, with the permission of the second Department, supervise the essay for both departments.

Two: a student can have a supervisor in the second department. In that case, the supervisor must agree to follow the History Department’s Senior essay schedule and guidelines.

Three: one can have joint supervision, that is, a supervisor in each department who must agree on the requirements.

Registration. The writer of a joint senior essay must register for the appropriate senior essay course(s) [two semesters: HIST 4995-4996].

Calendar of Milestones for Two-Term Senior Essays, Fall 2025 to Spring 2026

For students planning to graduate in May 2026.

Courses to enroll in: **HIST 4995 in Fall 2025**, **HIST 4996 in Spring 2026**.

At the deadlines specified below, please submit your assignment on Canvas and email it to your advisor. Your advisor will review your submissions and give you feedback. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due at 5pm and should be uploaded on Canvas **and** sent to your advisor via email. All assignments with an asterisk (*) are only done during the fall. All senior history majors complete these assignments, regardless of when you plan to complete the senior essay.

Fall 2025

- Aug. 27, 4PM** *Senior essay information session with the Senior Essay Director, librarians, and archivists: **Mandatory meeting via zoom (Link will be sent to students via email).** *
- Sep. 5 ***Research Fund Application:** Available on-line at history.yale.edu (the link will be sent when the application opens.) *
- Sep. 12 ***Statement of Intention** due. Please discuss it with your advisor before submitting it. Please return the form via email to the History Undergraduate Registrar email.
- Oct. 3 ***Research Fund Applications** Research fund application due, please return form via email to the History Undergraduate Registrar email.
- Oct. 13 **Prospectus** due, typically 3-4 pages. Be sure to discuss this assignment with your advisor. By this time, you must have held a consultation with a librarian. Go to the Senior Essay Research Guide (<https://guides.library.yale.edu/senioressay/history>) and use the link to request a meeting. Alternatively, you can write directly to the reference librarian in one of the area's most relevant to you. On your Prospectus, include the name of the librarian with whom you consulted. **Your consultation with a librarian should be completed by this date.**
- Oct. 24 Three-page **analysis of a single primary source** due.
- Nov. 3 **Annotated Bibliography** due.
- Nov. 20 **Ten-pages** of senior essay draft due
- December Based on your work so far, you will receive a temporary grade of SAT (satisfactory) or NS (not satisfactory) for HIST 4995. Once your letter grade for HIST 4996 is submitted in the spring, HIST 4995 will automatically receive the same grade.

Spring 2026

- January 2026** Sign up for HIST 4996
- Feb. 13 **Draft of Bibliographic Essay** due to advisor and on Canvas.
- March 2 **Full Rough Draft** of entire essay due to advisor and on Canvas.
- March 6 **Title Form due;** please submit this by email to the History Undergraduate Registrar Dan.Rehberg@yale.edu
- April 6 **Final submission deadline.** Upload the final version of your essay on Canvas, and in addition email a copy to your senior essay advisor and to the History Undergraduate Registrar. The essay should be submitted in pdf form as such: **HSE 2026 SP 26 (last name, first name) Smith, Jade.** **This deadline will be strictly enforced. Every day late will result in an automatic penalty of one letter grade for the first day and one-half letter grade for each of the next two days past the deadline.**

Calendar of Milestones for Two-Term Senior Essays, Spring 2026 to Fall 2026

For students planning to graduate in December 2025.

Courses to enroll in: **HIST 4995** in Spring 2026, **HIST 4996** in Fall 2026.

At the deadlines specified below, please submit your assignment on Canvas and email it to your advisor. Your advisor will review your submissions and give you feedback. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due at 5pm and should be uploaded on Canvas **and** sent to your advisor via email. All assignments with an asterisk (*) are only done during the fall. All senior history majors complete these assignments, regardless of when you plan to complete the senior essay.

Fall 2025

Aug. 27, 4PM *Senior essay information session with the Senior Essay Director, librarians, and archivists: **Mandatory meeting via zoom (Link will be sent to students via email).** *

Sep. 5 ***Research Fund Application:** Available on-line at history.yale.edu (the link will be sent when the application opens.) *

Sep. 12 ***Statement of Intention** due. Please discuss it with your advisor before submitting it. Please return the form via email to the History Undergraduate Registrar email.

Oct. 3 ***Research Fund Applications** Research fund application due, please return form via email to the History Undergraduate Registrar email.

Spring 2026

Feb. 2, 2026 **Prospectus** due, typically 3-4 pages. Be sure to discuss this assignment with your advisor. By this time, you must have held a consultation with a librarian. Go to the Senior Essay Research Guide (<https://guides.library.yale.edu/senioressay/history>) and use the link to request a meeting. Alternatively, you can write directly to the reference librarian in one of the areas most relevant to you. On your Prospectus, include the name of the librarian with whom you consulted. **Your consultation with a librarian should be completed by this date.**

March 2, 2026 Three-page **analysis of one primary source** due.

April 9, 2026 **Annotated Bibliography** due.

April 13, 2026 **Ten-pages** of senior essay draft due.

May 2026 Based on your work so far, you will receive a temporary grade of SAT (satisfactory) or NS (not satisfactory) for HIST 495. Once your letter grade for HIST 496 is submitted in the, HIST 495 will automatically receive the same grade.

Fall 2026

Oct. 5, 2026 **Draft of Bibliographic Essay** due.

Nov. 2, 2026 **Full Rough Draft** of entire essay due.

Nov. 9, 2026 **Title Form** due; please submit this by email to history.dus@yale.edu

Dec. 7, 2026 **Final submission deadline.** Upload the final version of your essay on Canvas, and in addition email a copy to your senior essay advisor and the History Undergraduate Registrar personal email address: The essay should be submitted in pdf form as such: **HSE 2026 SP (Last name, First name) Smith, Jade.**

This deadline will be strictly enforced. Every day late will result in an automatic penalty of one letter grade for the first day and one-half letter grade for each of the next two days past the deadline.

Calendar of Milestones for One-Term Senior Essays, Fall 2025

For one-term senior essays, you should enroll in **HIST 4997 during fall registration**.

At the deadlines specified below, please submit your assignment on Canvas and email it to your advisor. Your advisor will review your submissions and give you feedback. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due at 5pm and should be uploaded on Canvas **and** sent to your advisor via email. All assignments with an asterisk (*) are only done during the fall. All senior history majors complete these assignments, regardless of when you plan to complete the senior essay.

Fall 2025

Aug. 27, 4PM *Senior essay information session with the Senior Essay Director, librarians, and archivists: **Mandatory meeting via zoom (Link will be sent to students via email).** *

Sep. 5 ***Research Fund Application:** Available on-line at history.yale.edu (the link will be sent when the application opens.) *

Sep. 12 ***Statement of Intention** due. Please discuss it with your advisor before submitting it. Please return the form via email to the History Undergraduate Registrar email.

Oct. 3 ***Research Fund Applications** Research fund application due, please return form via email to the History Undergraduate Registrar email.

Oct. 10 **Prospectus** due, typically 3-4 pages. Be sure to discuss this assignment with your advisor. By this time, you must have held a consultation with a librarian. Go to the Senior Essay Research Guide (<https://guides.library.yale.edu/senioressay/history>) and use the link to request a meeting. Alternatively, you can write directly to the reference librarian in one of the areas most relevant to you. On your Prospectus, include the name of the librarian with whom you consulted. **Your consultation with a librarian should be completed by this date.**

Oct. 13 Two-page **analysis of one primary source** due.

Oct. 20 **Outline of the essay** (2-3 pages) due.

Nov. 3 **Rough draft of entire essay** due.

Nov. 10 **Draft of Bibliographic Essay** due to advisor and in canvas.

Nov. 14 **Title Form** due; please submit this by email to the history undergraduate registrar, personal email.

Dec. 1 **Final submission deadline.** Upload the final form of your essay on Canvas, and in addition email a copy to your senior essay advisor and to the History Undergraduate Registrar personal email address: The essay should be submitted in pdf form as such: **HSE 2025 FA – (Last name, First name) Smith, Jade.**

This deadline will be strictly enforced. Every day late will result in an automatic penalty of one letter grade for the first day and one-half letter grade for each of the next two days past the deadline.

Calendar of Milestones for One-Term Senior Essays, Spring 2026

If you hope to write a one-term essay in the final term of your senior year, you must secure an advisor in the fall and inform the Senior Essay Director (Professor Vanessa Ogle) in the fall that you will be writing your senior essay in the spring.

For one-term senior essays, you should enroll in **HIST 4997 in January.**

At the deadlines specified below, please submit your assignment on Canvas and email it to your advisor. Your advisor will review your submissions and give you feedback. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due at 5pm and should be uploaded on Canvas **and** sent to your advisor via email. All assignments with an asterisk (*) are only done during the fall. All senior history majors complete these assignments, regardless of when you plan to complete the senior essay.

Fall 2025

Aug. 27, 4PM *Senior essay information session with the Senior Essay Director, librarians, and archivists: **Mandatory meeting via zoom (Link will be sent to students via email).** *

Sep. 5 ***Research Fund Application:** Available on-line at history.yale.edu (the link will be sent when the application opens.) *

Sep. 12 ***Statement of Intention** due. Please discuss it with your advisor before submitting it. Please return the form via email to the History Undergraduate Registrar email.

Oct. 3 ***Research Fund Applications** Research fund application due, please return form via email to the History Undergraduate Registrar email.

Spring 2026

Jan. 26, 2026 **Prospectus** due, typically 3-4 pages. Be sure to discuss this assignment with your advisor. By this time, you must have held a consultation with a librarian. Go to the Senior Essay Research Guide (<https://guides.library.yale.edu/senioressay/history>) and use the link to request a meeting. Alternatively, you can write directly to the reference librarian in one of the area's most relevant to you. On your Prospectus, include the name of the librarian with whom you consulted. **Your consultation with a librarian should be completed by this date.**

Feb. 2, 2026 **Two-page analysis of one primary source** due.

Feb. 6, 2026 **Outline of the essay** (2-3 pages) due.

March 2, 2026 **Title Form** due to the history undergraduate registrar at their personal email address

March 6, 2026 **Rough draft of entire essay** due, along with the **Title Form**. Upload the rough draft on Canvas and email it to your advisor. Submit the Title Form by email to the Undergraduate History Registrar personal email address.

March 9, 2026 **Draft of Bibliographic Essay** due to advisor.

April 6, 2026 Upload the final form of your essay on Canvas, and in addition email a copy to your senior essay advisor and to the History Undergraduate Registrar personal email address: The essay should be submitted in pdf form as such: **Sample: HSE 2026 SP – (Last name, First name) Smith, Jade.** **This deadline will be strictly enforced. Every day late will result in an automatic penalty of one letter grade for the first day and one-half letter grade for each of the next two days past the deadline.**

The Advisor

All senior History majors must secure a senior essay advisor early in the first semester (fall) of their senior year. This also applies to one-term senior essays written in the spring.

The history faculty may not advise more than five senior essays per year; those whose specialize in areas of history that are especially popular with senior essay writers often have their slates fill up early. No matter what area you work in, it is best to secure an advisor early, ideally before the end of your Junior year. This may also help you conduct research or narrow your topic over the summer.

Your senior essay advisor is also your departmental advisor throughout your senior year, the person with whom you discuss your course selections and other academic or personal concerns.

Individual advising styles differ. Some advisors schedule consultations in response to their advisee's requests. Some hold regular meetings and add written assignments beyond the milestones listed in this Handbook, making the relationship more like a formal seminar. Some bring together advisees working on similar topics for group meetings. Discuss your advisor's expectations and your expectations. Discuss the assignments that are due, particularly those in the first semester, and be sure that you have a clear idea of what is required. Whatever the approach of your advisor, it is your responsibility to be proactive in asking their counsel and sending them your work.

Whenever possible, students work with faculty whose interests overlap with the general area of the senior essay. See the section on Faculty Fields of Interest later in this handbook.

Students are strongly encouraged to seek an advisor within History. Those who wish to work with someone outside of the department must seek individual permission to do so from the senior thesis Director.

The Format and Structure of the Essay

The essay consists of four parts: the title page, the text, the bibliography, and the bibliographical essay.

Length

There is no minimum requirement for length, but there is a word limit. Please adhere to the limit; it is a practice of editing and honing your argument.

Two-term senior essays: The maximum is 12,500 words for the main body of the essay.

One-term senior essays: The maximum is 6,250 words for the main body of the essay.

Joint senior essays: *Refer to page 3.*

Please state your word count on the very last page of the essay.

Appendices, bibliography, footnotes, and the bibliographical essay do not count in the word limit.

Audience and Style

Please write for an audience of professional historians who have a general knowledge of the wider field of your senior essay but are not experts on your particular topic. This is the style in which academic articles are typically written; usually this description also applies to the faculty member who will grade your essay!

Electronic or paper

Paper copies are no longer required. Please submit your senior essay in pdf.

Layout

Times New Roman, double-spaced, justified, 1-inch margins, page numbers at the bottom.

Footnotes

Please use footnotes rather than endnotes.

Citation Style

Please use the Chicago Manual of Style rather than MLA or APA in-text documentation styles. Always specify page numbers, unless you are citing an entire book, article, or document. In keeping with the spirit of the senior essay as an independent contribution to disciplinary knowledge, the formal quality of your citations must meet those of a published essay or book and is considered when assigning a grade.

Title Page

State the title, your name, your residential college, your advisor's name, and the date.

Bibliography

The Bibliography should include all sources consulted and every single source cited in your notes. Many readers will turn first to the Bibliography to make sure that you have effectively surveyed secondary works in the field and to get a sense of the source base of your project. In keeping with professional practice, only list works that you cite in the essay itself or the bibliographic essay. Divide the bibliography into Primary Sources and Secondary Sources, with Primary Sources first. Do not separate books, articles, or dissertations within the Secondary Sources section; simply list them alphabetically.

The Bibliographical Essay

The Bibliographical Essay is a separate part of the essay, 3-7 pages long and often written in the first-person singular. The bibliographical essay is an invitation to discuss your intellectual journey during this project. What works have shaped your thinking on the topic, and how? How did your process of archival discovery unfold? How did your questions evolve over time? Do not list every work mentioned in your bibliography. Give the reader a sense of the way you have gone about your research. Indicate the strengths, weaknesses, and limitations of the material you have used. You can talk about leads or sources pursued that turned out to be inaccessible or insufficient.

Detailed Instructions on the Milestone Assignments

Statement of Intention

Available at <https://history.yale.edu/undergraduate/current-students/undergraduate-forms>.

Use the Statement of Intention as a mini prospectus. Ordinarily, it must be signed by the advisor, but during the Covid pandemic, please just upload it on Canvas after you have discussed it with your advisor and won his or her verbal approval; Essie Lucky-Barros will then write to your advisor for a quick confirmation.

The Statement of Intention serves as a prospectus, a preliminary research plan as well as a contract between you, the History Department and your advisor. If you truly change your topic or change advisors, you must submit a change of Senior Essay Advising form, signed and completed by your new advisor, the old advisor, and the Senior Essay Director.

Prospectus

By the time you submit the Prospectus, you should have distilled your thoughts and questions into a focused and feasible research topic. The following structure works well for the prospectus, but you can choose different formats if you prefer:

- Open with a short description of the topic.
- Explain how your research will make a unique contribution to our understanding of that topic.
- Briefly discuss the major secondary literature that exists on the topic and in the field.
- Introduce the questions you intend to pursue as you set about your research. Some of these can be very specific. But also step back and reflect on the larger questions that your specific research project can illuminate. Down the road, this should help you form your thesis and argument – the takeaway for your readers. You might have a provisional hypothesis, but do not get fixated on articulating a fully developed thesis argument at this point; you have to do the research first. The thesis should be driven by sources.
- Finally, the prospectus should clearly identify the primary sources you intend to use, where they are located, and your plans for examining them. Where are the primary sources? Describe them. How will you access them? What potentially important sources have you been unable to locate?

Three-page analysis of one primary source.

No special requirements for the format. What matters most here is the depth and skill of your analysis.

Annotated Bibliography

This assignment will help you survey the secondary literature and identify books and articles you have yet to read. It will also give your advisor a clear sense of where your reading stands, and thus a chance to help you with further recommendations. Finally, the annotated bibliography will help you determine where your argument fits with other work in your field: which work it challenges and which work it expands.

This should be 3 to 7 pages long and should treat every secondary source that you think is important to your topic. Think of three or four areas of historical literature on which your essay touches and identify the major secondary sources in those areas. Write a short paragraph about each book, summarizing the argument and stating how it relates to your essay.

Ten Pages

Choose ten pages of your draft. The point of the assignment is to get you to start writing the essay in good time. Writing is one of our most powerful technologies for thinking, and structures that look compelling in

outline often turn out to have problems when we sit down and write the actual prose. Similarly, new ideas and solutions will occur to you as you think your way through each sentence, paragraph, and section.

Bibliographical Essay Draft

See the above section on the Bibliographical Essay.

Rough Draft

This is the last major opportunity for your advisor to give you feedback. This milestone should also save you from a last-minute scramble before the final submission deadline and give you ample time to polish your paper. Small improvements often take a lot of time, like tidying up footnotes and straightening out the bibliography or improving choppy transitions in your prose. Submitting a rough draft by the deadline should leave you the time you need for these important final steps.

Title Form

You need the following information: Your name and graduating year, your advisor's name and home department, the title of your essay, and suggested readers.

Your title:

Ideally, the title of your senior essay should telegraph its content or main argument. Finding titles that fully capture a complex argument is worth trying, but usually impossible. If you choose a poetic title, please make sure that your subtitles communicate the topic of your essay with clarity.

Suggested readers

Discuss two or three possible readers with your advisor and then put his or her suggestions in the title form. Usually, two or three readers. If you believe problems might arise if a particular faculty member evaluates your essay, please discuss this with your advisor as well. Neither the student nor the advisor can exercise any veto over the final choice of a reader for the senior essay. We strive to match each essay with the most appropriate faculty reader. The reader will not necessarily be an expert in the specific topic of the essay being evaluated; indeed, this would be impossible. One of the goals of history is to communicate beyond a cadre of experts; therefore, senior essayists should write clearly and not assume their readers share their detailed knowledge.

You will turn in the suggested reader's name on your senior essay title form to the History Undergraduate Registrar via email.

Submitting the Senior Essay

Upload one pdf on Canvas, send one each to your advisor and to the history undergraduate registrar.

The deadline is the stuff of which nightmares are made. It is non-negotiable. To quote from the Blue Book: “If the essay is submitted late without an excuse from the student's Residential College Dean, the penalty is one letter grade for the first day and one-half letter grade for each of the next two days past the deadline. However, no essay that would otherwise pass will fail simply because it is late. Late essays will not be considered for departmental or Yale College prizes.” Only major, incapacitating illnesses, and dire family emergencies will be considered as legitimate cause for an extension of this deadline by your college dean, who must consult with the Senior Essay Director prior to issuing the excuse. Note that this differs from a regular Dean’s excuse, since the Senior Essay is a yearlong project, and you are aware of the deadline as you read this. Most years, nobody receives a dean’s excuse.

But a few people do miss the deadline, and it is usually because something unexpected happens at the last minute. They are heartbroken, since their grade drops automatically. Give yourself enough time to weather the unexpected and still produce the essay on time. Students who do not turn in an essay by the end of the semester are given a grade of INC (this grade represents a mark of incomplete). Even after the end of the semester, students may submit an essay to finish their degree and replace an earlier grade of INC. Such exceptionally late essays receive no grade deduction penalty, since not graduating on time is considered penalty enough. They will be read and graded ninety days after the following term begins.

The Evaluation of the Essay

Two-term essays

The Senior Essay Director assigns first semester grades based on the timely submission of required assignments in consultation with your advisor. In other words, you must have completed the assignments listed below to receive a grade of SAT. The requirements are non-negotiable. Students who receive an NS on History 4995 should still register for and complete History 4996.

For a two-term senior essay, your first semester grade will be a temporary mark of SAT (satisfactory) or NS (not satisfactory). By the end of your second term, your final essay grade will be recorded for both HIST 4995 and HIST 4996. Remember, however, that many employers, graduate and professional schools will request first semester transcripts, so it is important to stay on schedule and earn a SAT in the first semester.

One-term essays

For a one-term senior essay, the student will receive a letter grade at the end of the term in which it was submitted.

Grading the Senior Essay

The Reader's Report evaluates primary and secondary sources; the writing, argument, and form of the essay; the treatment of the topic, including your interpretation and the overall success of your effort. (See the reader's report form, available on the Department's website.)

Before submitting the report to the History Undergraduate Registrar, the reader must contact the advisor and discuss the evaluation of the essay.

If the reader and the advisor cannot agree on the grade, the reader's grade stands unless the grade proposed by the advisor is at least one letter grade higher. (For example, B- vs A-. This also means that essays assigned a B+ by the reader do not qualify for a second reader, since Yale has no A+ grade.) In such cases, the advisor contacts the Senior Essay Director, who assigns a second faculty reader to evaluate the essay. His or her evaluation is final. The second reader remains anonymous to the student, and will have no contact with the advisor, the first reader, or the student about the essay.

Even when a second reader is assigned (a very rare event), the first reader is responsible for writing the Reader's Report, which will, however, bear the grade determined by the second reader.

Students may not dispute a senior essay grade.

Prizes

Essays can be nominated for prizes in the History Department either by the faculty reader or by the advisor or both. History majors are not permitted to nominate their essays for a prize in History, though there may be prizes in other parts of the university for which you are eligible and can self-nominate. One-term senior essays are not eligible for prizes. All History Department prizes are determined by special faculty committees and are awarded at a special awards ceremony during Commencement week. A list of departmental prizes is available online.

Academic Integrity:

Plagiarism is a serious offense and will result in an automatic Fail grade as well as further sanctions determined by the Executive Committee. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, using the logic and ideas of another source without attribution (even if the exact wording has been changed), cutting and pasting wording and phrasing from sources without attribution into your own text, and copying the work of other students. Plagiarism does not require intentionality; if you commit plagiarism unwittingly (for example because you did not understand the rules or got confused in your notes), it is still punishable.

You also may not use work that you submitted on another course without explicit, written permission of both the instructor of the course and your senior essay advisor. Even when permission is granted, the overlap should be small.

If you are unclear about what constitutes improper use of someone else's words or ideas, please consult the Writing Center's guide on avoiding plagiarism.

Faculty Fields of Interest

ANCIENT HISTORY

Joe GLYNIAS

Classical Arabic, Ancient and Byzantine Greek History, Religion, Middle East.

Andrew JOHNSTON

Roman history.

Jessica LAMONT

Greek history, Archaic through early Hellenistic periods (c.750-300 BCE).

Noel LENSKI

Roman History and Late Antiquity.

Joseph MANNING

Leave SP 2026

Ancient Greek history, especially Hellenistic history; eastern Mediterranean through the Roman period; ancient law, the ancient economy; Ancient Egyptian history; Ancient North African history

20TH-CENTURY INTERNATIONAL AND DIPLOMATIC HISTORY

Zeinab AZARBADEGAN

International and Global History, European

Michael BRENES

20th Century American foreign policy; political history; political economy.

David ENGERMAN

Leave FA 2025

20th-century international history.

Samuel MOYN

International law. Human rights. The law of war. Legal thought. 20th-century European moral and political theory.

Arne WESTAD

Modern international and global history. East Asia since the 18th century.

Alden YOUNG

International and global history.

UNITED STATES & CANADA

Alvita AKIBOH

United States; U.S. imperialism; Caribbean; Pacific; material culture; identity; disaster studies

Ned BLACKHAWK

Leave -AY -2024-2025

Native American History and Native American Law.

David BLIGHT

Civil War and Reconstruction era. African American history. US cultural and Intellectual history.

Crystal FEIMSTER (limited advising)

African American Studies. Racial and sexual violence.

Julia BROWN-BERNSTEIN

Twentieth Century US history, Urban Studies, Immigration History, Migration and Diasporic Studies, Citizenship Studies, Labor Studies, Relational Race Formation, and History of Capitalism.

Benjamin BERNARD

US History.

Joanne FREEMAN Leave SP 2026
Revolutionary and Early National American history with special interest in politics and culture, Early American journalism, print culture, and regionalism.

John Lewis GADDIS
Cold War history. Historical Methodology. Biography. Grand Strategy. 20th-Century International & Diplomatic history.

Beverly GAGE
Gilded Age and 20th century. Political history. Government and political development. Ideology and Social Movements (esp. conservatism and radicalism).

Jay GITLIN
US cultural history, esp. music-related or popular culture. Native Americans and American West. Colonial: French and Spanish borderlands. Canadian history. Social history, esp. urban/suburban.

Elizabeth HINTON AY Leave – FA 2025 – SP 2026
African American Studies; poverty and racial inequality in the 20th century United States.

Matthew JACOBSON
US cultural history, 19th and 20th century immigration, ethnicity and race, US expansionism.

Destin JENKINS
History of Race and Ethnicity, (Sub)Urban History, Political Economy/Capitalism

Jennifer KLEIN AY Leave FA 2025-SP 2026
20th Century US history: urban history, labor history, New Deal and post-World War II politics and policy, gender, and social movements.

Caleb KNAPP
My fields are 19th-century U.S., slavery & abolition, gender & sexuality.

Regina KUNZEL Leave SP 2026 (Chair FA 2025)
Modern US; histories of gender and sexuality; queer history; disability history; history of psychiatry.

Faith LAZAR
20th century United States history, political history, far-right movements, war and political violence, and the security state.

George LEVESQUE (limiting advising)
History of religious thought in America. History of education. History of American colleges and universities. 18th & 19th intellectual history.

Mary LUI
Asian American history. US urban history. Race, ethnicity, and immigration. Gender and sexuality.

Joanne MEYEROWITZ Leave SP 2026
The 20th century. Social, cultural, and intellectual history. Gender and Sexuality.

Nicholas PARRILLO (Law School)
US legal history. History of the administrative state. Political development.

Mark PETERSON
Early North America and the Atlantic world.

Stephen PITTI AY Leave FA 2025- SP 2026
History of Mexican Americans. American West. Latinos. 19th and 20th Century Immigration. The US-Mexico border. Labor history.

Noah RAMAGE

Native history, settler colonialism, and the U.S. West. 19th century US history and the Gilded Age

Edward RUGEMER

Comparative Slavery and Abolition; Antebellum United States; Atlantic history.

Paul SABIN

Leave SP 2026

Environmental history.

Brendan SHANAHAN

U.S. History; Citizenship and Nationality; Canadian History; Political/Policy History; Socio-Legal History; Gender History

Rebecca TANNENBAUM

Early America, 1600-1800. Social History of American Medicine. Women's history.

John WITT (Law School) limited advising.

American Legal History.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Ana CALDERON

Caribbean History, Latin American History

Marcela ECHEVERRI

The Andes. Social and political history. Law; race and ethnicity. Comparative revolutions, slavery, and abolition. Political theory. History of anthropology.

Anne ELLER

Leave FA 2025

Slavery and emancipation in the Caribbean and Latin America. The Haitian Revolution, Pan-Caribbean migration, and political movements. Latin American independence. African Diaspora.

Greg GRANDIN

Latin America. 20th-Century International & Diplomatic history

Manoel Rendeiro NETO

Latin America history.

EUROPE

Jennifer ALLEN

DGS (Director of Graduate Studies in History)

Modern Germany. Cultural history of modern Europe. Theories and practices of memory. Grassroots activism. The politics of space. Europe after the Cold War.

Sergei ANTONOV

Russia after 1800. The Soviet Union. Russian and comparative legal history. Russian serfdom. Global history of capitalism and credit. Crime & criminal justice. Secret political police. Elites & power.

Laurie BENTON

AY-Leave FA 2025-SP 2026

Comparative empires; history of international law; Atlantic history; global and international history; British and Iberian empires.

Paul BUSHKOVITCH

Russia to 1725. Russian foreign policy. Ukraine.

Carolyn DEAN

Leave SP 2026

Intellectual and cultural historian of modern Europe with a particular interest in France, Germany, and Italy. Genocide studies. Gender studies.

Marlene DAUT
French Colonial History, Caribbean Studies, Haitian Studies, Atlantic Studies, Comparative American Literary History, and Slavery and Abolition

Carlos EIRE
Early modern Europe: intellectual, social, cultural, and religious history; Protestant Reformation; Catholic Reformation (Spain, France, Germany)

Paul FREEDMAN Leave SP 2026
Medieval European history.

Hussein FANCY
Medieval European and Islamic History; Medieval Iberia and North Africa; Social History; Intellectual History; Economic History; Legal History; Latin and Arabic Paleography.

Bruce GORDON
The history of Christianity, especially the Reformation in early modern Germany.

Winston HILL
Early modern Britain and its empire, the Atlantic world, and queenship in global history.

Maria JORDAN
Early modern Spain,

Paul KENNEDY
Great power relations, 19th and 20th centuries; 20th-Century International & Diplomatic history, Military and Naval History British Foreign and Imperial history; contemporary Global Security issues; United Nations Studies

William KLEIN
16th-century Europe.

Ivan MARCUS
History of the Jews in medieval Europe. History of Jewish culture. Jewish-Christian relations. History of childhood and education. Jewish mysticism and pietism. The Jews and Islam. Jewish magic and popular culture.

Samuel MOYN
International law. Human rights. The law of war. Legal thought. 20th-century European moral and political theory.

Isaac NAKHIMOVSKY
Political thought and intellectual history, primarily in Europe between the 17th and 19th centuries.

Vanessa OGLE (History Senior Essay Director)
Modern European History

Stuart SEMMEL
British politics, culture, and thought since 1760. Popular Culture. Popular Politics. Political and social thought. European cultural and intellectual history.

David SORKIN
Intersection of Jewish history and European history since the 16th century.

Eliyahu STERN
Jewish History.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Robert HARMS

Sub-Saharan Africa.

Ben MACHAVA

Colonial and post-colonial Africa. Liberation Struggles. Decolonization. African Socialism. Carcerality. Culture and Politics in Lusophone Africa.

Daniel MAGAZINER

Director of Undergraduate Studies in History

20th-century South and Southern Africa. South Africa the African Diaspora. East Africa. Africa in the colonial and post-colonial age. Black Nationalism in South Africa. Black visual artists in 20th Century South Africa.

NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Laura ROBSON

Middle East, International and global history.

Alan MIKHAIL

Department Chair- SP2026

The early modern Muslim world. The Ottoman Empire. History of Islamic Science and Medicine. Environmental History. Cultural and Social History of the Middle East (1500-1800).

Omina EL SHAKRY

Intellectual and cultural history of the modern Middle East; race, religion, gender, and sexuality in the modern Middle East; history of colonialism; critical theory and psychosocial studies.

Jonathan WRYTZEN (not advising)

Leave FA 2025

North Africa and Middle East: Comparative empire and colonialism, ethnicity and nationalism, Morocco, Urban and Rural Contentious Politics.

SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Sunil AMRITH

Modern South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean. The history of migration and diasporas. Environmental history, especially the history of water and climate. The history of port cities.

Rohit DE

Modern South Asia. Global legal history. Law and society. Law and colonialism. British Empire. Nationalism and decolonization in Asia and Africa. Comparative constitutionalism

Jiya PANDYA

Global Histories and Theory of the Body, Colonialism and Postcolonialism, Critical Caste Studies, Feminist, Queer, and Crip Theory, Transnational and Third World Feminisms, Ecofeminism, Disability Studies, Modern South Asia

Nurfadzilah YAHAYA

History of Southeast Asia; History of Indian Ocean; History of Islamic World; Global and International History; Colonialism and Imperialism; Environmental History; History of Infrastructure; Legal History; Islamic law.

EAST ASIA

Daniel BOTSMAN

Leave FA 2025

Japanese history.

Fabian DRIXLER

Leave- FA 2025

Japanese history, especially early modern. Demographic history around the world.

- Maura DYKSTRA AY FA- 2025-SP 2026
Late Imperial and Modern China, Chinese Legal, bureaucratic and economics. History of governance.
- Valerie HANSEN Leave- SP 2026
China to 1600. Chinese religious and legal history. History of the Silk Road. The World around 1000 CE.
- Hannah SHEPHERD AY Leave FA 2025- SP 2026
Modern Japanese History, Urban History, Modern Korean History
- Taisu ZHANG (Law School)
Comparative legal and economic history, private law theory, and contemporary Chinese law and politics. Qing dynasty

HISTORY OF SCIENCE AND MEDICINE

- Sakena ABEDIN
20th-century US medicine. Medicine and social sciences. Race and medicine. History of the US healthcare system. Health care in New Haven.
- Rene ALMELING
Sociology, gender, genetics, health, reproduction, and assisted reproductive technologies.
- Toby APPEL
American medicine in the 19th and early 20th centuries, especially women in medicine and science. Connecticut and Yale medical history. Medical and scientific societies and institutions. Health professions including alternative physicians.
- Elaine AYERS
History of natural history, collecting, and museum studies, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries. Colonial history, scientific expeditions, and the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and labor, especially in cross-cultural contexts. Plants, animals, and other nonhuman actors, dueling drives of desire and loss, and sex and death.
- Paola BERTUCCI Leave SP 2025
Enlightenment. Cultural history of technology in the early modern world. Cultures of collecting and display. Artisanal knowledge. The early modern body. Scientific travel. Material culture.
- Deborah COEN
The modern physical and environmental sciences. Central European intellectual and cultural history.
- Ivano DAL PRETE Leave - SP 2025
European scientific culture, 1400-1800. Earth history and religious orthodoxy. Generation theories. Religion and society. Information and exchange networks. Cultural history of astronomy. The trade in scientific instruments.
- Melissa GRAFE
Medicine in early America. Medical education. History of medical collections and libraries.
- Megann LICSKAI (Director of Senior Essay HSHM)
US & Canadian medical history; reproductive medicine & justice; gender, science, & medicine; feminist STS; emotions, science, & medicine; biopolitics; life, death & personhood; bodies & medicine in the media; health politics, activism, conservatism

Gourav NANDI

History of global health; health and medicine in modern South Asia; postcolonial health policy; urban public health in the Global South; politics of refugee health; food, medicine, and law; health and governmentality; philosophy of history

Ayah NURIDDIN

Histories of eugenics, racial science, scientific racism, reproduction, and human subject research

Kelly O'DONNELL

Health activism; end-of-life care; technology & medicine; STS; material culture; medical museums; psychedelic therapy; senses, emotions, and spatial histories 20th Century US medicine; gender and medicine; reproductive health; health activism; medical technologies and pharmaceuticals.

Jiya PANDYA

Global Histories and Theory of the Body, Colonialism and Postcolonialism, Critical Caste Studies, Feminist, Queer, and Crip Theory, Transnational and Third World Feminisms, Ecofeminism, Disability Studies, Modern South Asia

Nana QUARSHIE

[AY Leave FA 2025 -SP 2026](#)

Medicine, science, and technology in Africa. Migration, political expulsions, and urbanization.

Joanna RADIN

Biology, medicine, and anthropology since 1945. History of global health. Biomedical technology. Scientific expeditions. Biomedical ethics. Human subjects research, collections, and laboratories.

Marcos RAMOS

Health activism; liberation psychiatry; decolonization; Latin America and the Cold War; psychedelics and drugs.

William RANKIN

[Leave SP 2026](#)

Physical and earth sciences since the mid-19th century. Military, industrial, and governmental science. History of Cartography. Science and architecture. Visual studies. Environmental history.

Carolyn ROBERTS

[Leave FA 2025](#)

Medicine and slavery in the Atlantic world. Race medicine and science. History of medicine in Africa and the African diaspora. Health and protest in African American history. Non-Western medicine and global health.

Jason SCHWARTZ

Vaccines and vaccination programs. Decision-making in public health policy. Scientific expert advice to government. The ways in which evidence is interpreted, evaluated, and translated into regulation and policy in medicine and public health.

Deborah STREAHLE

Health activism; end-of-life care; technology medicine; STS; material culture; medical museums; psychedelic therapy; senses, emotions, and spatial histories

John WARNER

19th & 20th century US medicine and health; Comparative history of medicine (US, Britain, France); Cultural history of science & medicine.

Appendices

Here, you will find advice and samples that many of you may be helpful. However, while you are responsible for knowing everything in the rest of this Handbook, reading the Appendices is optional.

Thoughts on Finding a Topic

By Jay Gitlin

I have become a professional historian. (I know this is true because people have paid me to write.) But I did not major in history because I expected enormous cash rewards. (Good thing!) I became a history major because I loved history, and I still do. I love the subtlety, the attention to nuance and detail, and the stubborn insistence on specificity. I've always thought that most historians share certain personality traits. Some people leap in; historians tend to linger, pondering long-term trends, waiting for some ironic twist. History majors and their professors share a certain kind of curiosity.

We look at things and wonder how they came to be the way they are. That historical dimension in every object, person, and occurrence provokes our questions and provides an important part of our understanding. When did people begin to eat dry cereal for breakfast? ^ What did people do before underarm deodorants became popular? ^^

These questions, though they may seem trivial to some, intrigue me. Every question and issue can be approached through history. One senior last year, for example, wrote an excellent paper on the historical evolution of affirmative action policies. Another wrote an insightful history of the creation of Palisades Parkway and the impact of that road on the suburbanization of New Jersey. Everything has a history, and history is all-inclusive. And that's part of your problem. How can you find one specific and perfect topic in a universe of possibilities?

Two ways of starting:

1) Look through the collections in Sterling or Beinecke. Unlike graduate students writing dissertations or professors writing books, you may not have enough time to visit several archives in search of sources. A year is not that long a period of time! Good history usually rests upon a firm foundation. You might start,

therefore, with letters, journals, ledger books, or diaries that interest you.

2) On the other hand, you can start with a broadly defined topic and hope that sources exist that will let you pursue it.

Either way, **start with something that interests you and start asking questions. Questions force you to frame your topic. Questions provide focus.**

NOTE: Don't expect to come across the perfect manuscript collection that frames your topic for you—although it might happen. We all have a desire to find that one special letter: “I'm about to invent the telephone, but before I do, I'd like to tell you what influenced me to do so and what uses such an invention might have in the future.” Dream on! Primary sources often have a stubbornly opaque quality. If they didn't, who'd need a historian?

Okay, let's start with some subject that's interesting in this case, interesting to me: Pizza.

Before you go any further, place some temporary restrictions on your subject.

Ultimately you will want to erect appropriate boundaries around your topic. Okay, let's start with “Pizza in New Haven.”

Let's start asking questions:
Who made the first pizza in New Haven?

In and of itself, the answer to this question has little significance.

It has only antiquarian value. But ... let's continue. Where did this person come from in Italy?

Was this first pizza maker Siciliano? Napolitano? Amalfitano? Are there different styles of pizza? Is it a regional food?

Did the first pizza pies made in New Haven recapitulate Italian or regional Italian traditions or were they a response to American conditions? A topic is beginning to take shape. What were the local origins of the Italian immigrants who came to New Haven? When did they begin to consider themselves “Italian”?

In short, what factors influenced an ethnic Italian identity? And—bringing us back to the pizza—what role did food play in the formation of an immigrant's sense of ethnic identity? After all, in the 2010s smaller percentages of people of Italian descent speaks Italian or attend Mass--I'm only guessing here. Most still eat pizza, and many consider themselves to be competent judges of wine or an ordinary dish of pasta. (Is it properly *al dente*?)

Okay, you didn't like the direction of those questions. Let us try some others, who opened the first pizza parlor in New Haven? (Why did they call them “parlors” for that matter?) Who was employed in this business? Was it a family enterprise? Were the employees all men or men, women, and children? (There's an obvious line of questioning here one could pursue about gender roles.) If the business was successful, how were profits reinvested? Who supplied the pepperoni? the mozzarella? The cardboard boxes? In short, how did such enterprises influence the immigrant community's economy? Indeed, what were the economic connections between New Haven's Italian community and Italian communities elsewhere in the state or in the region? Were profits sent home to Italy, or did they stay in America? Who provided credit? As you can see, a rather different topic--based on the same subject—is beginning to take shape.

But when did pizza become a popular food outside the Italian-American community? Right away? Was this an important source of income--rather like a neighborhood export? Where were the first pizza parlors located? When did such establishments begin to appear in neighborhoods or suburbs of New Haven that were not dominated demographically by people of Italian decent? How did Italian-Americans reshape the food ways of this Yankee city? Indeed, how did

Italian Americans reshape the politics, the values, and the image of New Haven?

So far, each set of questions has taken us beyond the consideration of pizza itself. You may wish to stick with pizza. (After all, it sticks with you.) What function did the pizza have initially in the diet of Italian immigrants? When did pizza become a typically American fast food? How has the preparation of pizza changed? Have the ingredients and styles changed over time? Why are so many pizza places owned and run by Greek immigrants today? Have national chains like Pizza Hut had an impact? How successful are such chains in Italian American neighborhoods?

One rather narrow subject—many possible papers. We could ask questions forever.

Okay now what? How do I answer these questions?

Reality check: What sources can I use to answer any of these questions? Is this a doable topic? And don't just check for primary sources--look in the library for books, articles, anything. Somebody's already written a book on the history of pizza in America? Good!!! (I don't think one's been written, by the way.) Perhaps some of the ground has already been broken. Finding your way on an unmarked trail is tough. (And every historian brings a fresh perspective to a topic) Okay, you've found a topic and you've asked questions that can be answered.

Start thinking of the overall shape of your paper. An essay is not a mini-book. Where will you begin and where will you end? Does the essay you envision have a sense of direction? Do the questions have any logical sequence? Can you do this in 50 pages or less?

One last note: After spending a certain amount of time in the salt mines finding sources and researching your topic, come up for air. Climb up again to higher ground and ponder the significance of your topic, the context of your general inquiry. The way you position your specific topic can be very important. This is part of your interpretation. Example: I had a student several years ago who wrote a brilliant paper on

the history of communal houses in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Rather than emphasizing the ways in which the young people living in these houses were rebelling against the values of their parents, the author chose to emphasize what she observed as the continuity between the values embodied by these communal places/homes and those of the suburban dwellings in which the members of the “alternative community” had grown up. This unexpected angle produced a penetrating historical portrait.

Good luck. I’m going out for pizza.

If you're interested in the history of breakfast cereal, check out Harvey Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Intrigued? Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986) discusses the history of deodorization. Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) discusses the creation of modern tastes.

Polishing a Rough Draft

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By Fred Strebeigh, with Mark Bauer

Three decades ago, one minor writer (Truman Capote) delivered a put-down to the work of another (Jack Kerouac). The put-down has outlived both men. It was: THAT’S not writing. That’s Typing.

In this essay, I am discussing ways to avoid that put-down. I’m discussing, that is, strategies of revision for a writer—ways to take a first draft and make it final, ways to transform typing into writing. I will assume, as I proceed, that you have already finished some sort of first draft (though I will try to make this worthwhile also to a writer who has not). Once you have your first draft, you will know it by the sense of liberation it brings. You will think, perhaps: I have 50 pages! I could hand this in! I will graduate from college!

I intend this essay to help you hold that sense of liberation. Once you have that draft, paradoxically, your next challenge must be to get some distance on it—to get perspective.

To help make that possible, I have organized this essay by questions that I would ask.

What is your structure?

Ask yourself: what is the structure of this senior essay? You now have one, whether you used an outline or not. Have you written, perhaps, some 40 pages describing someone else’s actions or thoughts—then interspersed them with, say, five

What do your subheads tell you?

Test each subhead against the small essay beneath it. Does the subhead fit what you typed? Or does it fit only what you thought you planned to write? If you see a disparity between subhead and essay, one or the other must change, sooner or later. But don’t rush to make this change: you are re-outlining (and, for that matter, you are revising) in order to discover what direction holds the most potential.

pages of your own comments? Was this your plan? Should it change? Asked another way, have you yet made the essay your own? Or is it still shaped by another’s thought?

Have you re-outlined?

To analyze the structure of your paper, I want to urge a very useful tactic: re-outline your essay. Outlining may be of little use at the outset of a project, except to very experienced writers. But re-outlining is invaluable for all of us, because it allows us to cross-examine what we have typed and ask if it fits our goals.

Let me explain what I mean by “re-outlining.” First, go through the draft in front of you and begin to divide it—and begin to think of it, if you haven’t already, as a series of smaller essays: perhaps two little 2-pagers, then three 8-pagers, and so on. Atop each of those small essays, write in a subhead (perhaps, for example: “The Colonists at Jamestown: Were They Lunatics?”). Once you have settled on your ten or so subheads, they will become the ten or so headings of your re-outline.

Next, add two bits of information that old-fashioned outlines (full of Roman numerals) foolishly omit: page lengths and transitions. This process of re-outlining prepares you to ask a few more questions.

What do your page lengths tell you?

By adding page lengths on your outline, you emphasize not just the sequence of your arguments but also the relative space devoted to them. Let me use page lengths to explain what I mean when I talk about cross-examining your draft. Perhaps you’ve written an essay in which the sequence is logical: the 19th century follows the 18th century. But your re-outline may show that the 19th century received only 10 pages after the 18th got 40. (You can imagine this happening.

You got writing well on the 18th. You churned and churned. The maximum page length and the deadline loomed. Finally, overnight, you whipped off a 10-page 19th century.) Your re-outline shows the obvious: you've created a 19th-century postscript. Is that your goal? (The answer is likely yes as no; the point is to ask the question and then make your goal clear in your essay.)

What do your transitions tell you?

Between each heading in your outline (and thus, each section of your essay), write in your transitions—probably as only a sentence or two. Then cross-examine them, also. If your transitions sound implausible, you have a clue that your organization may be unworkable.

What does your structure tell you?

Finally, cross-examine your entire structure. Ask if it seems appropriate to your purpose. Ask, for example, if it makes crucial comparisons easy, rather than difficult. Ask if it places emphasis on your own work, rather than the work of others. Spend time looking at your structure, as revealed by your re-outline, and considering how that structure fits (or alters) your goals.

Need more rigorous review of your argument and structure? (re-outlining: the intensive version)

It may be that after some work tweaking page lengths and transitions you are happy with the overall structure that your new outline proposes and happy with the changes you've made to several of sections of your paper, but you could still think that some of the sections seem weak. This is a good occasion to take re-outlining one step further to assess the clarity and organization of your argument in any particular section.

For this level of re-outlining, write a sentence that captures the point of each paragraph in a particular section. From this list of sentences, you will be able to see whether you move from point to point in a coherent way, or whether there are gaps in your argument that you need to fill or

repetitions to eliminate. Just creating the list of points can do a lot to suggest ways of clarifying your argument and structure. For example, you may find that the best sentence capturing your point comes at the end of the paragraph. (Write down this sentence and make a note to see whether you want to move it to the front of the paragraph.) Or you may discover that nothing already written does the trick, but that you can now articulate the point this paragraph is meant to demonstrate. (Write down this new sentence and go on to the next paragraph.) You might also find that the paragraph buries its point in the middle (where a point sentence could be confused with supporting information) or that it actually makes two distinct and important points, each one worthy of its own paragraph. In each case, write the sentence or sentences that best capture the point of each paragraph.

Once you have made your list of point sentences for the target section of your paper, check for gaps, repetitions, and overall order. (Does this section start by presenting the overall topic or question of the section and does it build in a systematic way to your most important point?) Often this paragraph-by-paragraph form of re-outlining will suggest new key points that you want to make and where you want to make them. Make any changes you want in the overall structure on this list of point sentences. Now you have a new outline by which to revise this section.

Note on the position of point sentences in paragraphs:

1. Place point sentences in the first two or three sentences of most body paragraphs. Then offer support.
2. Place point sentences at the end of introductory or concluding paragraphs, whether for a whole essay or a section.
3. Place point sentences at the end of inductive body paragraphs (paragraphs that take the reader through a narrative or body of evidence in order to draw a conclusion). Beware of overusing this placement. It requires the reader to follow along with no clear sense of where the argument is going. This is a common structure for early draft paragraphs and shows the writer discovering his or her point while drafting the paragraph. But

most often it will help the reader to move the point to the front of the exposition.

4. Beware of burying key points in the middle of paragraphs.

Does your introduction lead towards (but not reach) your conclusion?

Also, when you look at your organization, ask what you think of the introduction and conclusion. You might best think of the introduction as set-up or lead-in. It cannot, if your essay has any complexity at all, present your whole thought in miniature. (Some people are still writing, to an extent, the introduction I was taught in 9th grade: 1) tell 'em what you're gonna tell 'em, 2) tell 'em, and 3) tell 'em what you told 'em. That's fine only if you've got 9th-grade ideas.)

What your introduction might do is lead the reader in by presenting the problem that you will consider. That way, you allow his or her reading to remain exciting, to become a process of discovery. Let me give a brief example. It comes from an essay in the *American Historical Review* "The Labor Problem at Jamestown, 1607-18," by Edmund Morgan. It takes a new approach to an old question: why did the colonists at Jamestown "neglect ... the critical business of growing food to stay alive"? Morgan gives a brief tour of the conventional answer, and then, as he ends his introduction, goes on to say that the conventional answer probably fits the facts insofar as they can be known. But it does not quite explain them. ... **Why** did men spend their time bowling in the streets when their lives depended on work? **Were** they lunatics, preferring to play games rather than clear and plow and plant the crops that could have kept them alive?

Notice that these are direct questions (I have added boldface for emphasis). Often, a direct question offers the most efficient means to pose the problem your essay will address.

Now an introduction could simply end with such questions.

It happens that Morgan doesn't end there, so I want to go one step further with him. To his questions, he gives a few partial answers, offered

by other historians. He then dismisses those answers:

"These explanations are surely all valid.... But they do not reach to a dimension of the problem that contemporaries [contemporaries of the Colonists, that is, the historians' other sources] would have overlooked because they would have taken it for granted."

Having made it clear that problems remain to be solved, Morgan is off on the search, suggesting that we may discover among the ideas current in late 16th- and early 17th- century England some clues to the probable state of mind of the first Virginians, clues even to the tangled web of motives that made later Virginians masters of slaves.

Notice there has been no formal thesis, no wrap-up. Just significant questions, a central problem, a drama, and an invitation to discovery. Morgan, that is, has written an introduction that pulls his reader towards his conclusion-but does not try to present his thought in miniature.

Do you maintain control?

The question of organization leads to the question of control: Are you clearly the speaker throughout, or do others push you aside? The most common form of such pushing is the arrival of others' words unintroduced.

Imagine this from the viewpoint of the reader. Your reader has been listening to you, as if you were speaking from a stage. Then, suddenly in your essay, the words of someone else appear unintroduced, as if someone had just shoved you to the corner of the stage from which you were speaking. The reader doesn't know what to make of such an invasion. Don't let that happen: avoid such invasions by introducing your speakers, and in such a way that the reader knows if they are hostile or friendly witnesses, trustworthy or treacherous guides.

Do you control your secondary sources?

This is particularly important in history, because of your relation to other historians--who, 99% of the time, are secondary sources. You must not rely on using secondary sources. Use them,

sparingly, to substantiate a peripheral point. Use them even more sparingly if their language is irresistible. But quote them more to comment on them, even criticize them, than to rely on them. Try to move beyond them. Incorporate their thoughts, by paraphrasing, into your own. You write this essay not to praise other historians, but to bury them. And where do you bury them?

You bury them in footnotes.

Have you used the full power of footnotes?

If you haven't yet, now is the time to learn to use the explanatory footnote, which shows more than where your information came from. If you want examples of the explanatory footnote at its most authoritative, I recommend you turn to the back of Professor Robin Winks' book, *Cloak and Gown*, a history of Yale's involvement in the CIA. Let me offer one example (emphases added):

“The preceding descriptions of these various [CIA] projects is taken from *The Scarlet Thread* [a previously cited book 1, p. 63- 84, as augmented by information supplied through the individuals mentioned in note 1, [these are people Winks interviewed: here Winks makes clear that he knows more than the published accounts] by official records, and a variety of books.... Information on the burglary of the Spanish embassy is wildly contradictory. The account here leans heavily on Downes [another previously cited book, a primary source by a crucial player in the drama], including additional description from his papers [here again Winks makes clear that he knows more than the published accounts]. The only important discrepancy appears in Cave Brown [an author of another book], p.229, where Cave Brown says that the burglars of the Spanish embassy were captured and questioned at FBI headquarters and that Downes was with them.”

Some of you may hit such discrepancies in your sources and not know what to do with them: Winks here shows what to do. He concludes: “I have found nothing in the record to support this.” [*Cloak and Gown* [p.511, footnote 10.]

You've heard of the power tie? Talk about control. That is the power footnote.

Do you lead your reader through your evidence?

In referring to texts, or quoting from them, ask yourself: do you give the reader all that he or she needs to know? That is, do you give the context? You cannot assume, for example, that the reader recalls everything that you refer to--only you are immersed in what you are writing about.

And, a point related to giving the context: do you really tell the reader what the text suggests? Do you tell what it means to the development of your argument? Putting the text in the right place is not enough. The text does not speak for itself; you must speak for it. I can't emphasize this too much. A few related points of emphasis:

1. Try to follow this pattern for each piece of evidence you introduce:

Prepare the reader for what you are quoting; explain who said it, perhaps give a sense of the context, of time or place.

Then quote.

Then draw from that quote what comments you have to make.

2. Beware possible disproportion in size between what you have to quote and what you have to say about it. Don't quote 18 lines of some journal or poem in order to make the comment that “life was hard.” In fact consider this rule of thumb: the proper proportion of what you quote to what you say should be about 1 to 2.

3. If you find that there is such a disproportion, look for ways to be MORE AGGRESSIVE in the way you use the text or evidence. I suggest two main ways to raise your aggressiveness:

Chop the text block down into relevant fragments. Omit large sections of it. Embrace those fragments that remain within your argument and analysis.

Look for pieces of the text that you should have commented on- perhaps pieces that

you supposed you already had commented on-and go after them in your comments.

Have you imagined a wide audience?

I want to emphasize that all this aggressive analyzing of your evidence is more necessary in this project than in any other you have done at Yale. For the first time here, perhaps, you are dealing with readers who simply may not know what is at issue, who cannot intuit what you meant the evidence to reveal, who cannot read your minds.

In your senior essay, because you are writing for a reader who is not necessarily a master of your material, everything changes. Many of you, in this essay, have the chance to surprise your readers utterly. You can leave them in your dust, first groveling, then lost, then **furious**. You must beware.

Furthermore, I believe, if you confuse your readers you have missed one of the crucial assumptions of the major you have chosen. History's conception of a non-specialist audience helps define its strength as a discipline. In fact, though you may not have thought explicitly about the question of "audience," many of you probably chose to study history precisely because it speaks so well to so many people.

What is the drama in your essay?

Finally, and as one component of writing for a wide audience, ask yourself: What is the central drama in this essay? What is significant? Have I made clear what is new, what is mine, what is important?

I will always recall a senior-essay writer a few years ago who did utterly path-breaking research in California archives on what might be called an architectural-historical fraud--a venal misrepresentation of architectural history.

This student, having discovered the fraud, then wrote a superb depiction of the truth. (Her argument ran roughly as follows: Much of the architectural style of 20th-century California originated not out of emulation of early Spanish colonial structures in America--as had been alleged--by a group of architects who helped create that style, but rather out of a pastiche that those architects assembled from buildings they admired in southern Europe.) She wrote this depiction so convincingly that it sounded like unimpeachably established truth--hardly like iconoclastic revelation. Most conspicuously, she omitted the necessary page or two that should have showed the reader that everyone who had ever published on her subject had an idea different from hers.

Her reader found the essay vast but unimpressive. Only later in conversation, did the reader learn that this essay exposed historical fraud and past historians' gullibility.

"Why," he said, "why didn't she SAY SO?"

Don't get caught in that trap. There's drama to your essays. Ask yourself: What is the drama here? Don't let your reader miss it. Put another way, don't lose track, as you bring a close to your writing, of the dramatic questions and issues that originally got you typing.

Help Is on the Way

By Lori Gates

(Note: Ms. Gates wrote a prize-winning essay entitled “An Organization of Impeccably Respectable Southern White Women: The Women’s Emergency Committee and the Little Rock School Crisis.”)

Now that professors have told you how to choose an advisor, pick a topic, do careful research and write a prize-winning senior essay, let me tell you what it's really like. First, your senior essay does not have to ruin your senior year. You have plenty of time, and believe me, by the time you start writing, you will have more than enough to fill fifty pages. You may even find that you enjoy working on your senior essay if you keep a few hints in mind.

1. Choose a good topic

This sounds obvious, but the best advice I can give you is to choose a good topic. This is one of the only times in your Yale career when you can spend a year studying whatever you want. Pick something you are interested in! Remember, this is not a Credit/Fail class and you can't skip the reading, so choose something you are going to enjoy reading about for eight long months. Merely choosing an interesting topic is not enough, however. It is essential that you pick a topic that is appropriate for the senior essay format. I found it very useful to think in terms of questions. Your paper should ask a question (or questions), and you should be able to answer that question with the available sources. For many of the history majors I knew, the more specific topics worked out best. Seniors often panic if September and even October go by and they still don't have a topic. All I can say is that it is easier to catch up if you have a good topic in November than if you realize in March that you picked an impossible topic.

2. Get organized

Everyone has own style of researching and note taking and I approached my senior essay as if it were an extremely long seminar paper. However, there is one huge difference between the essay and your seminar papers - the number of sources. Senior essays often have over 100 footnotes and dozens of sources. This means that you must take good notes, because in March you will not

remember where you read that great quote in October. More importantly, during the writing process it is difficult to organize all of these notes. You will have to take notes on cards or on a computer, even if you simply use a writing program and print them out. There are also databases designed for this purpose. Be sure you devise a careful system to prevent inadvertent plagiarism and identify sources and find some way to thoroughly organize your notes before you start writing.

3. Meet with other professors

This is not essential, but I found it very useful to meet with professors other than my advisor to get advice about my essay. They can often suggest sources that your advisor is not familiar with, and in general, the more help you can get the better off you are.

4. Get a draft done early!!!!

Even if you don't think you can finish a draft start writing very early! First, writing your essay will be a week of hell and sleepless nights whenever you do it, so the earlier the better. Second, you will probably find that you need to do more research in certain areas once you start writing, and if you get a draft done early you will have plenty of time to do that research. Third, you will not want to read your essay for at least two weeks after you write it, and if you get it done early you can forget about it for a while. Finally, if you get your draft done early you, unlike other senior history majors, can spend spring break someplace other than New Haven.

5. Revise often!

My final piece of advice is revise, revise, and revise. By senior year most of us have become masters of the five-page paper and we usually turn in the first draft of everything we write. This will not work for the senior essay. Unfortunately,

the essays are graded on the final product, not the effort put into them. Professors are very picky about style, and I had several friends who received grades much lower than expected because they had "good ideas, but stylistic problems." Don't let a year's worth of work go unrewarded because you didn't feel like looking for those passive verbs and split infinitives. A

good way to deal with stylistic problems is to have someone else read your essay, or read it out loud, or both. I hope you find these hints helpful as you work on your senior essay.

Don't be overwhelmed by the size of this project. It really is not as bad as it seems, and you never have to go to class!

A Sample Bibliographical Essay

This senior essay began as many other history projects do: with the discovery of a curious photo, tucked away in a neglected drawer. The photograph in question is not an old photograph; it is in color, unmistakably recent. How recent, though, is difficult to tell—it could have been taken a month ago or ten years ago. The photograph’s subject is a child. She is about ten or eleven years of age, smiling slightly and dressed in a full-skirted pink and grey gown. The gown is vaguely antebellum in design, but clearly new. The girl stands next to a rosebush. Overhead, the full branch of an old oak tree provides shade. Behind the child, a staircase leads to the shuttered porch of a large, slate-roofed house.

The girl in this photograph is me. The house behind her, Beauvoir. At the time the picture was taken, over ten years ago, I had just spent a week attending summer camp at Beauvoir. There, I learned how to make cornhusk dolls, dance the Virginia reel, and sing French songs. At the Jefferson Davis Presidential library, I learned about the bravery of Confederate soldiers. I did not learn about why the Civil War happened, or about slavery, or about the contested memories surrounding Beauvoir.

As a child at summer camp, as a resident of the post-Katrina Mississippi Gulf Coast, and as Yale history major, I have contributed to the reconstruction of Beauvoir. My memory is intricately tied to Beauvoir, and Beauvoir, as a *lieu de mémoire*, has contributed to my understanding of the world. This project, then, is partially an attempt to understand where I come from, how the place has affected me, and how I have contributed to that place.

Serious historical scholarship about the Mississippi Gulf Coast is sparse. In 1985, Charles L. Sullivan, a local historian, professor at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, and Beauvoir board member, wrote a history of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. *The Mississippi Gulf Coast: A Portrait of a People* has been an indispensable reference tool for my various research projects on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

However, Sullivan offered little analysis in his history of the Coast.

Searching for more critical histories of the Mississippi Gulf Coast, I found, primarily, books about Hurricane Camille, a 1969 category 5 hurricane that decimated the Mississippi Gulf Coast. In a slim volume entitled *Camille: 1969*, historian Mark M. Smith explored various aspects of Hurricane Camille’s impact in three essays. The second essay related Hurricane Camille to the desegregation of schools on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Curious as to what other long-term impacts Hurricane Camille and other twentieth century hurricanes had on the Mississippi Gulf Coast and its residents, I began to search for primary sources.

One of the greatest challenges, however, of studying a place affected by hurricanes is accessing surviving sources. Preliminary research at the Hancock County historical society, located a block off the Bay of St. Louis, confirmed that finding sources on the Coast would be difficult. I decided that I needed to move my research inland. Over the summer, with the help of a Richter Grant from Jonathan Edwards College, I visited the Mississippi Department of Archives and History in Jackson. Though I was disappointed to find few sources dealing with the Mississippi Gulf Coast, I was able to scan a large number of newspaper articles that I could not otherwise access.

Reviewing the material I collected at the archive, I only found one item of interest relating to Hurricane Camille. One newspaper article I scanned, dated just days after Hurricane Camille, declared that Beauvoir, the last home of Jefferson Davis, had survived the storm. I was shocked that, in the wake of widespread death and destruction, there was apparent concern over the status of a Confederate landmark. I began to wonder if Beauvoir had received similar treatment following Hurricane Katrina. Indeed, I found that in the immediate aftermath of the 2005 storm, the local paper, the *Sun Herald*, published several articles on the monument’s status.

Digging further, I found national articles about Beauvoir after Hurricane Katrina. Many of the articles treated the Confederate shrine favorably, the authors expressing hope that it would be reconstructed. Within a few years of Hurricane Katrina, however, articles were no longer so supportive of Beauvoir. I wanted to know what precipitated the change.

Both because of the scarcity of print resources and the nature of my question, I began to conceptualize my essay as an oral history project. Almost as soon as I started my research, I discovered the pitfalls and benefits of oral history research. I marveled at the never-ending web of sources that oral history research provided. Whether through a derisive comment made during an interview or a recommendation following an interview, I left each meeting with new contacts. However, I also experienced the myriad difficulties that oral history research creates. Between September and February, I approached several Mississippi Gulf Coast residents for oral history interviews. Of all of the individuals I contacted, I ultimately only collected two interviews that I could use for my project. Some of the individuals I contacted simply did not respond, including local journalist Kat Bergeron and radio personality, tourism commissioner, and Beauvoir opponent Rip Daniels. Others initially agreed to an interview, but backed out at the last moment, like re-enactor Larry Higginbotham. One interview subject, local historian and Beauvoir board member Charles Sullivan, withdrew his interview a few days after we met. Ultimately, I collected interviews from re-enactor Terry Bailey and Jefferson Davis's great-great grandson and then Beauvoir executive director Bertram Hayes-Davis.

Moreover, the experience of the oral history interview itself was, at times, discomfiting. Though I am, like many of the people I interviewed, a Mississippi Gulf Coast native and resident, I was now also a representative of Yale. I could hear suspicion in their voices and read caution on their faces. Professor Sullivan, when he called my home to ask me to delete the interview recording, openly admitted that my association with Yale worried him. He feared

what Yale professors might do with the words I had collected from him. This experience was troubling. I felt caught between two worlds; though I never felt completely comfortable at Yale, I now no longer felt as if I fit in at home.

Initially disappointed about these difficult and failed interviews, I realized that they signaled something important about my project. People's reluctance to talk to me meant, perhaps, that I had stumbled upon an important topic, a topic filled with conflict and years of struggle and real consequences for my home community.

Unable to rely on oral history sources, I decided to return to newspaper sources. Unfortunately, I immediately hit another roadblock. Though I had asked the library at Yale for help getting access to the *Sun Herald* archive, the library ultimately was unable to purchase access for me. Looking into purchasing access on my own, I realized that I would not be able to afford access to more than fifty articles. Though this limitation initially seemed like an impairment, it required me to be more judicious and critical during my research. I selected articles more carefully than I might have otherwise, thereby learning how to be a more effective researcher.

Luckily, I was also able to access many other primary sources online. I was able to view several regional and national news sources through databases to which Yale already had access, including the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, the *New York Times*, the *New York Tribune*, the *Washington Post*, the *LA Times*, and *Harper's Magazine*. Additionally, items like the Hurricane Katrina government hearings and Beauvoir's National Historic Landmark application were accessible online or through the Yale library. The Mississippi Department of Archives and History digitized the deed to Beauvoir.

Finally, I had gathered many materials produced by Beauvoir's administration. While visiting the landmark in October, I gathered several pamphlets and booklets about Jefferson Davis and Beauvoir. Additionally, though Charles Sullivan did not allow me to use his interview, he did kindly donate three of his books—*Hurricanes of the Mississippi Gulf Coast*, *Down South with*

Dixie Press, and *Gulf Coast Album*—as well as a copy of his 1991 short documentary, *Beauvoir: Memorial to the Lost Cause*.

Searching for secondary literature about Beauvoir and the Mississippi Gulf Coast proved just as difficult as searching for primary sources. Few scholars have paid attention to Beauvoir. Historian Karen L. Cox was the only scholar that I found who focused specifically on Beauvoir. In the article “Mississippi’s United Daughters of the Confederacy: Benevolence, Beauvoir and the Transmission of Confederate Culture, 1897-1919,” Cox examined the role of the United Daughters of the Confederacy in funding the Beauvoir Home for Confederate Soldiers. Cox argued that, through their financial involvement, upper class white women exerted control over Beauvoir and its Lost Cause narrative. While I agreed with Cox’s argument, I saw little evidence of the continued influence of the UDC on Beauvoir, and so I turned my attention to the other forces that shaped the shrine.

Even in the study of Hurricane Katrina, scholars have largely neglected the Mississippi Gulf Coast in favor of New Orleans. The scholar who most influenced my thinking about the Mississippi Gulf Coast was anthropologist Bridget Hayden, author of “The Hand of God: Capitalism, Inequality and Moral Geographies in Mississippi After Hurricane Katrina.” Hayden’s larger argument focused on the idea that inequality was reinstated on the Mississippi Gulf Coast due to the implementation of the national ideal of modernity during the rebuilding process. In building this argument, Hayden posits a fascinating theory. She argues that following Katrina, the state of Mississippi both reincorporated the Coast and adopted national values. This argument provided a major jumping-off point for my thesis, as I saw Beauvoir’s attempts to reconstruct its own narrative as part of an attempt to fit within a larger national narrative.

Another Mississippi Gulf Coast writer that influenced my research was U.S. Poet Laureate Natasha Trethewey. In her book *Beyond Katrina: A Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast*, Trethewey, like Hayden, explores increased

inequality on the Mississippi Gulf Coast as a result of the storm. Trethewey also explores memory and cultural geography, focusing briefly on her family’s negative memories of Beauvoir.

Trethewey’s work was the first example I found of memories subverted by Beauvoir’s dominant narratives.

In attempting to understand why Beauvoir became a local and national symbol of recovery following Hurricane Katrina, I found Peter F. Cannavo’s work particularly helpful. In *The Working Landscape*, Cannavo explores two “fundamentally opposed” actions that threaten the development and experience of a sense of place in America. On one hand, there is the “founding” impulse, which seeks to drastically alter an existing place. On the other hand, there is the “preserving” impulse, which attempts to “maintain [places] according to some notion of their defining character.” These concepts apply particularly well to the post-Katrina Mississippi Gulf Coast, which was struggling to find a balance between the pre-Katrina landscape and heritage and a modern future.

For sources on memory, an immense and growing field, I turned to two of the most respected sources. I began with Pierre Nora’s “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*”. Nora’s *lieu de mémoire* concept worked particularly well for Beauvoir, which is a “functional” and “material” site that many people have imbued with symbolic meaning. David Blight’s *Race and Reunion* was also a helpful work. The book explores the nationwide processes of remembering the Civil War that led to reconciliation between the North and the South at the cost of racial justice. This occurrence has allowed for the survival of monuments like Beauvoir and the subversion and avoidance of racial tensions that surround such monuments.

I owe a great deal of gratitude to Dean Ryan Brasseaux for his guidance throughout this project and for encouraging me to study the Mississippi Gulf Coast. I also would like to thank Andrew Horowitz and Alejandra Dubcovsky, who have also been wonderful academic advisors throughout my time at Yale and who offered

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