

World Civs: Research REPORT Assignment Guidelines, Spring 25

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Research REPORT Assignment

Learning how to conduct research and write a research paper are complex skills. In order to better support your development, we are splitting the traditional World Civs “Research Paper” into different stages: Report, Essay, and Final Draft. In the Report Stage, you will work on learning the foundations of your topic so that you can build upon it to develop a more complex argument during the final two stages of the project.

The goals of this first step are to:

1. Organize your research materials and process
2. Select a topic of interest suitable for a historical research paper
3. Demonstrate mastery of the context of the topic (who, what, where, when, etc.) in written prose
4. Practice articulating facts in a formal, academic style
5. Learn the basics of creating a Chicago Style Bibliography and citations

Step 1: Get organized- Research papers are all about the process. Let’s get ourselves situated before diving in so you fully understand what is expected of you.

1. Read this prompt in its entirety once, highlighting or underlining key expectations.
2. Read this prompt a second time, this time with your calendar out so you can add key dates into your calendar. *Bonus:* Are you a (recovering) procrastinator? Mark down the weekends before major deadlines so you can work on this project.
3. Create a GoogleDrive Folder within your World Civs GoogleDrive Folder to house *all* information and materials from this project so you don’t lose anything.
4. Make a digital copy of this prompt into the folder so you don’t lose it.
5. Create a document to track **keywords that will support you in your research**
6. Log into your NoodleTools account (login with Google), create a project (citation style: Chicago; citation level: Junior for Luffman, Advanced for Stern), and share it with the teacher inbox for your class period.
7. If you don’t know how to do the following skills, you either need to either teach yourself through the “Help” menu in the GoogleDocs toolbar, use the “Question mark icon” in GoogleDrive, or find some time to meet with your teacher as we expect you to be able to do these things as you move through the process:
 - a. save files to PDF
 - b. Print to PDF
 - c. upload files to GoogleDrive
 - d. move/copy files into a specific GoogleDrive folder
 - e. hyperlink text

What is being assessed: Organizational Check (completion, 1 pt) due in-class with teacher

Step 2: Picking a Topic- We have guided many students through this process; one key to success is picking a topic that triangulates *your interest, the expectations of the prompt, and accessible materials*. We are going to spend a lot of time working on this so you find the right topic for *you*.

Think of this step like a target– your *topic* is the outer rings and will cover lots of context, details, and events. It will likely be something broad (like an empire, civilization, or belief system). Eventually, you will pick a much more specific *question* to answer (you will do this in the Essay and Final Draft), which is the bullseye. This question will eventually cover the parameters of your Essay and be the thing your thesis answers.

Example Topic: The Roman Empire

Example question on the Roman Empire: why did Emperor Constantine I move the Roman capital city from Rome to Byzantium?

Your topic must be something from before 1500 CE for which the USN library can provide primary, secondary, and tertiary sources.

What is being assessed: Get your topic approved by your teacher (completion, 1 pt), due by Day 2

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Step 3: Research— Let's gather the basics on your topic! You will explore the library's databases and resources to gather background information on your topic. Your search should seek out the following information:

- WHO was involved? What are the spellings and alternate spellings of the names of key figures? If your topic is about a person (ex: Genghis Khan or Joan of Arc), you need to identify significant figures who impacted the lives of the main historical actor.
- WHERE did the action take place? Remember that places change names over time, so you need to identify the name used at the time of your topic, as well as today. Consider the impact of your topic on neighboring lands/peoples.
- WHAT were the key events? Again, you probably want to at least identify the things that led up to the main event(s) and the consequences of them.
- WHEN did the action happen?

While you are free to explore primary & secondary sources as part of your search, the minimum expectation is that you utilize at least 3 tertiary/reference sources to gain this information. 1 of the 3 can be a Wikipedia article. The other 2+ must come from a database connected to the [USN Library](#) (this is to ensure the USN Library can support your research interest for the other stages of the project). If you are struggling to figure out whether a source is primary, secondary, or tertiary, [check out this reference sheet from Virginia Tech](#). Your goal in this stage of your research is to corroborate the information you are finding about your topic. The easiest way to make sure you have done so at this stage is to use at least 3 independent reference sources. In other words, your report should not be based on 3 articles exclusively from one database.

If you are struggling to find materials, are having trouble understanding your materials, and/or are sick of your topic, *now* is the time to shift gears.

Step 4: Process the information you find— Simply finding material to read is not enough; you need to then *read, understand, and document* your findings so you can use the information throughout the remainder of the project. There are a few ways we will practice these skills:

1. as you encounter new keywords (who, what, where, when, etc.), you should enter them into your **keywords list**. You will use this list during this stage of the process, as well as during the next stage when you write your Essay.
2. print out the article and **annotate** it
3. **save a copy** (ideally in PDF format) to your Google Drive folder
4. **cite your source** in NoodleTools
5. As you read, take notes using the NoodleTools notecard feature. Remember to only put 1 fact on each notecard.

What is being assessed: 10 notecard check (completion, 1 pt) due by end of class on Day 3

Step 5: Write your report— This document will be used by your teacher and the librarians to ensure you have a solid foundation on your topic, and will be used by you in a few weeks as a springboard to launching your official Research Essay! The task here is straightforward: Write a research report that provides clear context and background information on a historical event, figure, or idea. Your report should include an introduction that explains the topic's significance, key details that provide context (such as time period, location, and relevant cultural or social factors), and a conclusion that ties the background information to the topic's broader importance. Your report should also include key events and an understanding of the cause-effect relationships among those events. Your report should include relevant footnotes and an appropriately formatted bibliography, both in Chicago Style. (NoodleTools will help you with this.) Your report should be a minimum of 2 pages, 12 pt Times New Roman, double spaced.

What is being assessed: 2 pg minimum research report (quality, 20 pts), due by end of the school day on Day 5

Step 6: Meet with a Librarian (alternate title: Librarian To The Rescue!) Traditionally when you submit work, your teacher will be the sole person giving you feedback and a grade. However, as this process is designed to assess your ability to conduct research using library resources, in addition to writing the report, you will get an

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extra set of eyes on your work: a librarian! This will not only give you more opportunities to discuss your work with someone else, but a trusted resource to rely on as you continue on with the remaining two stages of the project.

For this step, you will set up a time to meet with a librarian after you submit your Report. During your scheduled meeting, the librarian will walk through your work with you and give you some feedback on how to proceed into the next stage. You will take notes on this meeting to support your memory in the next stages, as well. **You must follow all of the librarians' directions in scheduling and keeping this meeting.** Half of your grade for this Report will come from their assessment of your work.

What is being assessed: finding, identifying, and properly using high-quality sources for your research, as well as scheduling and coming prepared to your meeting with a librarian (the librarians are responsible for 10 of the 20 points total for your report, you will earn your first point from them by showing up on time for your meeting, prepared to engage in this process)

Breakdown of points earned:

1 pt for organization check

1 pt for getting your topic approved

1 pt for completing 10 notecards

20 pts (quality-based) for your overall research report

10 of those points will come from the librarian who will be assessing your research skills and what you produced (1 of which will be from coming on time and prepared for your scheduled meeting)

10 of those points will come from your history teacher who will be assessing your historical thinking and writing skills