

HIST 333: Witches from Roman Times to Harry Potter
Part Three: Final Projects (Research Essay Option)
(May 2020)

Due Date: June 8th at 5 pm.

Please submit via the course website. Details on how to do so will be coming!

PLEASE USE THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE FOR ALL CITATIONS.

Don't forget to complete Part One (due May 11th) and Part Two (due May 15th). See those specific handouts for information.

For your final project, you can choose to write an essay of 2000-2500 words in length. Your essay will be posted to our course website, complete with footnotes.

Submission of Final Essay

1. Please complete your essay using a word processing program or Google docs, ensuring that everything is formatted correctly, including footnotes.
2. Go here: <https://hist333projects.opened.ca/write-2/>
3. Input your title into the "Title" section.
4. Include your name under "author" (please do not submit your essay anonymously as otherwise I won't be able to give you credit for your work!).
5. Cut and paste your essay into the "Writing" area. Make sure that it is formatted as needed. See the red "editing tool tips" for assistance.
6. In the "Additional Information for Footer", include your bibliography.
7. Choose an image for the "header image" related to your topic and upload. Don't forget to include a credit for where you have taken this image from.
8. Click on 'Save Draft', then 'preview'.
9. You can edit it as many times as you would like, but if you want to leave and then return, make sure to include your email address and the page will send you a link through which you can edit your piece.
10. After you are done with editing, don't forget to click "Publish Final".
11. Check back after June 8th to see the work of your fellow students!

The requirements for your essay will be different, depending on which option you have chosen for it (historical witches or modern representation). I've indicated below the structure that each should take.

Option One: Historical Witches

You can choose any topic that deals with witches in the ancient/medieval/early modern periods.

STEP ONE: WHERE DO I START?

You may want to start by looking first for a primary source that will act as the basis of your paper.

Questions to consider when reading your chosen primary source:

- What issues does your source raise about witches and witchcraft in its time period?
- How is it related?
- Are there any specific themes or concepts discussed that you could use as a basis for your paper?

Some of the reading we've covered for the course thus far may have piqued your interest so you can also start with ideas generated there.

NOTE: Part One of the Final Project is designed to help you choose a primary source and start thinking about how it might be used for your research project.

STEP TWO: INITIAL RESEARCH

If you've started with a primary source in choosing your topic, you may also want to look for more. If you didn't, you'll need to find a primary source first before moving onto secondary research.

You need to use AT LEAST one but can certainly use more than that. I've listed some websites and primary source collections on the Final Project Overview handout to help with finding potential primary sources.

STEP THREE: SECONDARY RESEARCH

You now need to think about looking at some secondary sources. You will likely have raised some questions in your reading of a primary source, so look for books/articles that deal with some of the broader themes you've written down.

After doing so, read two or three other secondary sources to see how historians have viewed your broader topic.

- a) What are their answers to the questions you've posed?
- b) What type of evidence do they use? Do you agree or disagree based on what you've read yourself in your primary source? Does this primary source evidence support or refute their assertions?

- c) What view of your topic do these secondary sources provide? What kind of issues or debates regarding your topic do they explore?

******a note about secondary sources******

-try to use secondary sources that have been published recently rather than older works on a topic as ideas about the subject may have changed significantly as new primary sources were discovered. Be especially wary of material published in the 1960s and 1970s, as interpretations of topics have changed quite a bit.

STEP FOUR: DEVELOPING YOUR THESIS STATEMENT

What is a thesis? The thesis is the controlling idea around which you construct the rest of your paper. In a history paper, *the thesis generally explains why or how something happened*. Every word of your paper should support your thesis. Information you do not directly relate to your thesis will appear irrelevant. This means, of course, that in a paper with a weak or no thesis, much of the paper will appear to be irrelevant and unguided.

The thesis is a scholarly argument. A history paper takes a stand on a historical issue or problem, and attempts to develop a coherent and persuasive line of thought intended to convince the reader of the validity of that stand. Your thesis is the concise statement of your argument.

A good thesis derives from a good question. Since the thesis is your conclusion to a scholarly argument, there must be a clear question at stake. This question is known as your research question. A thesis which does not answer a question, or answers a simple or obvious question, is not a thesis. You need to ask thoughtful questions of your topic and primary source material to develop a good thesis. The best theses are good precisely because the questions they answer are significant, complex, and original.

How do I develop a good thesis? Here is an example of how you might arrive at a strong thesis.

(1) Start with a general topic. E.g. Discrimination against Japanese Americans during World War II.

(2) Develop a question around it, as in "why did government officials allow discrimination against Japanese Americans?" (You now have a question that helps

you probe your topic; your efforts have a direction, which is answering the question you have posed for yourself. Note that there are a great many questions which you might ask of your general topic. You should expect in the course of your research to consider many such possibilities. Which ones are the most interesting? Which ones are possible given the constraints of the assignment?)

(3) Develop a unique perspective on your question which answers it: Government officials allowed discrimination against Japanese Americans not because it was in the nation's interest, but because it provided a concrete enemy for people to focus on. (This is a thesis statement. You have answered the question you posed, and done so with a rather concrete and specific statement. Your answer offers a novel and thoughtful way of thinking about the material. Once the terms of the thesis are clarified [what was the "national interest"; what was the meaning and value of having "a concrete enemy for people to focus on"?], you are on your way to a solid paper.)

While the questions you raise will come up as you do your research, you will not have a true idea of what your paper is going to be arguing (i.e. your thesis statement) until you've done ALL of your research. Trying to figure out your thesis first is a problem because a) you will likely find lots of evidence that refutes your thesis b) you will likely overlook material because it doesn't fit with your tentative thesis c) it will influence your interpretation of the documents you are reading because you are looking for a particular perspective to fit your tentative thesis.

STEP FIVE: ORGANIZING YOUR PAPER

The Basic Structure of a History Research Paper:

- INTRODUCTION
 - Introduce the problem
 - Define key terms
 - State the thesis
 - Stems from good question
 - Tentative answer is "hypothesis"
 - Refine hypothesis into thesis
- THE BODY
 - How is the paper organized?
 - Paragraphs
 - Topic sentence (mini-thesis)

- Argument supporting topic sentence
 - Transition to next mini-thesis
- Arguing in paragraphs
 - Mini-thesis
 - Evidence
 - Analysis (what does evidence support?)
- CONCLUSION
 - Re-state the thesis
 - Significance of thesis (why should we care about the problem?)

Option Two: Modern Representations of Witches

You can choose any modern representation of witches from film, television, written fiction, comic books, video games, songs, poetry, or art. Your representation only needs to come from after 1950 and from Europe or North America.

STEP ONE: WHERE DO I START?

Your project should begin by analyzing the modern representation that you have chosen in a detailed fashion. You need to think about what image your representation is creating of witches or a single witch-figure. Remember that you are going to be analyzing this representation in light of historical ideas about witches and witchcraft, so you want to make sure that historical ideas are present within your choice. It does not mean, however, that your representation must be set in the past.

Part One of this project is designed to help you figure out which questions to ask of your modern representation in order to analyze it closely.

STEP TWO: CONNECTING IT TO THE PAST/RESEARCH

After you have completed your initial analysis of your modern representation, you need to consider how it connects to the historical past.

- what historical ideas of witches and witchcraft is your representation imbued with? (physical appearance, personal characteristics, and witch-like activities)
- do these historical ideas fit together or are they at odds with one another? What time periods and regions do they come from?
- are these historical ideas represented authentically, based on historical evidence? If they are not, how are they changed? Why do you think the creators

changed/modified them?

In order to answer the questions above, you will need to do some research. The choices you make in terms of primary sources and secondary sources should reflect on the ideas about witches and witchcraft that your representation presents. For example, if your modern witch is female, flies on a broom, and has a “familiar”, you may want to look for primary and secondary sources that discuss why women were more likely to be witches, the use of familiars, and flight as a witch-like activity.

For help in finding sources, please consult the “Final Project Overview” handout.

STEP THREE: DEVELOPING YOUR THESIS STATEMENT

What is a thesis? The thesis is the controlling idea around which you construct the rest of your paper. For this project, your thesis should relate to how your modern representation presents historical ideas of witches and witchcraft. Every word of your paper should support your thesis. Information you do not directly relate to your thesis will appear irrelevant. This means, of course, that in a paper with a weak or no thesis, much of the paper will appear to be irrelevant and unguided.

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STEP FOUR: WRITING YOUR ESSAY

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- i) A brief description of the medium in which your witch figure is represented. This should include a summary of plot for films, novels, television episodes, or comic books; a summary of potential storylines/goals for video games; a description of image for art; a discussion of content for songs or poetry. (maximum 1-1.5 pages)
- ii) A description of your witch figure in terms of his/her physical appearance, personal characteristics, and witch-like actions. You can do this separately or integrated with your historical analysis (see below).

- iii) An analysis of where the ideas about witches in terms of appearance, characteristics, and actions come from historically. You must discuss AT LEAST three historical aspects of your witch figure (preferably one from appearance, characteristics, actions) and explore the connection between the historical evidence and modern representation. Are these ideas represented accurately, based on the evidence we have from the past? If they are not, how are they changed/ modified and why? (this section and the one above should make up the bulk of your essay 5-7 pages)
- iv) A discussion of the context of the modern representation itself. Who is the creator? What is his or her background? When was it developed? What was going on at that time? How does this context impact the representation? (1-1.5 pages)