Research Paper Guidelines
The Old South - HIST 316 - Spring 2017 - Dr. McIntyre

GENERAL. Two of the main goals of this course are to be able to develop and defend historical arguments and to express ideas clearly, logically, and persuasively. As such, students will conduct their own research on a topic of their choice (that has to do with the Old South!) using both primary and secondary sources. The paper should be 8-10 pages long, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins.

INTRODUCTION. 1-2 paragraphs.
1. Sets out the problem to be discussed.
2. Outlines the structure of the argument.
3. CLEARLY states the thesis, e.g. the argument that you will maintain or prove in the paper. (See below.)

Suggestions:
• Quickly establish the issue your paper confronts. What, where, when are we examining?
• Be specific. In a paper about Frederick Douglass, references to the “days of slavery” are vague and unhelpful, as are phrases like “since the beginning of time...” or “Humans have always...” Root your statements in time and place.
• Catch the reader’s attention. Consider starting with an example, a quotation, a statistic, or, especially exciting in history, a story. Just be sure that the story fits your theme and that you can use it to help unify your paper.
• Give a subtle road map. For example, if your paper breaks down into political, social, and cultural components, let the reader know.

THESIS. Your argument in 1-2 sentences, at the end of the paper’s introduction. The thesis should be specific, well-defined, and based on what you find in primary documents.

BODY. What do I need to support my argument? If this question is difficult to answer, you may need a more interesting thesis!

Structure. Often suggested by your thesis. (political, cultural, and economic effects = discussion of each)

Topic Sentences. Should tell the reader what the paragraph is about; “mini-theses.”

Support. Follows topic sentences. You should include two kinds of support:
1. Source evidence and quotations. Taken from primary and secondary sources. Can be quoted or paraphrased. Use Chicago or Turabian style guide to cite sources using footnotes.
2. Your analysis. Material from primary and secondary sources should NEVER stand alone. You must always interpret and analyze the sources. How does this data support your point? Provide the connections between source evidence and your thesis.

Transitions. Link your ideas with transitional phrases between paragraphs. Often, the last sentence of a paragraph begins to guide the reader to the next idea.

CONCLUSION: About a paragraph. Should briefly recapitulate the thesis and pull all your arguments together. Should also (a) suggest why the argument is important in the bigger scheme of things, (b) suggest avenues for further research, or (c) raise a bigger historical question.

CITATIONS. ALL sources MUST be cited using footnotes in Chicago or Turabian style. (See Chicago Style Handout for more guidelines.)

DATES TO REMEMBER. (See syllabus for more information.)
Monday, March 20. Bibliography Due. At least 3 primary and 3 secondary sources.