Guidelines for Abstracts
Dr. McIntyre - History 316 - Old South - Spring 2017

What is an abstract?
An abstract is a one-paragraph summary of a research project. Abstracts precede papers in research journals and appear in programs of scholarly conferences. In journals, the abstract allows readers to quickly grasp the purpose and major ideas of a paper and lets other researchers know whether reading the entire paper will be worthwhile. In conferences, the abstract is the advertisement that the paper deserves the audience's attention.

What should the abstract include?
Think of your abstract as a condensed version of your whole project. The reader should understand the nature of your research question. Like abstracts that researchers prepare for scholarly conferences, your abstract will reflect work still in progress at the time you write it. Although the content will vary, all abstracts convey the following information:

- The purpose of the project. What are you trying to accomplish?
- The research problem that motivates the project. What are the big questions you have about the project?
- The methods used to address this research problem. What kinds of documents or primary sources will you examine?
- The conclusions reached or, if the research is in progress, what the preliminary results of the investigation suggests. From your brief examination of the sources, what direction do you think your paper will go in?
- The significance of the research project. Why are the results useful? What is new to our understanding as the result of your inquiry?

Whatever kind of research you are doing, your abstract should provide the reader with answers to the following questions: What are you asking? Why is it important? How will you study it? What will you use to demonstrate your conclusions? What are those conclusions? What do they mean?

Style
The abstract should be one to two paragraphs and between 150-200 words. Edit it closely to be sure it meets the Four C's of abstract writing:

- Complete — it covers the major parts of the project.
- Concise — it contains no excess wordiness or unnecessary information. Use active voice and pay attention to excessive prepositional phrasing.
- Clear — it is readable, well organized, and not too jargon-laden.
- Cohesive — it flows smoothly between the parts.

Type the (anticipated) title of your paper and your name, centered, at the top of the abstract. Type the abstract itself, single spaced, in the body. Please include a word count somewhere on your paper.