

## **History Department Writing Checklist**

1. \_\_\_ Is your name, the course prefix, number, name, crn number, the name of the assignment, and the date on your assignment?

For example:

Jane Doe, HIS 1220 American History since 1865, CRN 42668,  
Summer 2009, Assignment 1 Paper, "The Great White Fleet," July 1,  
20XX.

2. \_\_\_ Do you understand the assignment? If the instructor has given you directions on how to do an assignment, have you read those directions and understood them?

3. \_\_\_ Does your assignment meet the length requirements?

4. \_\_\_ Is your assignment double spaced?

5. \_\_\_ Have you carefully read your paper to catch errors that spell check may miss? For example, have you used the words "there -- their," "principal -- principle," and "capitol -- capital" correctly?

6. \_\_\_ Have you paid attention to grammatical rules? Do your verbs agree with their subjects? Are your pronouns in the proper case?

7. \_\_\_ Have you used capital letters correctly? Have you capitalized names of states, cities, people, rivers, and other geographical features? Have you avoided capitalizing words that do not need capitalization?

8. \_\_\_ Do all of your apostrophes indicate possessives?

The only time you should use apostrophes in a paper is to indicate a possessive. All other grammatically correct apostrophes indicate contractions, which should be avoided in formal writing. So, for example, write, "it is" not "it's."

9. \_\_\_ Have you avoided capricious changes in verb tenses? Usually in history papers, it is best to write in the past tense.

10. \_\_\_ Have you italicized the names of newspapers and the titles of books?

11. \_\_\_ Have you avoided plagiarizing material?

If you quote a source, you must put the quoted material in quotation marks and provide a footnote indicating the source. Taking a source and slightly revising it by changing a few words or the order of sentences is plagiarism.

12. \_\_\_ Have you cited your sources? You should supply an endnote for anything that you quote directly. You should put quoted material in quotation marks.

13. \_\_\_ Have you avoided using abbreviations except in cases in which the abbreviation is extremely common.

Mr., Ms., Dr., Sr., Jr. are common abbreviations, but Col. to indicate colonel or Gen. to indicate general are not. Although you should abbreviate names of states in bibliographic citations, you should not do so in the body of your paper. In bibliographies or notes do not use post office abbreviations for states. For example, Colorado is abbreviated Co. not CO.

14. \_\_\_ Have you kept both a hard copy and an electronic copy of your paper? If a paper is lost, the instructor will expect you to be able to produce another copy.