

THE FORMULA

FOR EVERY PAPER YOU WRITE IN THIS CLASS:

The aim of the papers is for you to formulate and defend a historical thesis, or argument. Excellent papers will, in all of its parts, and draw relevant evidence *from all reading assignments and films for the theme*. Mediocre or unacceptable papers are abstract ruminations about power rather than pieces of historical writing that marshal evidence to defend an interpretation of history. Or they are standard “book reviews,” focus on only part of the reading, or simply repeat an author’s argument without critical thought. A response that does not explicitly cite evidence from all of the relevant weekly readings or that does not credit an author’s argument—even if the response synthesizes all of the readings for the week-- will not have successfully answered the question.

Excellent papers also consider, to an appropriate degree, both historical facts and the larger themes about resistance and rule, as well as the politics of writing colonial history that frame the class. An “appropriate degree” means that an essay that is only about theories, rather than a historical argument about specific people, places, and events, will not be acceptable. But a paper that does not attempt to think through larger implications of what those people, places and events mean for colonial Latin American history will not be considered “excellent.”

Every paper you write must follow the following 5-paragraph format, or “The Formula”:

- I. **Paragraph 1: Introduction.**
 - a. Thesis. The very first sentence of the paper must be formulated as a declarative statement. This is your thesis.
 - b. The first paragraph must preview the arguments supporting your thesis, as they will appear in the paper. A preview of arguments is a sentence or two that gives a list of the three or four sub-arguments in your paper.
- II. **Paragraph 2: Subargument #1.** Here is where you explain in depth the first fact or combination of facts that you’ve read that supports your argument. *You should quote sparingly but cite the source of your information in parenthetical style. You only must give the author’s last name and page number in a cite, before the period, like this: (Conrad and Demarest, 23). You don’t need to cite lectures.*
 - a. Either the first sentences of the paragraph must summarize the subargument and connect it back to the thesis.
 - b. The last sentence of the paragraph must transition to the next subargument.
- III. **Paragraph 3: Subargument #2.** Here is where you explain in depth the second fact that you’ve read and gleaned from lectures that supports your argument.
- IV. **Paragraph 4: Subargument #3.** Here is where you explain in depth the third fact that you’ve read and gleaned from lectures that supports your argument.
- V. **Paragraph 5: Conclusion:** Here you’ll restate your conclusions.
 - a. Your thesis should reappear here, in a slightly different form.
 - b. A conclusion is a summary, but it is more than restating your thesis. Because you’ve taken your reader through each point, you have an opportunity to make your argument more powerfully in the conclusion than in the introduction. It may be here that your reflections on the larger theoretical implications of your argument can be made most effectively. The conclusion is where you can really shine. Don’t neglect it.

HOW TO CITE COURSE READINGS:

- You absolutely must cite page number references for specific arguments or thoughts in the texts, or the name of films from which you draw your information:

As Eva Perón's fellow actress revealed, many upper-class Argentines were unprepared for her political success ("Evita: The Woman and the Myth.")

- If it is clear from your sentence who the author is, just cite the page number; if not put the author's name in the parenthetical reference. Examples:

As Socolow points out, an upper-caste colonial man might be humiliated by standing before a colonial judge (p. 42 or 42).

An upper-caste colonial man might be humiliated by standing before a colonial judge (Socolow, 42).

QUICK TIPS

- Resist the temptation to simply write about each reading in isolation from the others. Synthesize your answer to the question into ONE THESIS that appears AT THE BEGINNING of the paper.
- Remember, your paper will not be judged only on finding evidence that supports your particular argument, but also on thinking through evidence that may contradict your thesis. Handle contradictory evidence by stating why you believe that it does not undermine your basic argument
- Conclude your reaction with a sentence that ties it all up.
- REVIEW your essay for grammar, sentence structure and common writing problems, paying careful attention to avoiding problems discussed in the "Editing Key," which will help you banish for good those pesky writing errors. Making a mistake listed on the Editing Key will hurt your grade. So be sure to check it out.