

A Guide for Writing Term Paper and Class Presentation

Notre Dame de Namur University

HST 2430 01

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Following points should help clarify the requirements for writing a good term paper.

General Remarks:

- 1) Your term paper is one of the pivotal elements of this course and accounts for 35% of your grade (45 % if you include the presentation).
- 2) Your term paper is graded for both content and style.
- 3) Your topic needs to be on a **point of encounter between the West and the world of Islam. This could be a beneficial exchange or a deadly conflict, and everything in between. Your subject matter may come from any field of interest, from arts to politics, from science to cookery.** In your paper/presentation, you shall make an attempt to relate something about the West with something about the world of Islam. In doing so (a) you shall be analytical, that is: you would explore the causes and consequences of the encounter/exchange. Your explanations could be economic, political, intellectual, psychological, etc. What is important is that you have a rigorous and scholarly explanation; and (b) you shall make an effort to be objective and impartial, that is to say, you shall try to see the situation from all sides.
- 4) **As part of your research leading up to your paper, you will keep a research journal. In your research journal you will report what you have done (read, watched, discussed, etc.) to advance your research, and how that activity has helped you in this regard. You shall also briefly describe what you need and plan to do next. I will inspect your journal periodically to assess your progress. You shall submit your journal along with your paper at the end.**
- 5) Selecting a specific, interesting and less explored topic and finding an equally interesting style of presenting it are essential elements of a good term paper. (Note: the more specific a topic, and hence, the more in-depth, analytical and complex your argument the higher the value of, and the grade for, your effort would be.)
- 6) Choose a topic that you like to learn more about, and share your enthusiasm for learning new things with your classmates. Your grade will reflect your courage in exploring new areas of knowledge.
- 7) In choosing a topic and in presenting it effectively, it is always imperative to remember that the goal is to please, move and educate your audience.
- 8) Your term paper should be more than 7 single-spaced (14 double-spaced) pages long. It should include a solid bibliography. A solid bibliography is up-to-date and includes books and articles of a scholarly nature.
- 9) Choose a topic that can be adequately explored in the specified period. Make sure that you understand it well enough to intelligently answer the questions your classmates or I may ask. Your response to such questions will affect your grade.

Procedures and Deadlines:

The steps specified below are not optional. To earn the full grade for the term paper and presentation, they must be followed diligently.

- 1) Thursday, Oct. 18-- you need to hand in a typewritten proposal. A good proposal is not just a statement of a dream or a project, but demonstrates evidence of preliminary research. Your proposal must at least specify the following:
 - Your name and an email address
 - A title for the topic you wish to study
 - At least three paragraphs introducing your central thesis, and how you intend to study it,
 - Your reasons for regarding it as a topic worthy of understanding and discussion for **this particular course**,
 - Evidence of preparatory research and reading about the topic, such as a **review of at least two sources** you plan to consult for writing your paper. In this annotation of sources, you shall explain why they are useful for your research.
 - A **preliminary bibliography** (Your bibliography must include books and articles of scholarly nature. It should include recent publications.)
 - If you have any question about selecting a topic come and see me in time for the due date.
- 2) Thursday, November 29 -- you need to submit a typewritten paper containing a detailed outline or a draft of your term paper. It should include a complete bibliography.
- 3) Your term paper is due on the last day of class meeting (Thursday, December 6). You shall submit your journal of research activity along with the paper.

- **Note: You are responsible for tracking the time line. Delays at each step will adversely affect your grade.**
- **You will submit a hard and an electronic copy of the paper.**
- **Your paper will be evaluated for both content and style (English composition and grammar; please ask for help from the Writing Center).**
- **Your paper and your research activities as reflected in your journal must be compatible.**

I look forward to an engaging period of preparation capped with an exciting and scholarly term paper.

Ali Ferdowsi