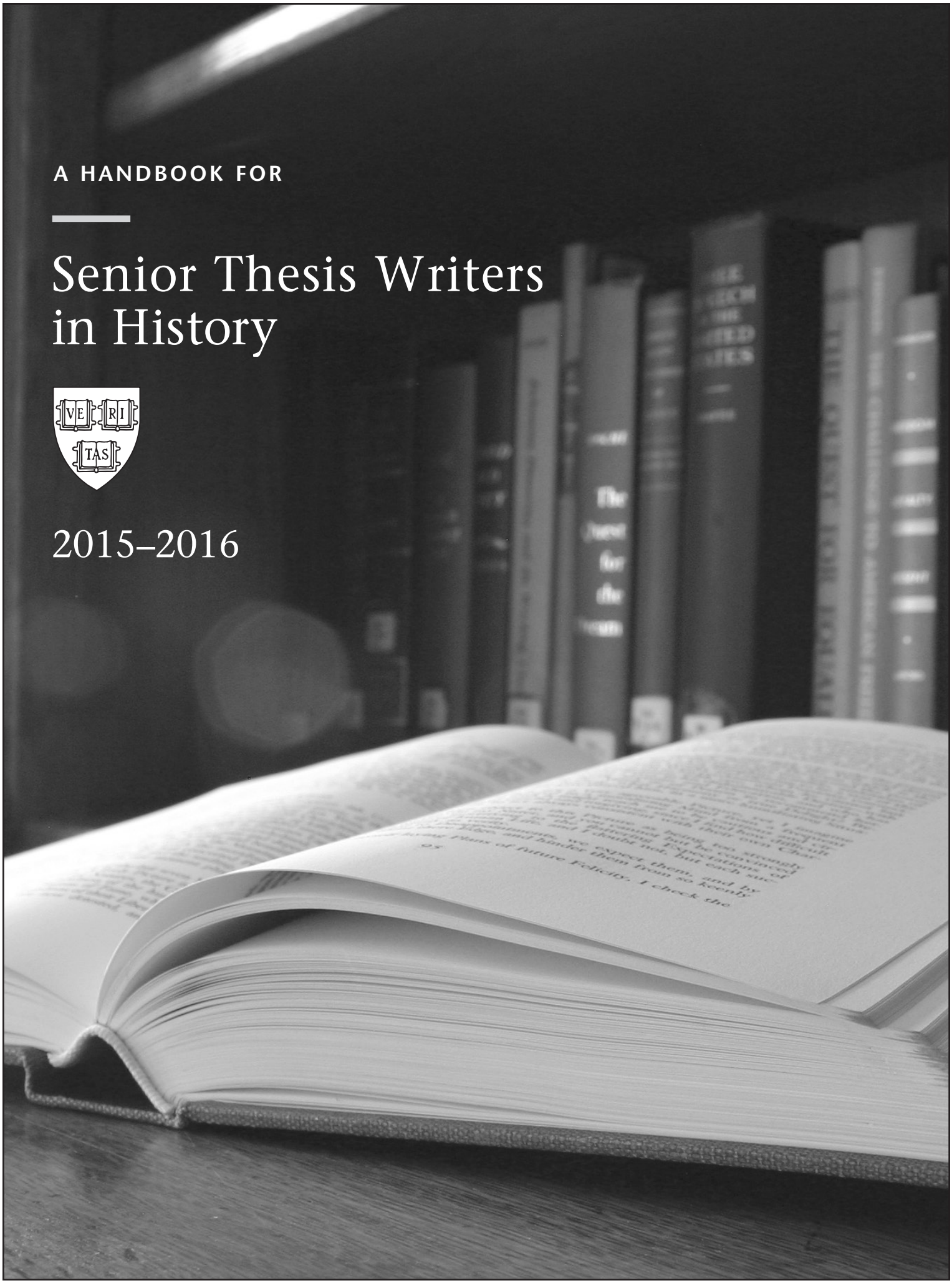


A HANDBOOK FOR

Senior Thesis Writers in History

2015–2016

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Overview of the Thesis Process

Your senior thesis will hopefully become the most memorable experience of your academic career at Harvard. Over the course of several months, you will work in a one-on-one relationship with an adviser and participate in an ongoing seminar with other thesis writers. Near the mid-point of the thesis process, you will present your work-in-progress to the History Department's community of undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty. Though the focus of the thesis experience should be the investigation of a historical subject and composition of an authoritative essay, there are also some practical considerations to keep in mind.

All senior theses are due on the same day in March; however, until then, progress on each thesis will vary depending on a number of factors. Two of those factors are the personal schedules of your adviser and you. The **Timetable for Thesis Writers** provides a framework for organizing your time during the thesis process. You and your adviser are responsible for adapting the pace of your particular thesis project—which depends on your research agenda and both of your schedules—to the general departmental timetable. If you and your adviser can adhere to the timetable, then you will have nearly one full month to revise your thesis before submitting the final version—an advantage that is often the difference between a merely completed thesis and a good or excellent one.

The **syllabus of the Senior Thesis Seminar** reflects the communal element of the thesis experience. While the student-adviser relationship is fundamental, the seminar offers you an opportunity to benefit from the collective wisdom, best practices, and detached opinions of your peers. The seminar will also provide practical guidance to help you to improve your techniques for researching, writing, and revising your thesis. You should report on seminar discussions to your adviser as you chart your individual course through the thesis process.

The **check-in sheets** that cover September through March will help you and your adviser identify options before windows of opportunity close on topic development, follow-up research, and thesis composition. Embarking on a senior thesis is exciting—and at times daunting. The exercises that follow break the process down into manageable steps and will help you make the most of your experience.

Timetable for Thesis Writers 2015-2015

Assignments marked with an asterisk (*) are due to the Undergraduate Office (Robinson 101) by 5:00 PM on the date specified, unless in-class submission is noted in the parentheses. All other assignments should be handed in to your adviser.

Note Regarding Chapter Drafts:
There is no standard structure for senior theses. For the purposes of the timetable below, a chapter draft is meant to be a substantial and coherent block of writing. The subject and scope of a thesis will dictate how many chapters are included and how long each chapter will be. Also, the nature and schedule of the research phase may influence the order in which chapters are written. Thesis writers and advisers should discuss plans and expectations for these drafts.

Date	Material Due
9 September 2015	*Thesis Prospectus due (in class)
15 September 2015	Zotero Workshop
Week of 5 October 2015	Annotated bibliography of primary and secondary sources prefaced by provisional interpretation
14 October 2015	*Title of conference presentation due (in class)
Week of 19 October 2015	Outline of conference presentation due
5-6 November 2015	Senior Thesis Writers Conference
Week of 30 November 2015	Draft of first chapter due
10 December 2015	**25-35-pp paper due* *(only students dividing History 99 for half-course credit)*
Week of 11 January 2016	Draft of second chapter due
25 January 2016	*Draft of peer-review chapter due to the Undergraduate Office, 5:00 PM (drafts available for pickup on Tuesday, 27 January at noon)
Week of 1 February 2016	Draft of third chapter due
3 February 2016	*Finalized thesis title due (in class)
15 February 2016	*Draft of introduction due to the Undergraduate Office, 5:00 PM (drafts available for pickup on Tuesday, 17 February at noon)
10 March 2016	**Theses Due to Robinson 101 by 5:00 PM and uploaded to 99 iSite**
15 April 2016	Theses and readers' comments returned to students
29 April 2016	*45-50-page paper due (only students moving to basic program and taking History 99 for full-course credit)

History 99: Senior Thesis Seminar

Wednesdays, 6–8 PM

Elizabeth More
Robinson 102
more@fas.harvard.edu
Office Hours: Tues. 2-4
(Sign up online: u.history.fas.harvard.edu)

Guillaume Wadia
Robinson L10
gwadia@fas.harvard.edu
Office Hours: Fri. 2-4

Course Objectives

The Senior Thesis Writers' Seminar has a twofold purpose. The first is to provide you with practical guidance and writing advice as you complete a senior thesis in History. We will discuss many of the common hurdles and pitfalls that past students have encountered. Over the course of the year, we will cover a variety of issues from macro-organization to formatting and polishing the final draft. The second purpose of this seminar is to bring you together with other thesis writers to share experiences, interests, successes, and techniques. Writing a senior thesis can be an isolating experience; comparing approaches, exchanging advice, and simply staying current with the work of colleagues helps to dispel the confusion and frustration often encountered by writers at any level. Indeed, collegiality and intellectual exchange are at the heart of any academic seminar, and those can be the most rewarding aspects of History 99.

The senior thesis should be the culmination of your academic experience at Harvard. It will also be the longest and most complex piece of writing that most of you have ever developed, and you will face a number of new challenges along the way. Consequently, we will focus much of our attention on the process of writing an extended, multi-chapter work. Critical thinking and self-aware writing are inherently linked, and as the seminar progresses we will address matters of style and language.

This seminar will also prepare you for the Senior Thesis Writers Conference, which is attended by History Department faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates. At the conference, each thesis writer will explain his or her thesis project during a 15-minute presentation. The audience will be given 15 minutes to ask questions of and provide feedback to each presenter. This feedback often proves invaluable in sharpening the argument of the thesis.

Course Requirements

Attendance at seminars is mandatory. You must have a valid excuse for missing a meeting and notification must be given in advance for any absence not due to health problems. In the event of an absence, be prepared to provide documentation from your Allston Burr Resident Dean or a clinician from Harvard University Health Services. Unexcused absences may prompt an UNSAT for the fall term and/or exclusion from the spring term of History 99; this could jeopardize your ability to complete your degree requirements and effectively move you to the basic program in History.

At some point during fall Reading Period, you must schedule a meeting with your seminar leader to discuss the progress of your thesis.

Schedule of Course Meetings

- **Seminar 1:** **Wednesdays, 6-7 PM,** **Robinson Lower Library**
- **Seminar 2:** **Wednesdays, 7-8 PM,** **Robinson Lower Library**

Sept. 9	**Embarking on a Thesis** *How to begin your project.*
Sept. 16	**Managing Your Research** *How to make the most of library resources and organizational techniques.*
Sept. 23	**Critiquing a Sample Thesis** *Discussion of Elizabeth David's "History for a Changed World"*
Sept. 30	**Staking out Your Turf** *How to position your project in the relevant historiography.*
Oct. 14	**Explaining Your Thesis** *How to structure your conference presentation.*
Oct. 28	**Preparing for the Big Show** *How to give an effective oral presentation, and invite helpful feedback.*
Nov. 5-6	**Senior Thesis Writers Conference** *Presentation of works-in-progress.*
Nov. 18	**Taking the Next Step** *How to write your first chapter.*
Dec. 4-10	**One-on-One Meeting with Seminar Leader** *Discussion of progress in fall and agenda for spring.*
Jan. 27	**Chapter Workshop** *Peer review of a body chapter. [NB: Submit two copies of your chapter draft to the Tutorial Office by 5:00 PM on Monday, Jan. 26. Drafts will be available for pickup on Tuesday, Jan. 27 at noon.]*
Feb. 3	**Revision Workshop** *Refining your argument, writing your introduction, and packaging your thesis*
Feb. 17	**Finishing Touches** *Review, check, and double-check requirements, peer-review of introduction. [NB: Submit two copies of your introduction draft to the Undergraduate Office by 5:00 PM on Monday, Feb. 16. Drafts will be available for pickup on Tuesday, Feb. 17 at noon]*
Mar. 10	**THESES DUE TO ROBINSON 101 AND UPLOADED ON 99 WEBSITE BY 5:00PM**

Monitoring Thesis Progress

History 99 has no formal course requirements of regular readings, response papers, and examinations. Such independence comes with a great deal of responsibility because you and your adviser must devise a plan that accounts for your research agenda, the Timetable for Thesis Writers, and your individual schedules. As you and your adviser set (and likely adjust) a calendar for thesis progress over the next several months, the following series of check-ins will suggest ways to balance scholarly ambitions with practical considerations as the latter change from week to week and month to month. The questions, timely reminders, and scheduling tips in these check-ins emerge from the actual experiences of former thesis writers and their advisers.

Rehearsing the Three Thesis Tricks or The Elevator Pitch

Get into the habit of explaining your thesis project clearly and succinctly. This takes a lot of practice as you have to be able to explain it to various audiences. When you meet with your adviser, you will likely focus on specific issues, such as books you just read or documents you just gathered. Often, there is little time to discuss the big picture but try the following to keep reminding yourself of your project's main goals. In conversation or by e-mail with other thesis writers, roommates, and family members: state three sentences about your historical topic; raise three analytical or historiographical questions about your topic; and, describe three collections of primary sources you intend to investigate. Each trick might be more valuable at different stages in the project. Describing three collections of primary sources will be more useful towards the start of your project than the end, for example.

Another way to think about the big picture is the classic "elevator pitch." How would you explain your thesis in thirty seconds or a minute to a knowledgeable stranger?

Setting Weekly Thesis Goals

During the fall term, you should set 2-3 weekly thesis goals in consultation with your adviser—discrete tasks that require 3-4 hours of sustained focus:

- **Reading secondary works.** Familiarize yourself with a couple of books or articles and then write summaries. You do not necessarily need to read every page of a secondary work to extract what you need from it. You might also consult book reviews on potentially relevant works.
- **Researching primary sources.** Set research goals based on estimates of what is achievable in a 3-4-hour block. For example, if you plan to scan a certain periodical for your thesis, you might aim to get through a particular run of six months.

During January—if not earlier—you should establish a consistent writing schedule. Keep the following points in mind:

- **Write early and write often—no writing is wasted.** Writing is often the best way of thinking through your ideas and you may find that your best ideas emerge as you write. Don't wait to "finish" your research before you process it on paper, or you'll never get to the processing part. If you're stuck, try writing out the three thesis tricks, or free-write for half an hour. Carry a notebook wherever you go and jot down thoughts, outlines, or questions whenever they enter your head. Keep a document of your thoughts as you read through primary sources and secondary works. Look back at that document when you start to write. You may find many excellent places to begin. There is no requirement that everything you write ends up in the thesis, no guarantee you'll remember an idea an hour after you have it, and no writing that doesn't refine your thinking.
- **Schedules work over time—*if they are followed*.** Deviate as little as possible from your schedule. Theses are not written in a day, or a week, or even a month, but emerge from many individual hours of sometimes prolific, sometimes apparently futile writing. If you write regularly, preferably a few hours every day, the law of averages will work in your favor.
- **You're writing your thesis, not reinventing yourself.** Productive scholarship depends on regular habits that work *for you.* Now is not the time to become a morning person if you do your best writing at midnight. Experiment with new techniques if you like, but remember that the finished project alone is graded; no style points are awarded for the work that goes into it.

September | **Thesis Progress Check-In**

Establishing the Advising Relationship

As soon as the semester starts, make sure that you and your adviser share the same expectations for your working relationship. This relationship will evolve over time and depend on your personal styles, but it is worth trying to establish some basic parameters so there is no confusion or frustration for either party:

- How often will you meet during the fall term? Weekly? Twice a month? Whenever you have findings to report?
- What does your adviser expect you to do in preparation for your meetings? E-mail ahead of time with notes on the latest sources you have consulted, or writing you have done? Merely come to meetings prepared to discuss these things?

Choosing Courses

As a thesis writer, you have many factors to consider when shopping for courses. While your thesis should not dictate every choice you make, bear the following in mind:

- **Assignment Schedule.** When deciding between equally appealing courses, consider picking the one with paper and exam dates that fit well with the Timetable for Thesis Writers (e.g., avoid major assignments due at the time of the Senior Thesis Writers Conference).
- **Synergy with the Thesis.** Will taking the course help you with your thesis? A course in History might provide you with helpful background for the specific subject of your thesis, while a course in another Department could provide you with methodological tools for the analysis you hope to perform in your thesis.
- **Degree Requirements.** Avoid taking extra unnecessary courses in the spring as you complete your thesis. Every year, students misunderstand their degree requirements and are forced to take certain courses to graduate. Consult your House Adviser to confirm your remaining concentration requirements. Also, consult your Resident Dean and/or on-line student record to confirm your remaining Gen Ed and overall requirements.

Meeting with a Research Librarian

If you and your adviser find that your research agenda is a bit unfocused, make an appointment with a librarian. Fred Burchsted (burchst@fas, 5-4093) is the Department's liaison to the Harvard College Libraries. He is an excellent resource for finding sources (physical and electronic). In addition, Fred can refer you to librarians who oversee special collections around the University, such as at Harvard Law School, Harvard Medical School, and the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study. History 99 requires each of you to meet individually with Fred at some point before Sept. 18.

Before scheduling a meeting, read *Launching the Thesis Project,* page 29—especially the section on librarians.

Considering Models for Your Thesis

While your thesis will be a unique product of your research and insights, there is value in studying other theses. The broad guidelines for theses give you a lot of flexibility, but this means you have to find a way to organize your thoughts and sources. Doing so now will make your research more time-efficient. For example, if you plan to offer three case studies, be careful about immersing yourself in research for the first without leaving time for the third. Such an imbalance in the early stages will affect your analysis and writing. Talk to your adviser about this before preparing your annotated bibliography. Think about thesis structure early and often, but remember that it is normal and productive for your ideas to evolve.

Browse *Learning from Sample Theses*, page 49, for useful examples of strong thesis work.

Compiling the Annotated Bibliography

Confirm with your adviser a list of must-read secondary works (e.g., books, articles, dissertations) to include in your annotated bibliography. For practice, write a summary of a secondary work in relation to your thesis proposal, latest thesis tricks, or provisional argument. Show it to your adviser and confirm that you are on the right track before completing the rest of your bibliographic entries.

See *Situating the Thesis Topic*, page 33 and *Preparing an Annotated Bibliography*, page 61.

September | 2015

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9 ✱ **Embarking on a Thesis** *How to begin your project. Prospectus Due*	10	11	12	13
14	15 ✱ **Zotero Workshop** *4 PM and 5 PM, Robinson Basement Seminar Room*	16 ✱ **Managing Your Research** *How to make the most of library resources and organizational techniques.*	17	18	19	20
21	22	23 ✱ **Critiquing a Sample** *Discussion of David's "History for a Changed World".*	24	25	26	27
28	29	30 ✱ **Staking Out Your Turf** *How to position your project in the relevant historiography.*				

Making the Most of Your Off Weeks

Beginning in early October, the Senior Thesis Seminar meets only biweekly through the first third of November. This series of "off weeks" is timed to maximize progress on your thesis and not a break from your thesis. The first four seminars prepared you to turn your topic into a thesis. Now, in early and mid October, you need to produce two substantial documents (the historiographical essay and an outline of your conference presentation) that demonstrate real steps forward. You and your adviser should make a concrete plan for this period in the semester, because mid-term assignments in other course can make it tempting to postpone thesis exercises with flexible deadlines. The seminars that follow will focus on refining your presentation outline and skills for the Senior Thesis Writers Conference. You must have made sufficient progress in your research to take full advantage of these sessions and deliver a presentation polished and substantive enough to elicit useful feedback. The conference presentation and the first draft you deliver in November will be the basis for deciding whether you can continue History 99 in the spring.

See *Maintaining Momentum while Researching,* page 37.

Writing the Historiographical Essay

Review the entries in your annotated bibliography. Which secondary works seem to agree with or complement one another? Which differ strongly, and how? Is the difference one of focus, methodology, choice and interpretation of evidence, or a combination? Create a list of four to six authors that, based on your reading, would have a particularly lively conversation about your general topic. What are the basic arguments, the major strengths, and the signal weaknesses of each participant's contribution? What do we learn from the conversation you construct among them that we would not learn by reading each author in isolation? If you were to make a Venn diagram of your secondary works, what kinds of categories could you use to group authors together? Finally, what remains unexplained, unexplored, or under-appreciated—that is, how might other historians enhance the conversation? Write out answers to all these questions, and use them as the basic building blocks of your essay.

Planning Your Thesis Presentation

Four main objectives should guide you as you plan your presentation at the Thesis Writers Conference:

- Explain your basic topic and convince your audience of its importance
- Explain the contribution you hope to make to the scholarship on that topic, by 1) posing the question or questions you intend to answer and, 2) articulating the argument you will advance to answer it
- Explain the means by which you will make your contribution, including the order in which you will present your main questions and ideas, the evidence you plan to marshal, and the methods you plan to employ in analyzing it
- Elicit specific and constructive feedback that will help you refine your argument and methods, and boost your momentum

Outlining Your Thesis Presentation

Begin outlining your presentation by tackling the four presentation objectives one at a time, in whatever order seems easiest, and then arranging the results. Some hints:

- When trying to explain your topic and its importance, review your annotated bibliography and historiographical essay—you wrote them for a reason!
- The same documents will help you explain your contribution to the field, as will a review of your notes on primary sources. While you may not have a stable argument by conference time, you will be expected to state the questions you seek to answer and the patterns in the evidence you have found thus far. Explain those questions and patterns to a listener, and write down the results.
- Similarly, few will have all their evidence analyzed and organized to reflect the extended argument that will ultimately emerge. The conference is a chance to begin systematizing your work. Consider what you have found and how you think it all fits together, and plan to share with your audience any continuing struggles to find sources, interpret evidence, or organize your thoughts.
- The best way to elicit useful feedback is to put maximum thought and effort into achieving the other three objectives. The clearer your presentation, the more time your audience will spend engaging rather than deciphering your ideas.

October | 2015

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
			1	2	3	4
5 * **Annotated Bibliography**	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14 * **Explaining Your Thesis.** * **Title of Conference Presentation**	15	16	17	18
19 * **Outline of Conference Presentation**	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28 * **Preparing for the Big Show** *How to give an effective oral presentation and invite helpful feedback.*	29	30	31	

Rehearsing for the Senior Thesis Writers Conference

In the past, thesis writers have found various ways to practice their presentation and get feedback. Consider relying on the following audiences: yourself (with a mirror or recorder); your thesis adviser; your roommates; your family members (by phone if necessary); or, your House Adviser. If there are multiple thesis writers at your House, talk to your House Adviser about scheduling a group practice session with as many tutors as possible. Not only will you receive feedback from people with different specialties, you will also be able to learn how your peers are approaching their presentations in terms of content, structure, and style.

Preparing for the Q&A at the Senior Thesis Writers Conference

As you work on your presentation and practice it, try to anticipate some potential scenarios that might arise during the Q&A session:

- Given your subject, what historical and thematic tangents might audience members pursue with their questions?
- If questions seem to imply that you are overreaching, how can you draw boundaries around your project to make clear to the audience what you are not purporting to accomplish in your thesis?
- If someone bluntly asks "so what?"—or some polite variation of this question—after your presentation, what talking points will you have ready for your response?

Talk to your adviser about these scenarios. You will be more relaxed if you have answers in mind (or, even better, on a page of notes) when you are in front of the audience.

See *Presenting Your Work to an Audience,* page 39.

Reflecting on the Senior Thesis Writers Conference

What questions were you asked at the conference? This will tell you how an audience of historians reacted to your subject, research, and argument *as you presented it*. You and your adviser should determine which questions (if any) require follow-up research or adjustment of your arguments, and which questions can be chalked up to the constraints of an oral presentation relative to a written thesis. Talk to your adviser about how to address the audience's questions as you move into the writing phase.

See *Getting Ready to Write,* page 43.

Writing Your First Chapter Draft

Discuss the following questions with your adviser before sitting down to write your first draft chapter:

- **Which chapter to write?** Starting with the introduction can build your momentum because by now you can easily explain your topic, provide historical background, review the historiography, and outline the rest of your thesis. However, introductions often require heavy revision to fit the final thesis. Starting with a body chapter may seem daunting, but you might feel better after writing up one of three case studies or covering a third of your narrative. Just be sure to outline what will come before and after.
- **How long should the draft be?** This depends on the likely length of your entire thesis. Can your argument be made in 70-75 pages? 90-95? 110-115? After working out an estimate, decide how long each chapter should be. For example, a 70-page thesis likely does not need a 20-page introduction, unless you and your adviser think extensive historical and theoretical background is critical for readers to appreciate the focused analysis to follow.
- **How polished should the draft be?** Have a very explicit discussion with your adviser about his or her expectations. If your adviser is the type of reader who is distracted by sentence fragments or missing citations, you may not get the feedback you need.

November | 2015

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
2	3	4	5 * **Senior Thesis Writers Conference** *Presentation of works-in-progress.*	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18 * **Taking the Next Step** *How to Write Your First Chapter.*	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30 * **Draft of First Chapter**						

Meeting with Your Seminar Leader

Schedule a meeting with your seminar leader during Reading Period. This meeting is an opportunity to review your progress to date, and talk about your plans for the rest of the way. In particular it will help you plan how best to use Winter Recess and the open month of January to recharge and then get deep into the writing process.

Setting Thesis Goals for Winter Recess

It's okay and healthy to take a break after finals if you're feeling ahead of the game, or even a little burnt out. But remember that momentum can take a while to rebuild, and be careful not to let your break slide into January, which is prime thesis writing time.

Before you decide how much thesis work you should try to accomplish over winter recess, take stock of what you have achieved so far:

- Did you keep up with your weekly thesis goals during the term?
- How much research do you have left?
- How polished was your first chapter draft?

Set reasonable goals and do not pack more books and papers than you need to accomplish those specific goals. This way, you can come back to campus in January with a sense of momentum as you continue with writing and conducting follow-up research.

Planning Your January

With finals over and an entire month free of coursework, you can live a thesis writer's dream: four full weeks of concentrated thesis work. As you plan how best to use this time, whether to make up ground or save yourself anxiety come February, ask yourself the following:

- **Where will I be, in terms of thesis progress, in January?** Consider the goals you and your adviser have set, review your meeting with your seminar leader, and look ahead to the check-ins on pages 20-21. Think about your pace of work thus far and plan your January accordingly. How much time will you need to travel and complete your research? How many hours a day must you write to complete the drafts due in January and February? Do you have extra time, and can you use it to maximize time for revisions later? Draft a schedule reflecting your answers.
- **Where will I be, physically, in January?** Will you be in Cambridge to access the resources you need, or do you need to collect materials before you head elsewhere? Are there libraries or other institutions where you plan to be that have some or all of the resources you need? (Hint: Check the WorldCat system through the Harvard College Libraries website.) Your January schedule should advance your thesis while reflecting the physically possible.

December | 2015

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	1	2	3	4 * **One-on-One Meetings with Seminar Leader Begin**	5	6
7	8	9	10 * **25-30 page Paper Due** *(Only for students dividing History 99)*	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

January | **Thesis Progress Check-In**

Completing Essential Research

You should finish all of your critical research before February. This category of research includes sources that cannot be ignored without requiring you to narrow your thesis or add significant caveats to your current claims. The period from the first day of the spring term through the thesis deadline has the feel of a sprint and there is little time to gather sources, analyze them carefully, and incorporate them into your writing. The beginning of reading period is a good moment to prioritize research tasks left over from the term. Once you have made your list, explain your choices to your adviser and/or seminar leader and see if they have ideas for additions, subtractions, or reordering.

See *Maintaining Momentum while Researching,* page 37.

Keeping a Writing Timesheet

Keep track of how much time you spend writing each day by maintaining a daily timesheet, which is a simple tool for letting you know whether you are successfully making the transition from the research to the writing stage. January can slip away with little progress made on chapter drafts. Since peer reviews are scheduled for February's seminars, you need to have two presentable body chapters ready to share with fellow thesis writers. Set aside at least one hour per day for writing so you can revise your first chapter draft, finish your second, and start your third. Alternatively, you might set a (reasonable!) goal of pages or words to write each day, such as 500 words per day.

See *Maintaining Momentum while Writing,* page 47.

Preparing Body Chapters for Peer Review

Even if your adviser does not mind very rough chapter drafts, you should do at least one round of revisions based on your adviser's feedback before the peer reviews in seminar. By incorporating those comments, you allow your peers to react to a chapter that is one step closer to completion. Thus, they will be able to give you a clearer sense of how much more work you have left to do on that chapter. For example, if your adviser recommended including more direct quotations from sources to illustrate your points, you can find out from your peers if you have added enough by making changes in advance of the chapter exchange.

Choosing Courses

The most important consideration when choosing courses for the spring term is the fulfillment of your degree requirements so you can graduate in May. The next—and perhaps more immediate—issue is whether an instructor makes accommodations for thesis writers. Every year, some thesis writers are horrified to learn that they cannot defer a midterm exam or paper until after the thesis due date. Many instructors state their policies regarding theses very clearly at the first class or on the syllabus; however, some do not and you should ask, rather than make assumptions, about course policies.

January | 2016

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11 * **Draft of Second Chapter**	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25 * **Draft Chapter for Peer Review**	26	27 * **Chapter Workshop** *Peer review of a body chapter.*	28	29	30	31

Revise, Revise, Revise!

Mid-thesis students often fail to recognize the vast difference between the 30-page seminar paper they successfully executed in the waning days of reading period, and a 70-120-page thesis held to higher standards of argumentation and presentation. But any good writer will tell you that revision is the key to success: Revision can salvage a foundering project or turn a good thesis into a fantastic one. There is no exact formula for revising, but you can take your cues from your peers and adviser.

Sharing Peer Reviews with Your Adviser

What were the top three pieces of feedback from your peer reviewers? Talk to your adviser about how to address this feedback:

- **Is last-minute research necessary?** This might mean mustering more evidence to bolster your argument, or more background information for readers unfamiliar with your subject. In either case, avoid open-ended research. Compile a narrow list of sources that will serve particular and limited goals agreed by you and your adviser.
- **Should you adjust your presentation?** By February, you and your adviser may be so immersed in the thesis that you take for granted the connections between the events described or arguments made. You may need to insert more robust transitions between sections of chapters, and make certain points more explicit so readers can follow your argument.

See *Conducting Peer Reviews,* page 67.

Local versus Global Revision

Whatever the revisions you and your adviser decide are necessary, they will fall into two categories: local and global.

- **Local** revision tackles problems like mechanical errors, awkward word choices, or confusing transitions. Local revisions are important: Small mistakes distract the reader's attention and call the writer's other skills into question. But the best theses also get the global treatment.
- **Global** revision requires stepping back from the entire project and often rewriting or rearranging substantial parts of it. It means more than responding to marginal comments by your peer reviewers. It involves reassessing the ways you have stated and restated your thesis, structured your argument, organized your chapters, and used your sources. It does not, however, require changing all these things or rewriting the whole thesis. Revise to clarify and strengthen your argument. Change is not an end in itself.

Setting a Calendar for Submission and Return of Writing

You and your adviser should agree on a schedule for submission and return of drafts and revisions. This schedule will depend on how closely you have adhered to the Timetable for Thesis Writers, and on your adviser's schedule. Do not assume your adviser will read and return chapters with comments in 24-48 hours. Collaborate on a calendar of writing and meetings that accounts for your goals and reflects your adviser's availability to help.

Drafting Your Introduction

The Introduction may be the most important part of your thesis. Many readers will judge your topic, argument, and method based on the summaries you provide at the start, and even on your style. Above all, readers will expect to be told what the thesis is about, why you chose to write it, and what you hope they take from it. Otherwise, they may be frustrated and suspicious of your work even before reading the majority of it. If this is your first draft of an Introduction you may spend most of your time answering the "So what?" question. As was true when compiling your Annotated Bibliography, your answer will likely resemble one of the following three scenarios:

- Scenario #1: No one has written about my topic. My thesis explains the significance of this neglected topic and offers a provisional interpretation of this new material.
- Scenario #2: A few scholars have written about my topic, but gaps and deficiencies in the literature exist. My thesis examines new or different evidence to correct these shortcomings.
- Scenario #3: Many scholars have written about my topic. While its importance is established, my thesis calls for a reassessment of the existing literature based on recent findings, new methodologies, or original questions

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Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1 * **Draft of Third Chapter**	2	3 * **Revision Workshop** * **Final Thesis Title**	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15 * **Draft of Introduction**	16	17 * **Finishing Touches** *Peer review of introduction*	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29						

Assessing Your Introduction

Now that you have body chapters for the thesis you provisionally introduced, use this checklist to make sure the introductory chapter fits the actual thesis written:

- ☐ Does your thesis start with a hook that captures the reader's attention? Is the opening of the thesis engaging overall?
- ☐ Does the introduction provide a basic idea of the historical context of the argument? Are all of the most significant characters and issues introduced?
- ☐ Is the argument situated within a historiographical context? Is the argument's relationship to other bodies of scholarship made clear?
- ☐ Does the introduction succinctly spell out the argument of the thesis? Does it make clear the historical questions from which the argument arises?
- ☐ Does the introduction indicate which primary sources form the basis of your analysis? Does it explain why this set of sources best allows you to answer the central historical and historiographical questions posed?
- ☐ Have you answered the dreaded "so what?" question? That is, have you made a good case for the project's significance?
- ☐ Does the introduction give the reader a sense of the layout of the entire thesis? Is there a "road map" that walks the reader through the thesis, quickly summarizing the content and argument of each chapter?

See *Getting Ready to Write,* page 43.

See *Situating the Thesis Topic,* page 33.

Assessing Your Conclusion

The conclusion is often the last thing a thesis writer drafts. Since time and energy may be in short supply, use this checklist to make sure your conclusion serves its basic functions:

- ☐ Is there a clear and thorough summary of the argument outlined in the introduction and elaborated upon in each body chapter?
- ☐ Does the conclusion reinforce the fact that you have delivered what you promised at the outset of the thesis?
- ☐ Is the reader reminded that the thesis engaged a significant and interesting topic? How so? Does the thesis challenge some aspect of the historiography? Does it provide seeds for further research? Does it shed light on contemporary issues?

Formatting Footnotes and Bibliographic Entries

Citations are essential elements of good historical writing. If you have not produced formal footnotes or bibliographic entries along the way, start doing so as soon as possible. Incomplete or irregular citations may cause readers to question the thoroughness of your research and analysis. Remember that your readers will have only your final thesis to understand the year-long process that produced it. Do a reading of your thesis in which you think carefully about whether passages need citations. Also, reflect on the sources that informed your thinking, but were not discussed in the body of the thesis. These sources belong in your bibliography so that readers can appreciate the scope of your research and how it led to your final thesis.

Buying Thesis Supplies

Buy printing paper and a binder for your thesis. At the final seminar, you will receive one used binder from the Tutorial Office so you only need to provide one new binder.

Please note an important change in the History Department's policy. You are now REQUIRED to submit a PDF copy of your thesis to a dropbox on the History 99 website before 5 p.m. Your thesis submission will only be considered complete if you have also uploaded the PDF.

See *Instructions Regarding Theses*, page 77.

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Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10 * THESES ARE DUE BY 5PM BOTH AS PDF AND HARD COPY	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Resources for Thesis Writers

This section offers concrete steps to break down the large task of writing a thesis and to help with each individual stage along the way.

Breaking down the thesis into smaller parts will help you to enjoy the thesis writing process, rather than feeling overwhelmed. The chapters spell out individual tasks so that you can address them in stages and on a schedule coordinated with your adviser and the Timetable for Thesis Writers. Different students will find different parts of this section helpful. For example, you might not need tips for identifying a topic that interests you, but you might benefit from strategies for turning it into a thesis for your audience in the History Department.

This section is also intended to lead you through the tasks of writing a thesis that often seem fuzzy or interminable. You can find specific suggestions for organizing your thoughts and research materials at different stages of the thesis process. If you are having trouble envisioning how your efforts will become a section, chapter, or entire thesis, then you can learn how past thesis writers accomplished the feat.

You should refer back to this section on a regular basis, especially at those times when you want further guidance or you feel that progress on your thesis has stopped. The advice on the following pages has emerged from the experiences of scores of thesis writers and those who advised them; it is gathered in this handbook to guide you through the research and writing stages of your own thesis journey.



Launching the Thesis Project

When the fall term begins, thesis writers are at various stages of getting started on their project. Some are using a past research paper as a springboard into a larger project; they already have a sense of the existing literature and available sources. Others did research over the summer in archives at Harvard or beyond; they have a lot of primary materials, but now need to work with an adviser to sort it all out and situate it in the existing literature. Still others are looking for a topic and adviser; they need a project that can be completed between September and March with a heavy reliance on sources available locally. For everyone writing a thesis, however, the same time constraints are now in effect because all theses are due on the same day. The next few pages of this guide will give you ideas for launching your thesis project, regardless of your starting place in September.

The Art of the Possible

Writing a senior thesis in the History Department of Harvard College is a specific kind of intellectual experience. It will be at least three times as long as any paper that you have ever written for a seminar. As you consider different research options, remember that a senior thesis is neither a book nor a dissertation. Down the road, your thesis may prove to be the beginning of a larger professional or amateur project, but for this year, it is a stand-alone product to be completed within certain parameters and submitted on a certain day. The structure of History 99 is intended to keep you moving towards a final product appropriate for the capstone tutorial of the Department's undergraduate program. Whatever your topic and whenever you choose it, be sure to leave enough time to edit, revise, and proofread your thesis before it is due. While the Timetable for Thesis Writers offers flexibility for working with your adviser on your thesis and for submitting chapter drafts to your adviser, the final due date is not negotiable.

Conceiving of a Thesis

There is no definitively right way to look for a thesis topic. Usually, identifying a good topic requires a mix of diligence and serendipity. An abundance of one will often help compensate for a deficit of the other. The most important criterion for success is arriving at a topic that excites you. You will spend the next six months immersed in the study of your chosen topic. While there is time to reframe it, conduct follow-up research, or change your conclusions, there is not enough time to start over in late October, get the most out of the thesis experience, and complete the project on time.

Seek advice from faculty and graduate students who know your field of interest. They are in a good position to talk about options and will serve as a sounding board for your ideas. If you are not sure of whom to ask, consult with your seminar leader, your House Adviser, or the Undergraduate Office staff. When gathering advice on thesis options, remember that acting on this advice is your responsibility.

Anticipating Your Audience

You are writing your thesis for an audience of historians familiar with the History Department's curriculum program. Depending on your topic and the interests of members of the Board of Tutors, the readers of your thesis might have different degrees of knowledge about your specific topic; however, they will all be historically minded when assessing your work. While current events or personal interests may drive your research, readers expect that you will ask historical questions, employ historical methods, and draw historical conclusions. They will also pay close attention to your central argument and your contribution to the body of knowledge about your topic. While familiarity with the scholarly use of sources is

important, it is not the sole criterion for evaluation of a thesis. You must convince your readers that you are aware of both the contribution you are making to the field and the limitations of your evidence and arguments. None of this should leave you feeling surprised or constrained. Aside from these fundamental expectations regarding historical scholarship, you are free to shape your research agenda and senior thesis however you like, in consultation with your adviser.

Harvard College Research Librarians

The History Department is fortunate to have a wonderful working relationship with Fred Burchsted, a research librarian for the Harvard College Libraries. Over the years, Fred has guided scores of the Department's undergraduates through research projects for tutorials and other courses involving major research papers. He is eager to help and is an invaluable resource no matter how familiar you are with your topic. Fred can be reached by e-mail *(burchst@fas)* or phone (5-4093). If you plan to do most of your research on campus, meeting with him is essential to pursuing a thesis.

To ensure that your meeting with Fred will be as productive as possible, follow his suggestions and tips for students beginning theses:

- Exhaust Harvard's catalogs before using search engines for the entire world wide web. The former are structured for research purposes while the latter are organized by commercial considerations and user popularity. Moreover, there are thousands of resources that will appear in Harvard catalogs but not on the world wide web. You should also consider searching on WorldCat to find other resources not owned by Harvard. Most of these can be ordered through either Borrow Direct or Interlibrary Loan.
- Working with catalogs is not an administrative step to rush through so that you can start checking out books or copying documents; rather, it is the initial process of discovery that can show you how to pursue the thesis you had in mind or lead you to an exciting topic that you had not considered.
- When scheduling a meeting, find a time when you have 2-3 hours free. After the meeting, you can go straight to the stacks or Government Documents to follow up on resources identified during your consultation.

Using HOLLIS and HOLLIS Classic

There are countless approaches to studying any historical event, figure, theme, or era. Turning your particular interest into a thesis topic requires placing it in some kind of context. One of the first steps is using the HOLLIS catalogs to define the historical subjects (people, events, themes, etc.) of your thesis, which will help clarify the historical debates you want to engage. The availability of sources is an important factor in this process. To take a simple example, the connections between your subjects can provide the post-colon variables for a common formula used in historical titles: "Pithy Quotation: Subject 1, Subject 2, Subject 3, Date 1-Date 2."

Because you have access to both HOLLIS and HOLLIS Classic, you should understand the relative strengths of these tools and how they differ. The new HOLLIS works best as a "discovery tool," useful for exploring broad topics or getting an initial sense of the contours of your topic and relevant literature. HOLLIS also allows quick identification of a few recent works of relevance to your topic, useful when you are looking for introductory material. For these reasons, the new HOLLIS is an excellent place to begin looking for sources and secondary works. HOLLIS Classic, on the other hand, allows more exhaustive searches, and can make it easier to locate hard-to-find or obscure sources. This can make it a better choice after you are familiar with your topic and want thorough exposure to the literature as well as hard-to-find or obscure sources. This can make it a better choice after you are familiar with your topic.

e-Resources

While much of the best historical work has appeared in books that you will find on Hollis, journal articles are also an essential resource for your project. You can either search through specific journals that may be most pertinent to your subject or you can conduct a search of all articles in the core collection for specific terms. e-Resources will often prove more fruitful when you are searching for specific topics such as a person, particular event, or historical methodology. It is also the best place to turn to find book reviews of secondary works.

Here are a few other general contrasts between HOLLIS and HOLLIS Classic:

HOLLIS

- Keyword searches only; does not understand quotes, so no phrase searches
- Default display is set to "relevance"
- Right-hand side of display lists Subject terms available (see below)
- Does understand quotes

HOLLIS CLASSIC

- Default display is set to inverse chronological (newest-to-oldest sources)
- Subject term, call number, and other Browses available; however, you must view multiple records to gather Subject terms.

The examples below illustrate how basic HOLLIS/HOLLIS Classic browsing can reveal avenues for research, provide essential sources, and save you time when you sit down to write your thesis.

Pretend you have taken a course on the Cuban Revolution and one on twentieth-century U.S. foreign relations. You are now interested in the Cuban missile crisis but do not know what has been written, or what angle you want to take in your research. The following may help you start your investigation:

Using HOLLIS:

1) Open HOLLIS and browse for "Cuban Missile Crisis." You will bring up a list of almost 150 relevant entries.

2) Look at the right side of the display. Notice that you can filter the list to show only very recent titles (within 3 years, within 10 years, etc.). This allows you to identify quickly some recent works that might offer a snapshot of the "state of the field."

3) Still looking at the right-hand side of the display, look at the list of "Subjects" and click "100 more." This brings up a new page with scores of Subject headings. These are terms chosen by the Library of Congress to denote the content of books. Knowing how to work with these terms will advance your research (see below under HOLLIS Classic). Perusing these Subject headings may suggest new angles or inspire you to think about broader connections. Finding books about diplomacy and the Cold War is no surprise, but did you expect to find relevant headings as diverse as "Scuba Divers," "Negotiation history," and "Unitarian churches?" As this list suggests, there are many possible approaches to a given topic. Let this list provoke new questions, and look at the books under Subject headings that interest you.

Using HOLLIS CLASSIC:

Now, or after some similar searches, you switch to HOLLIS Classic to run a more exhaustive search by Subject headings. Remember: multiple Subject headings may be relevant to your project! Note too that Library of Congress headings are not always intuitive. For example, scholars interested in "Shell Shock" need to look under "War neuroses"; "Morality" requires browsing under "Ethics." Luckily, by starting with a keyword search in HOLLIS, you have already identified the proper Subject headings to browse in HOLLIS Classic.

Let's continue:

Continued overleaf

Sample Use of Hollis Catalog

1) From the HOLLIS Classic main screen, select Subject beginning with… and enter "Cuban missile crisis" in the Browse for: field. Then, click the Browse button.

2) The heading returned is Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962 and there are various subheadings revealed in the browse list, samples of which are below.

a) Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962

i) Clicking here yields numerous works in reverse chronological order of publication. Each entry offers bibliographical information for the work, as well as related subject headings. Subject headings found in the first few entries suggest the extensive options for broadening your view from a specific interest to a thesis topic.

(1) Kennedy, John F. (John Fitzgerald), 1917-1963

(2) National Security Council (U.S.)—History—20th Century

(3) United States—Foreign relations—1961-1963—Decision making

(4) Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962—Public Opinion

(5) Cold War—Social Aspects—United States

(6) Civil Defense—United States—History—20th Century

(7) Cuba—Foreign Relations—Soviet Union

(8) Soviet Union—Foreign Relations—Cuba

(9) Cuba—History—1959-

b) Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962—Bibliography

Clicking here yields reference works containing reviews of literature on the crisis and related documents, both bound and in microform; these would offer summaries of secondary works and/or collections of primary sources.

c) Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962—Chronology

Clicking here yields a book that is a chronology of the crisis, which can save you a lot of time during the thesis process. Chronologies let you focus on interpretation rather than factual details when reading other works. They also save you from having to generate your own time-line while researching and organizing your notes. Finally, they are valuable in constructing a background narrative when writing your chapters.

d) Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962—Congresses

Clicking here yields a list of publications containing the proceedings of academic conferences about the crisis, some of which may have included crisis participants. It might be interesting to compare reflections in these volumes (published from 1989 to 1993) to the 1962 microform documents you found under Bibliography.

e) Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962—Drama and Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962—Fiction

i) Clicking on these entries yields titles to 2 movies (—Drama) and 7 novels (—Fiction) about the missile crisis, which would allow you to compare historical memory to the historical record.

f) Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962—Foreign Public Opinion, British

Refining the Thesis Topic

You have now settled on a topic for your senior thesis and have secured an adviser. What next?

The start of a project can be the most exciting but also daunting moment. Remember, though, that you cannot do all of your research and write 60+ pages of your polished historical prose in the first few weeks of the fall term. At this stage, you should focus on how the thesis process is similar to the one you successfully navigated in your Research Seminar. Although the thesis is a different animal than the countless other research papers you have written during your time at Harvard, this section will address the many useful connections between your thesis and your previous historical writing.

Performing the Three Thesis Tricks

Start with the basics. Your first goal is to move beyond simply *having* a thesis topic to arriving at a place where you can articulate the central questions that make your thesis unique. A good way to progress from a thesis *topic* to a thesis *project* is to use the "three thesis tricks," which are a self-diagnostic exercise you can use to anchor yourself, though different tricks will be more useful at different stages. At the end of each month (and probably more often) perform these tricks for yourself and your friends:

1) Summarize and describe your historical topic in three sentences;

2) Raise three analytical or historiographical questions about your topic; and,

3) Cite three collections of primary sources (e.g., personal papers, memoirs, periodicals, government documents, census data) you intend to investigate for your topic.

If this seems like a daunting task, speak to your thesis adviser or seminar leader as soon as possible. You will have trouble getting started down any research path if you cannot identify a thesis topic, a set of questions, and a collection of sources.

Your thesis tricks may look different in September than they will in December or March because your thesis will continue to evolve. The good news is that these changes will keep you and your friends entertained with fresh acts. Evolving ideas are a productive part of more research and reading. Follow the new paths that appear as you engage in additional research, analysis, reading, and advising. For now, performing the three thesis tricks is enough. Some time soon, however, you will need to be able to justify why someone should devote a day to reading the argument you construct from the evidence you have about your topic.

You might also brainstorm questions about your topic. What do you wish you knew about your topic? Have you disagreed with particular historians' interpretations of an event or time period and why? Keep track of these questions as you move through the thesis-writing process. All good historical research results from asking probing questions. Don't worry about having all the answers but think about how you will approach finding them.

Situating Your Research Amidst Other Historians' Interpretations

Having started down a research path, the next step in thesis work is to situate your topic within a larger historiography. This situating is critical both for your historiographical overview and for defining your unique contribution to the historical literature. Begin exploring relevant historiography by using library resources:

- **Search Hollis.** Are there books written about your precise topic? About closely related topics?
- **Search JSTOR.** If there are no books on your topic, there may be articles. Remember that JSTOR does not include all journals and does not give you access to the most recently-published articles. For the most recent publications, search an e-resource such as "America: History and Life." If your topic falls in a niche not adequately covered by JSTOR or "America: History and Life," ask a librarian for the appropriate e-resource to search.
- **Search Dissertation Abstracts.** Have dissertations been written about your topic? If they have, and they did not surface in your Hollis search, request a copy via Interlibrary Loan or download it (if available).
- **Use each of the above to locate still more sources.** Comb through bibliographies and footnotes in books, articles, and dissertations to find other sources (primary and secondary) of interest. In the best-case scenario, you will find a recently-published book with a current and comprehensive list of useful sources in its bibliography.

After devoting some time to the steps above, you might find yourself in one of two situations:

1) You find that others have written extensively about a topic closely related—if not identical—to your own. You ask yourself, "Is my topic salvageable if it has been 'done' already by others?"
2) You cannot find anything written about your topic. There is no recent scholarship in book, article, or dissertation form. You ask yourself, "Can I write a thesis on a topic everyone dismissed as uninteresting or not sufficiently compelling? Can I even come up with a viable interpretation of the sources if there is no professional literature to engage?"

The answer to thesis writers in either of the above situations is the same: "Yes! This is a *good* place in which to find yourself." Your next step, however, will differ depending on whether you have a wealth or dearth of secondary materials on your hands.

SCENARIO 1:

When Others Have Written about Your Topic—Differentiating your Argument from the Pack

If others have already "taken" your topic, do not despair. Instead, be proud: you not only selected a viable project, you also hit on one that intrigued other scholars. On a practical note, you can use other scholars' work to track down primary sources and focus on those questions that interest you most.

Because a senior thesis strives to make a contribution, however small, to the historical literature, you will need to differentiate your project from those previously published. There are a number of ways to do this:

1) **Revise.** By examining previously overlooked sources, you may find that your analysis of a given subject can revise the standard interpretation offered in historical literature.
2) **Confirm.** Through a case study of a specific group, institution, geographic area, or moment in time, you may confirm a general trend outlined in the historical literature.
3) **Complicate.** With a combination of overlooked sources and/or a case study, you may complicate an accepted generalization prevalent in the literature.

As you compile a working bibliography of secondary sources and begin to consider which of the above strategies makes the most sense given your primary sources, consult with your thesis adviser, faculty, and graduate students. A brief discussion with those familiar with the subject can save you considerable time by pointing you in the direction of the most influential books and articles. It is not necessary to read everything ever written about your topic, especially if you are taking on a subject well-represented in the historiography.

Tip #1: Read books with the most recent publication dates first because they will likely cite, summarize, and review earlier works on the subject.

Tip #2: Search journals (using JSTOR or other e-resources) for literature reviews, which often take the form of "state of the field" essays or a history of a topic's historiography.

SCENARIO 2:

When No One Has Written About Your Topic - Inserting Your Work into Wider Literature

At first, it is both exhilarating and a little scary to realize that the thesis topic you proposed does not exist anywhere in the published literature. In the past, you always found that if you searched widely enough, if you dug deeply enough, secondary literature appeared. Now what do you do? Rejoice! You have selected a topic that enables you to make an original contribution to the historical literature. Somehow, you discovered sources and arrived at ideas overlooked by countless history professors and doctoral students. You have an open playing field just sitting in front of you.

Of course, the lack of secondary literature on your topic requires you to be more creative. In order to make your historical argument useful, you must speak to the larger community of historians. How do you do this? The key is situating your analysis within other bodies of historical or other academic literature. You'll want to find overall themes that your project speaks to and that others have addressed. Discuss this with your seminar leader and thesis adviser, as they will have suggestions for useful paths to pursue. An example (from an actual senior thesis) will help:

First, **summarize the topic**: the growth of youth summer camps in the United States during the early decades of the twentieth century.

Second, **ask questions** that will narrow the general topic into a subject for research. For example:

- Why did summer camps emerge at this particular time in American history?
- Where did they flourish?
- What were the stated aims of summer camps? What societal problems or needs did they attempt to fulfill?
- How did the movement's promoters describe the goals of summer camp (specifically, what language did they use)?
- Was there a gap between the camps' stated aims and the reality of the camping experience? When did this become apparent?
- Who were the leaders of the summer camp movement, and how they can be characterized (social class, race, religion, gender, geographic region, political views, etc.)? To what other communities did they belong?
- Who were the summer campers? How did they learn about the camps? What attracted them to the camps? What were parents' motivations in sending their children to summer camp?

Notice that these questions rely on the traditional "5 Ws and H": Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?

Third, **use tentative answers** to your questions (drawn, of course, from your readings and analysis of primary source material) as a means of directing yourself to relevant secondary source literature.

- Camp directors and staff often used the terms "progressive" or "progressive education" in describing their aims.

  Check out the secondary literature on progressive education. Does the growth of summer camps coincide with the spread of "progressive education?" Is it an outgrowth of the progressive education movement?

- Summer camps flourished in the North, particularly in rural New England.

  There seems to be a strong "back to nature" thread running through the camping movement. To what degree was the rise of summer camps a backlash against heavy industrialization? Check out literature on progressive reform more generally.

- Summer campers included both girls and boys, but they were segregated into separate "boys' camps" and "girls' camps." Did "back to nature" and "progress education" differ by gender?

Continued overleaf

Acquire a working knowledge of how gender functioned in schools and child-rearing at the time of camps' growth.

- There seem to be two kinds of summer camps: ones for middle class children and "charity camps" for poor city children.

  Did gender expectations differ by class?
  How did camps for middle-class and working-class children differ?

As you can see, tentative answers to your research questions suggest ways to "read around your topic." There may not be a vast literature on the birth of the American summer camp movement, but there is a rich historiography of progressive reform, progressive education, twentieth-century gender roles, and "back to nature" pastoralism. By situating your senior thesis within these larger literatures, you make your analysis accessible to a wide range of scholars. You also lend credibility and sophistication to your particular argument about how an examination of summer camping illuminates wider trends in early twentieth-century American society.

Finally, as you explore the secondary literature hovering around your topic, **look for direct as well as indirect paths linking a particular historiography to your topic**. You may be pleasantly surprised to find that a name you came across in your primary source appears in one or more of the secondary works you are exploring. A summer camp director, for example, may be quoted in a book about progressive reform because he is a member of the YMCA's national board. Or perhaps he studied under a leading progressive educator at Teachers College in New York. In either case, you have more evidence with which you can link your topic to wider trends in American society.

Maintaining Momentum while Researching

At some point—and possibly several times—progress on your senior thesis might feel too slow.

Simply put, you will feel stuck or as if you are just treading water. This is actually a very productive moment in your research. If you are hitting a brick wall, it often means that you are on the verge of working out the keys to unlocking a more innovative argument or better thesis structure. Try as best you can not to compare yourself to your peers. While the due date is non-negotiable, we each write and research at our own paces and hit stumbling blocks at different moments. It should come as no surprise that everyone's fits and starts occur at different times during the year. After all, each thesis writer is balancing an individualized research agenda with various curricular and extracurricular commitments. If you find yourself in a thesis slump, you must determine what is holding you back so you know where to direct your efforts. Feelings of frustration and anxiety have many causes: too many unread books and articles littering your bedroom floor; too few leads that seem worth pursuing; or, a flood of papers, exams, job interviews, and LSAT courses to take care of first. While there is no magic solution to getting back on track, the following tricks of the trade might help.

Prioritize your readings.

If you feel overwhelmed by the mountain of books in your room, spend two hours sorting books into two piles: "To Return" and "To Read." Start building the "To Return" pile with books that seemed interesting when you found them in the stacks but proved irrelevant when you started reading them at home. Having a lot of books in this category is a good indication that you have refined your topic and have grown more aware of what is useful for advancing your thesis. Next, flip through books you have not yet skimmed or read. Since you have only two hours, give each book 5-7 minutes of attention; this should be enough to determine if the book is worth more of your time in the days ahead. If a 30-page section of a 300-page book looks useful, mark the relevant pages so you know the size of the task when you include it on your to-do list.

Improve your filing system.

If you have photocopies scattered across the floor of your room, sort them by topic and put them into clearly-labeled (in pencil, since they may change) file folders. Do the same on your computer's desktop: create folders and categorize notes by subject, source, or thesis chapter. All of the above can help you feel less overwhelmed and more in control of your project. In addition, you will be glancing at your sources again and may have fresh insights to make note of as you file.

You might consider organizing your secondary literature in citation software such as Zotero, RefWorks, or EndNote. This will save you many hours when creating your final bibliography and will enable you to take stock of your books.

Be an *active* note-taker.

As you take notes, keep a running commentary of your own thoughts. Mark these notes clearly as your own (e.g., bracket them, put an asterisk by them, highlight them) so you can later distinguish them from information taken from a source. For secondary literature, note whether you agree or disagree with the analysis and why (e.g., your primary sources contradict an author's point). For primary sources, note your initial analysis of statements or facts. This will save you time later and keep you on task as you read: is the information you are recording really useful to you? How does it connect to other information you have gathered? It will also help with writing, as you

won't start with a blank page, but with many helpful thoughts and ideas that you gathered along the way.

Write concise summaries of the secondary literature.

Before you can situate your particular analysis within the larger historical literature, you need a clear idea of the arguments others have made, as well as the sources they used to make them. As you read key secondary works (i.e., books and articles useful less as a source of factual information and more as a representative piece of historiography), create an annotated bibliography. Note who is talking to whom within the literature by reading footnotes too. As you create your annotated bibliography, write a few sentences outlining how your developing interpretation differs from or builds on those of others. Keep editing this paragraph as you add to the bibliography. This exercise will not only help organize your thoughts, but it will also help you prepare the historiographical essay due in October, and ultimately provide you with the basis for the historiographical section of your thesis. *(See Preparing an Annotated Bibliography.)*

Remember that sources can be used in multiple ways. In addition to helping you situate your analysis within a wider historiography, secondary sources might be useful for background information. Even if you are critical of an author's interpretation in your historiography section, you can use the author's research in making your own argument. Discursive footnotes will help you navigate between multiple uses of a source.

Make a list of questions to be answered.

While the early phase of researching involves reading widely as you attempt to pinpoint your topic, your strategy will change as you narrow in on a central argument. Keep your reading and research focused by maintaining a list of questions you still need to answer or information you still need to pin down. Update this list regularly, and keep a copy (e.g., printout in your backpack, attachment in your e-mail inbox, or file on a USB memory stick) so it travels with you to the library and your adviser's office. Before reading any new source, review the list so the ultimate purpose—advancing your thesis—is clear in your mind.

When you start reading a new book or article, you can also refer to your annotated bibliography. This will remind you why you are including the source in your thesis in the first place, and it will help you focus on the most pertinent aspects of it.

Ponder the piece that does not fit.

When developing your argument, you will often find a piece of evidence that does not fit with the rest of the evidence you have gathered. There are two common reactions to this seemingly aberrant piece of evidence:

- to ignore it because, after all, this source is outweighed by the mass of evidence you have gathered that points in a different direction; or,
- to stop dead in your tracks because this source contradicts the thesis you have developed during your research.

Resist both of these extreme inclinations. Consider the possibility that this awkward bit of evidence could transform your entire argument if you can figure out how to incorporate it into the whole. Historians often find that the piece that does not fit matters more in the end than all of the other pieces put together. Your argument may become more sophisticated and more impressive as you take into account countervailing pieces of evidence.

Tackle one area at a time.

Because the senior thesis is likely the longest paper you have ever written, it is easy to feel pulled in many research directions. If you do not know where to start, go back to your thesis proposal and select one area to focus on first. Then, set manageable goals in consultation with your adviser and schedule a meeting to report on your findings after a reasonable period of time. Know that as you check items off your to-do list, you will be building momentum toward accomplishing larger goals, such as completing a chapter outline or draft.

Presenting Your Work to an Audience

Your presentation at the Senior Thesis Writers Conference in November is your chance to explain your ideas to a group of scholars, and to tell them what you have found and why it matters. You will speak for 12-15 minutes and then take 12-15 minutes of questions from the audience. This exercise is an exciting opportunity to present your work to others and hear their reactions. You might also feel a little nervous and it may be tempting to adopt a defensive crouch and to hope that no one will challenge your ideas in a way that will embarrass you. In fact, it is most unlikely that anyone will openly dispute your ideas. The conference has traditionally been a forum in which thesis writers are encouraged to refine their arguments, conduct follow-up research, or adjust the scope of their project. The value of the conference has always depended on the mutual commitment of presenters and audience members. The more you invest in the exercise of organizing your thoughts and evidence for the presentation, the more constructive feedback you will get from the audience. If you don't work on engaging your listeners, the conference will not help you much because your audience will not be paying enough attention to ask interesting and helpful questions. Here are some tricks that can help you get the most out of your thesis presentation.

Use the first three minutes wisely.

Audiences have a short attention span. If you have not engaged their attention within the first three minutes, they will start to tune you out. By the fifth or sixth minute of your presentation, it will be too late to reel them back in. The introduction of your presentation is like a contract between you and the audience. You have to promise them some sort of enlightenment or knowledge by showing them that you have found something that they need to know about. The rest of your talk will be the fulfillment of that promise.

There are several good ways to begin: an interesting story or anecdote from your research, a paradox, or an intriguing proposition.

Hang on to the audience's attention.

If you have done a good job of setting up the heart of your presentation—perhaps by opening with a startling interpretation or an interesting theory—it is likely that you have bought everyone's attention through at least the fifth or sixth minute. If you start to flag, however, you can lose that attention. These tools will help you bridge a strong introduction and conclusion:

- **Signs.** Do not be afraid to use explicit signposting, such as introducing your points by listing them: "I will be making the following three points." This can look amateurish on paper, but in an oral presentation, it is an admirable practice and your audience will appreciate the guidance.
- **Baubles.** Think of your audience as a herd of cats who need constant tempting to stay interested in you. You can entice them by dangling interesting pieces of evidence, by embedding compelling stories into your narrative, or by telling the occasional joke. Pictures or maps on a PowerPoint presentation may also help to keep the audience's attention.
- **Reminders.** Do not hesitate to repeat your main points. In a written presentation, repetition is a bad thing, but in an oral presentation, it is necessary. You have to repeat yourself as a way of letting the audience know that you are remaining on track. Besides, some members of your audience may not have been listening the first time you made your points. Repeating yourself is a way of welcoming both figurative and literal latecomers.

Know the difference between an oral and a written presentation.

The oral version of your thesis needs to be simplified and clear because most people find it more difficult to assimilate information through hearing than they do when reading. In an oral presentation, you have to lay bare the logic of your thesis and make explicit the connections between each part of your argument.

Long, complex sentences can be read and re-read in a written work, but your audience at the conference will not ask you to repeat yourself. Shorter sentences with clear transitions will serve you well for your oral presentation, even if they look like unsophisticated prose on paper.

Many scholars, including experienced historians, find that a written text is a nice safety net while giving a paper at conference. If you have a written text, you might find that printing it only on the top half of your sheets of paper will mean that you look up to make more eye contact with the audience. If you are relying on a written text (as opposed to notes or a structured outline), it is also worthwhile departing occasionally from your text in a spontaneous fashion. This can surprise and intrigue the audience, as they wonder whether you are going to be able to survive this high-wire act now that you have moved away from your safety net. You can also use this moment to look up from your text and make eye contact with your audience, as this also will help to recapture their attention.

Tip: When rehearsing your presentation, experiment with making extemporaneous comments. You will get more comfortable with practice and feel confident about departing from your text at the conference.

Vary your delivery.

Nothing puts an audience to sleep like a monotonous delivery. As you write and revise your notes or text, use these simple techniques to your advantage:

- **Pause occasionally.** The best presenters know how to use pauses for dramatic effect. There is nothing wrong with pausing for two or even three seconds between one part of your talk and the next, while you take a sip of water or a deep breath. Such pauses can feel like an eternity to you, but a couple of seconds will make an audience take notice and allow them to digest what you have just said. It gives the audience an opportunity to think of questions that they might have and wish to ask once your presentation is finished. Finally, it indicates that you have just made an important point or concluded a segment of your presentation. Now, you can move on with the audience's attention refreshed.

Tip: As you rehearse for an audience, ask for suggestions about where pauses would be helpful for emphasis or breaks in the delivery. Then, write "PAUSE" in between notes or paragraphs so it becomes part of your presentation.

- **Ask questions.** When preparing notes or writing prose, people tend to rely on declarative statements. Some statements present the historical problems or historiographical issues being addressed in a research project; however, some of these statements can be rephrased as questions. In an oral presentation, the occasional question (accompanied by emphasis on a keyword like "why" or "how") will grab the audience's attention by changing the tone of your delivery and creating anticipation of an answer.
- **Speak slowly.** Be sure to speak slowly enough that listeners can follow you. The temptation is always to rush so that you can fit more information into your talk. Resist this temptation, but do not speak too slowly either.

Tip: Rehearse your speech for friends so they can tell you whether you are speaking too slowly or too fast. As you rehearse, insert time marks (e.g., "9 MIN") in your notes or text at various points to see if you are on pace, or going too fast or too slowy. Practice, practice, practice!

Conclude on time and on point.

Part of your implicit contract with the audience (including your fellow panelists) is that you will not go over time. If you break this part of the contract, you will have forfeited some of your audience's goodwill, and you will not have been fair to the other panelists. You may also find that your moderator will cut you off. To be sure that you end on time, rehearse your speech in advance and mark the halfway point and the three-quarter point in your text.

Tip: Bring a watch to the presentation so that you can time yourself as you are speaking.

If you find that you are halfway through your paper, and you have used three quarters of your time, cut some material that you have identified in advance as dispensable. If you have practiced, however, this should not even be an issue. It is a good idea to signal that you have reached your conclusion with a phrase such as, "So what have we found?" Once you have announced the beginning of the end, wrap things up within a minute or two. Audiences tend to prefer short, punchy conclusions to long-winded ones. Also, a conclusion that is well-constructed, speculative, and provocative will pay immediate dividends.

Tip: It is usually a bad idea to end with an anecdote. If you want to tell a vignette that highlights your careful research, do so at the beginning of the talk (to lure the audience in) or in the middle of the talk (to refocus their attention). Save the end for your own claims or recapitulation of the framework of your thesis.

Use the Q&A to your own advantage.

Now that you have given an engaging talk, varied your delivery, and concluded on time, you will have earned a scholarly reward: three or four provocative and thoughtful questions that defy easy answers and cause you to think harder about your project. How you answer these questions is less important than how you listen to them and reflect on them later. When you get an intriguing question, take a moment to make sure that you have fully understood what the questioner is saying. If necessary, ask for clarification or rephrase the question and confirm that you are on the same page. If you find a question to be particularly helpful, conclude by saying, "Have I answered your question fully?" This neat trick invites your questioner to comment on your answer. Typically, the questioner will then tell you outright what he or she was getting at with the initial question. This is also a chance to feed you insights or information that can end up being crucial in the development of your ideas. Since time is short, you want to maximize the opportunities for valuable questions. Be alert to a couple of common traps during the Q&A:

- **Unhelpful Questions.** Some questions will not be helpful so answer them quickly—but not abruptly—and move on. People commonly ask questions related to their expertise or current methodological interest, even if the link to a presentation is tenuous at best. Assume the motivation is scholarly curiosity, but entertain it for only as long as it spurs fresh thinking that could influence your thesis. Politely explain that you will have to give the question further thought, or take the opportunity to reiterate the limits of your research and claims.
- **Unhelpful Answers.** You just gave a lecture on your thesis topic so do not spend your Q&A period giving mini-lectures on related topics with which you are familiar. With so much research unrepresented in your talk, you may be tempted to show off your broad knowledge

during the Q&A. Give useful answers—that is, answers that reveal the depth of your research and the novelty of your interpretation, rather than your command of historical trivia. Your answers might prompt the next intriguing question from an audience member.

Tip #1: Take a pen and paper with you so that you can write down all the questions as they are asked.

Tip #2: Remember that any one of the faculty members or graduate students in the audience could end up being one of your thesis readers. Their input is particularly important, because if you do not follow up on their suggestions, you may find them repeating the same suggestions over again in their comments on your final thesis.

Getting Ready to Write

The transition from research to writing is often difficult for thesis writers. How will mounds of evidence and notes become fluid prose and coherent chapters? Since senior year is so busy, some thesis writers feel they have little time to meditate over sources, ponder broad questions, or outline the thesis before drafting it. In fact, some thesis writers cut corners on preliminary organizational steps with the assumption that they can do everything at once while drafting. Even if you have made time for your thesis each week of the semester, it is worth pausing before opening that blank document in your word processor. This section addresses the universal need to ground yourself in your subject before writing and the common desire to start writing on page one.

Getting Reacquainted with Your Subject

The luxury of time that comes with a senior thesis—nearly seven months of the academic year—can also be a curse. Whether you started research over the summer or in September, you will likely begin drafting your thesis some number of months after your initial discovery of documents and preliminary reading of relevant scholarship. The informal (e.g., three thesis tricks or the elevator pitch) and formal (e.g., the annotated bibliography) exercises in this handbook are designed to bridge this gap and help clarify your thesis in anticipation of the writing stage. Most importantly, try not to think of writing and research as two wholly separate activities. They are often intertwined and you may find when you write that you start to discuss a topic on which you then need to do further secondary or primary research. Writing is the best way to clarify your thoughts on your subject and to identify any weak points on which you still need to work.

Are you still asking the same historical questions?

It is rare for a senior to write the exact thesis he or she proposed in September. Though the proposal may have been based on solid background reading and reasonable speculation about what primary research would reveal, the actual process brings productive new avenues of investigation, diversions, and complete surprises. The moment before you begin drafting your first chapter is a good time to reaffirm or reassess the goals of your thesis, so that the note-taking and free writing you've been doing to process your thoughts does not end up dictating them. Except for the most natural and gifted writers, producing good prose is hard work. Therefore, at the drafting stage, you only want to write in the service of your argument *as it currently stands*. Still, it is possible that even after your conference presentation you still find it hard to articulate this succinct-ly or confidently. Rather than panic, retrace your steps:

1) **Review your thesis proposal.** What historical questions did you begin with? What sources did you think you would need to consult in order to answer these questions? You may have been working all along in the service of these questions and simply lost sight of or internalized them. If so, you can now infuse your writing with this sense of continuity. Your research probably has yielded a well-ordered set of sources that you can analyze as part of your answer to these original questions.
2) **Review your annotated bibliography and historiographical essay.** At the top of your bibliography, you wrote a provisional argument based on early research. Was this argument a tentative answer to the questions raised in your proposal? Or, had your research already started leading you in a different direction?

Which direction did your essay take—and was it fruitful? Did a narrow or subtle aspect of your proposal's questions emerge as your focus? If so, rethink earlier—and, perhaps obsolete—plans for the structure of the written thesis and which issues you will emphasize in your writing. You may want to dispense with your original questions in a few paragraphs and then get right into your more specific and sophisticated concerns.

3) **Review your conference presentation.** This document should be your most recent and most articulate summary of the questions you plan to answer in your written thesis. Compare the questions and claims to those in your proposal, bibliography, and essay. To what extent has the nature and scope of your inquiry changed? Identifying these differences for yourself will enrich your writing. As a self-aware author, you will be able to convey to your reader the process of discovery and refinement. In addition, you will be able to direct your writing toward fulfilling the latest iteration of your argument rather than an earlier version.

What do your sources really say?

As suggested above, a lot has happened since you were digging through archives and roaming around library stacks. You may have formulated new questions, found unexpected evidence, had an analytical breakthrough, or experienced some other pleasure of historical research. Hopefully, you were meticulous along the way about taking notes. There are, however, a couple of questions to address before beginning to write: Are you unknowingly taking your sources out of context to advance a line of argumentation developed while working exclusively from notes? And, on the flip side, are you extracting the best information from your sources to support your line of argumentation? These issues matter for all sources:

- **Secondary works.** When reading books and articles for your historiographical review, you no doubt transcribed or paraphrased passages that highlighted a point to dispute, a gap in evidence, or an oversight in analysis. Months later, however, you may be focusing on a slight variation of your earlier inquiry or on something quite different (though still related). When revisiting your notes on secondary works, you will look at them through the lens of your current concerns and may misinterpret or over-interpret a book or article's argument because you have only excerpts that you pulled when thinking about other issues. If another scholar's work is important for your historiographical discussion, go back to the source and make sure you represent it accurately in all its nuance.
- **Primary sources.** It is in your own best interests to check your primary sources in between refining your questions and starting to write. The notes you took months ago may not serve you as well now as they did then. On the one hand, historical actors, like authors of secondary sources, deserve to be portrayed fairly and your original excerpts and paraphrases may be out of context for the questions you are now asking. On the other hand, you may be missing out on valuable information that did not seem worth noting when you read sources earlier—that is, when you had less specific questions in mind. Revisiting sources you already have may yield critical evidence for your argument and will help you to produce a more refined argument. Beginning to write with this information in mind will produce more consistently self-aware prose than adding these insights later in the writing process.

Depending on your topic and schedule, you may feel that you have too many primary sources to perform a comprehensive review. If this is the case, decide which sources are critical for your historical analysis and go back to these original documents (or close reproductions, such as photocopies or scanned images).

Choosing an Opening Gambit

As the assignments for your chapter drafts make clear, you do not have to start your writing at the beginning of the thesis—some people start with chapter two because their evidence and thoughts for that chapter are better organized and, thus, represent an easier point of entry. Many thesis writers, however, feel strongly about starting from the beginning. Some want the satisfaction of having a well-crafted opening on paper before drafting the body of the thesis. Others want to have a point of reference to give direction to their later writing. Regardless, at some point, you are going to have to write page one of your thesis—the first page that your readers will encounter. There is no one right way to begin a thesis; each topic may lend itself to a different approach. Here are some of the most common introductory gambits used by historians:

The Anecdote.

Historians love anecdotes. A well-chosen anecdote brings your argument to life, and many of the best historians have made their careers by writing "micro-histories" that often read like long, extended anecdotes. A poorly chosen anecdote, however, can lead to disaster, dulling your argument and rendering it incomprehensible. If you decide to begin with an anecdote, make sure there is a close connection between that introductory narrative and what you are about to argue. Above all else, avoid the dreaded "pointless anecdote"—not only does it leave friends scratching their heads in conversation, it also causes thesis readers to turn back a page and wonder if they missed something. There are two ways to use an anecdote and your choice should depend on the length of the anecdote:

- **Short Story.** If the anecdote is a couple of paragraphs or less, you can simply plunge the reader straight into the action: "On the tenth of May, 1869, a hammer fell on a spike in the Great Basin Desert of Utah." The Roman poet Horace famously termed this narrative technique "*in medias res*," which is Latin for "into the middle of things." If you employ this technique, your first sentence will immediately begin with a miniature narrative about a particular person, place, or time. While dramatic, this kind of opening provides the reader with no context for understanding the bigger picture. If you go on for too long, it can leave the reader feeling lost—and even anxious for the start of your argument. Opening *in medias res* is most effective when you wrap up your anecdote quickly and then tell the reader why that story matters.
- **Long Story.** If the story or anecdote that you want to tell is long (more than a page), you probably should not start *in medias res*. Instead, you can turn to another ancient author, Homer, whose opening to the *Iliad* is

instructive. In your thesis, you will need to start with a brief statement of purpose; something with the message of, "The reason why I am telling you this story is..." will establish you as the narrator, and will make clear that you know where you are going. So, before launching into a long anecdote, write a short paragraph explaining why the story you are about to tell is meaningful or significant. Once you have oriented your reader, you can then immerse him or her in the lengthy story.

The Funnel (a.k.a., "The Bait and Switch").

One way to lure your reader in is to find something that is important to him or her, and to announce that you are going to write about it. This "funnel" technique is essentially the opposite of the anecdote: instead of starting with something small, and then widening out, you start with something big, and then narrow down. Once you *bait* the reader with questions or a subject of general interest, you can then *switch* to the more specific aspect of that topic that you will address. The most difficult moment in any "bait and switch" routine is the transition because the process should be imperceptible to the audience. In the case of your opening, you have to lead the reader from a large idea to your narrower topic. Therefore, your transition might involve multiple steps so the reader does not have to make one big conceptual leap, which can be jarring. Also, the transition—no matter how many steps it contains—must make clear exactly how your specific topic relates to the large idea that served as the bait. Otherwise the reader will feel cheated, and it will look like you are claiming that your thesis topic is more historically important or broadly relevant than it really is.

The Paradox.

With a paradoxical introduction, you can immediately pique your reader's curiosity by announcing that there is something unusual about your topic, and that you will be exploring the unexpected. By fostering your reader's sense of adventure with a paradox, you are implicitly promising that your thesis will resolve the paradox: "Politics can find no stranger bedfellows than X and Y"; or, "Harvard is often cited as a paradigm of American education, but in X area it is far from being typical." Though artful, this gambit can be difficult to sustain for more than a sentence or two. Even the best writers can probably keep it going for one paragraph at most. If you do it right, however, it can be one of the strongest ways of opening your thesis. Moreover, if you begin the writing process with your opening, the labor of establishing the paradox will help shape your approach to organizing and drafting later chapters.

Maintaining Momentum while Writing

No amount of planning will eliminate all obstacles from the writing process. Everyone struggles through passages that are complex, yet critical to the analysis. Also, when writing a lengthy chapter, it is possible to lose track of the central argument of that chapter or how it serves the overall thesis. This section offers strategies for staying productive throughout the writing stage—even if the actual technique involves taking a step back, leaving a task for a later date, or having a conversation.

Make a schedule and stick to it.

If you plan to start writing on Monday, then start writing on Monday, even if you do not think you are ready. In some respects, you are never ready to write: there is always one more book you could read, one more article you could download, one more microfilm reel you could scan. This will be true at the beginning of every section and every chapter. When you reach the brink of the writing phase, additional research—especially additional secondary research—can be more of a hindrance than a help. Never do more research as a means of avoiding writing. You will only compound your problems by gathering more information that must eventually be discussed in a chapter you cannot bear to start writing in the first place. Decide that you will spend a set number of hours each day *writing* your senior thesis or make a concrete goals such as writing 500 words per day. The following guidelines will help:

Never do more research as a means of avoiding writing.

- Keep track of your hours at the computer. Even if those hours prove unproductive on some days, in the end they *will* add up to a completed draft.
- In tallying your hours, count only time spent actually composing. Do not count time spent getting books from the library or reading articles.
- Avoid being overly critical of your prose as you write because you will impede your progress. You will be able to refine your argument and polish your prose once you have a draft.
- Write the central argument of your section, chapter, or thesis in big letters at the top of your computer screen or on a Post-it next to the screen so it is waiting to confront you at the beginning of each writing session.

Perform the three thesis tricks or elevator pitch.

Although you think you know precisely what your thesis is about, you may find that you have difficulty explaining it to someone else. You should be able to summarize your research project, along with the questions motivating you. Practice this whenever someone asks you about the topic of your thesis. Your answers have probably changed several times already; this likely reflects increasing awareness of your initial topic, but avoid hopping around from subject to subject in the writing stage. While talking to faculty, graduate students, and peers is imperative, you will also find it useful to explain the project to a friend or family member who has little knowledge of the subject. Continually repeating the central goal of your investigation and analysis in clear, understandable language will help focus your writing.

Create a reverse outline.

If you have been writing diligently for several days and feel like you are rapidly going nowhere, consider backing up and creating an outline of what you have

already put on paper. Can you identify an argument? Is this argument supported by evidence? Do the various pieces of the argument flow together? Taking time to edit what you have written and clarifying its purpose can often propel you into the next five pages of writing.

Start on a fresh page.

If you find yourself overwhelmed by your own prose—20 pages of analysis that pull you under like a whirlpool—save what you have and open a blank document. Sometimes starting on a fresh page is incredibly freeing; you no longer have to worry if you are wandering off track. Start writing a new section or new chapter from the beginning. Later, you can cut and paste the pieces together and smooth out transitions.

Tell yourself, "This is just a draft." (Repeat as needed.)

The first draft of your senior thesis is just that - a draft. If you follow the thesis timetable, you will have almost a month to revise your thesis before submission. That month is critical for polishing prose, footnotes, and fine-tuning your argument so don't feel that the first draft must be perfect. All of the skills you have learned—from Expository Writing through History 97 and your reading and research seminars—will help you make the process a rewarding one. Like any other paper, the senior thesis is written in rough drafts that are gradually polished undergraduate experience at Harvard, but in the form of the final product, not the first draft.

Consult the History Department Writing Fellow (DWF), Hannah Callaway, http://u.history.fas.harvard.edu (log in with HUID and click on "Dept. Writing Fellow" at left)

The History DWF is specifically trained to tutor students in historical writing. You can sign up online for an appointment on the DWF website, which also links to other useful resources for writers. Drop-in hours are also offered.

Do not break your rhythm.

Allow yourself to write a *draft*. If the prose is flowing, do not stop to look up a quotation, ponder the right word choice, or format a block quote. At most, type in "[insert quote here]" or "[look up page number later]" or "[add footnote]." You can polish, elaborate, refine, or trim another day. The important thing is to get a draft on paper sooner rather than later. Having a draft enables you to edit and fill in blanks when inspiration ebbs. Once you have a draft of a chapter or section, you can tinker with it, reflect upon it, and seek feedback. Nine times out of ten, you will be pleasantly surprised when reading a rough draft for the first time.

Visit the Writing Center (Barker Center 019)
http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/

Talking with a Writing Center tutor—someone who knows about writing, but not your thesis topic—might help you structure a chapter or articulate a complex set of ideas. If you feel stuck late at night and want some immediate help, then the Writing Center website has useful tools for writers working through common challenges, such as incorporating counter-arguments into writing.

Learning from Sample Theses

You may wonder how others before you have tackled the same, seemingly insurmountable challenges inherent in writing a thesis. This section highlights aspects of Hoopes Prize-winning theses to help you better understand how past thesis writers came up with effective approaches to introductions, incorporation of sources, analysis, and organization. Browse the headings regularly because you may not realize the utility of an entry until you encounter a particular challenge in your research or writing. While the subjects of particular theses may be far removed from your own, the techniques that these writers used will be helpful for any thesis topic.

Prize-winning theses from the last couple of years are available for you to peruse in the lobby of Lamont Library; earlier winners are available at the Harvard University Archives. Some winners from the History Department have generously provided electronic copies of their theses. You can access these theses via the course website.

INTRODUCTORY MATERIALS

Organizing an Introductory Chapter

Melissa Borja (2004) begins with a colorful anecdote in her well-written introduction to a thesis exploring religious change among Hmong refugees in Stockton, California. After capturing the reader's interest, she takes the next few pages to develop her central research question: "What has triggered the rapid and widespread conversion to Christianity by Hmong refugees in the United States?" (3) With the historical puzzle presented, Borja proceeds to situate her research, a case study, within the established historiography. She follows this by introducing her case study's setting and discussing her theoretical framework and use of oral sources (9-11). Borja acknowledges some challenges with her research method and location and her ways of handling them (11); such a discussion reflects her self-awareness as a researcher and writer of history. Finally, she concludes with the layout of her thesis chapter by chapter.

Jakub Kabala (2004) begins his thesis by introducing his subject and setting, Guibert of Nogent, a medieval monk in France. He explains that his thesis provides a close analysis of several books written by Guibert in order to understand the "nature of ambition in a medieval career at the dawn of the great Twelfth Century" (2). After describing his subject and methodology, Kabala outlines the various editions of Guibert's works and then summarizes successive interpretations of these works over the years. Kabala handles a massive historiography effectively by categorizing the extensive literature into three camps and discussing how each scholar influenced others (4-9). He then indicates how his research question differs from prior scholarly explorations. Next, Kabala discusses his goals and themes chapter by chapter while revisiting his methodology and restating his research question.

Explaining a Theoretical Framework

Jakub Kabala (2004) provides an explicit discussion of his own theoretical framework: a close reading of two books written by Guibert of Nogent. He refers to previous scholars' works that have used this approach and sets his research questions and his findings apart from theirs. He divides his analysis into "comparative" and "psychological" approaches to Guibert's language and vocabulary (15). Chapters 2 and 3 contain especially good examples of Kabala's close reading and linguistic analysis.

Victor Ban (2005) sets out his framework in his introduction: "the integration of textual, social and philosophical modes of analysis and critical response to these approaches" (10) in looking at several texts by Plato and their translation and reception in early twentieth-century China.

Reviewing a Small Historiography

Melissa Borja (2004) does a good job with sparse historiography. Little has been written on the subject of religion and Hmong refugees in the United States, and because of the recent nature of her subject (1975-1990), most work has been in sociology or anthropology. Therefore, Borja opens her field of vision to include more general works on religious experience and immigration to the United States (5). This approach allows Borja to compare and contrast parts of the Hmong religious experience in the United States. She also discusses the barriers to historical scholarship among the Hmong (8). While the thesis is strong, it could have been more explicit and persuasive about how her work overcomes these barriers.

Reviewing a Massive Historiography

Nathan Perl-Rosenthal (2004), in his thesis on seamen and the American Revolution, expertly lays out how interpretations of the Revolution have changed over time with different "waves" of history (2-5). He properly addresses the massive historiography by relegating many of the titles to footnotes and authoritatively discussing how his thesis engages with the major historiographical questions of the current field (6-11). (His thesis contributes to the very current historiography on the Atlantic World.) Perl-Rosenthal also notes which historiographical questions his thesis does and does not address (11-12).

VARIETIES OF SOURCES

Using Unconventional Sources

Melissa Borja (2004), with an interpreter, conducted over 30 interviews with Hmong refugees. These interviews formed the backbone of her research. Because the Hmong did not have a written language in Laos, she also "reads" Hmong quilts, a traditional means of documenting Hmong experiences. Borja includes pictures of these quilts in her appendix, along with other photographs of Hmong Christian religious life in the United States.

Christopher Loomis (2004) uses a bevy of different kinds of sources: interviews, correspondence, internet sites, as well as newspapers and archives for his thesis on competition and community in the Junior Drum and Bugle Corps. This reflects an engagement over many months with many of the important figures in the drum and bugle corps community in the United States. Throughout the text, he has reproduced some great visual sources (photographs, diagrams, and brochures) to complement his writing.

Flora Lindsay-Herrera (2005) uses song lyrics as some of her sources and collates them in the appendix with translations. She discusses at length several of the songs in the text; however, it would have been an even more effective use of unusual sources if she had incorporated them more systematically by referring to them in the text or directing the reader to the larger collection in the appendix.

Relying Primarily on an Extensive Source (e.g., Personal Journal)

James Honan-Hallock (2006) uses the expedition journal of Johann Anton Guldenstädt, a Russian naturalist, as the centerpiece of his evidence. While this might seem confining, Honan-Hallock introduces the thesis by establishing how Guldenstädt's late eighteenth-century expedition through the Caucasus emerged from Catherine II's twin interests in expanding Russia's imperial reach and supporting the development of "Enlightened" science. In a substantial introduction, Honan-Hallock links Guldenstädt's expedition and findings to broader historical issues, such as colonialism and the relationship between science and politics. The reader is thus prepared to appreciate the significance of the forthcoming study of the scientist's journey and notes. Over three body chapters, Honan-Hallock explains and analyzes in these larger terms what Guldenstädt wrote and recommended with regard to the Caucasian economy, political situation, and peoples.

Dealing with a Lack of Sources

Johnhenry Gonzalez (2006) tells the fascinating story of the Polish soldiers brought in by the French to suppress the Haitian Revolution, who ended up switching sides and making common cause with the former slaves who led the revolution in Haiti. Unfortunately, Gonzalez was not able to find any letters or manuscripts produced by the Polish defectors, and it is likely that no such documents survive. Nevertheless, he effectively tells their story through several angles by examining the letters written by the French about the Polish defectors, the pronouncements made by the new Haitian government in support of the Poles, and the writings of Haitian historians from the nineteenth century who observed directly the experience of these Poles. Gonzalez is careful not to push any of this evidence too far, and admits the limitations involved in using indirect evidence to understand the motivations of the defectors. With conclusions that are carefully qualified and three different source bases to illuminate the experience of these soldiers, Gonzalez's portrait of their motives is convincing.

Translating Sources

Liora Halperin (2005) has a great introductory note on "transliteration and translation," which explains to the reader how she translated sources from their original Hebrew and Arabic. Her definitions of certain words with thorny meanings across languages are especially impressive and instructive. This effort is especially important for a thesis (entitled "The Arabic Question: Zionism and The Politics of Language in Palestine, 1918-1948") that focuses on issues of language in a historical context.

Representing Statistical Data

Jonathan Abel (2005) uses graphs (through Excel) to show the fluctuation of stock prices in his business history of the British East India Company in the late 18th century. His graphs allow the reader to easily see the tremendous change through the period discussed in the text.

GENRES OF ANALYSIS

Narrative History

Noah McCormack (2004) tells one long political history while he subtly weaves in his argument. He rarely steps out of telling his story because he does not need to—he has laid out his argument in the beginning. His historiographical discussion in the introduction sets up his argument and his conclusion reviews how his narrative has demonstrated his point. Using a number of primary documents (manuscripts, letters, and treatises) he retells the story of the origins of political parties in England in the late seventeenth century, arguing that the first political party was founded earlier than previously thought.

Intellectual History

Thomas Wolf (2005) weaves together case studies of three different public intellectuals (Lionel Trilling, David Reisman, and Herbert Marcuse) and traces their growth in the context of the changing nature of post-war America, paying particular attention to the themes of history and utopia. A solid introduction includes a lengthy historiographical discussion and draws clear boundaries around the aims of the thesis. In an excellent conclusion, Wolfe offers ideas for further work.

Victor Ban (2005) delivers an intellectual history of Plato's reception in China in the early twentieth century. He examines several texts by Plato, the translation and translator of each text, and their reception in the context of early twentieth-century China. He deftly integrates historical background of the era in China with the personal histories of each translator. Each chapter provides a generous context for the texts and translations. Ban ends with thought-provoking and wide-ranging conclusions.

Counterfactual History

Eric Shroyer (2006) provides an instructive model for conducting a rigorous counterfactual analysis. In a study of George Washington's frontier policy, Shroyer considers the implications of simultaneous wars on the Northwest and Southwest frontiers of the new American republic. Shroyer argues that Washington "accomplished a hard-won, complex stability" in the Southwest while there was a war going on in the Northwest (12). He lays out his intentions clearly: "To appreciate Washington's continental strategy, it is essential to ask counterfactual questions about what did not happen on the frontier" (32). To establish the plausibility and significance of scenarios that never materialized, Shroyer examines what members of Washington's administration thought about the prospects and consequences of a two-frontier war and an Indian confederation across the frontiers. He also incorporates the War of 1812, which was still twenty years away, as "a useful historical analog for imagining the scale and scope of a general frontier war in the early 1790s" (37).

CONNECTION TO BROADER THEMES

Treating Race, Class, and Gender in a Thesis not Ostensibly About These Themes

Nathan Perl-Rosenthal (2004) carefully considers race and gender while examining the transmission of revolutionary ideology among American and French seamen. Although he did not set out explicitly to discuss their experiences by these categories, he implies that race and gender had a strong influence on their time at sea, their interactions with other ships, and their time at port. Perl-Rosenthal traces those relationships to the burgeoning discourse about individual rights in France in the late 1700s.

Christopher Loomis (2004) incorporates questions about race and class into his thesis on competition and community in the Junior Drum and Bugle Corps. By doing so, he broadens the reader's understanding of the complicated interactions between members and their communities in twentieth-century America.

Integrating Diverse Case Studies to Suggest Larger Trends

Nathan Perl-Rosenthal (2004) presents case studies of an American ship and a French ship (chapters 2 and 4) while incorporating his historiographical arguments into each one.

Elisabeth Theodore (2005) utilizes two case studies (Ireland and India) to explore martial law under the British Empire in 1919-1921 in her effort to better understand how it was applied differently and had different outcomes.

Thomas Wolf (2005) looks at three different public intellectuals (Lionel Trilling, David Reisman, and Herbert Marcuse) and traces their growth alongside and with the changing face of post-war America.

Linking the Thesis to a Contemporary Societal Question

Christopher Loomis (2004) writes in service of a current societal question: has the role of competition changed youth civic organizations? By tracing the history of the drum and bugle corps since World War I, he raises interesting questions about young people's changing connection to civil society. Loomis ultimately argues that his case study illustrates how the tensions between community, competition, and excellence overlapped and interacted in youth activities from the very beginning.

ORGANIZATIONAL APPROACHES

Signposting in a Long and Complicated Thesis

Christopher Loomis (2004), because his thesis is so long and covers a number of different questions, uses signposting to keep the reader on track. He divides his thesis into three parts, each with several chapters and illustrations. Each part has an introduction and summation, in addition to the introduction and conclusion of the whole thesis. For example, on page 54, Loomis reminds the reader of the time period and question part II will explore, then details the contents of each chapter in this section.

Discussing Secondary Sources in Discursive Footnotes

Will Deringer (2006) has done extensive reading in primary sources to examine the life of William Petty, the seventeenth-century geographer and scholar. He disagrees with much of the previous work done by other scholars who have written about Petty. Instead of structuring his work around those disagreements, Deringer chooses to organize his work around a chronological narrative of Petty's life. This allows him to present his own coherent story of Petty's accomplishments. By confining his critiques of other scholars to the introduction, conclusion, and his long (sometimes too long) footnotes, Deringer frees up the main body of the thesis for his own original analysis.

Conclusions

Jakub Kabala (2004) has a strong conclusion that brings his subject's life to a close, then offers a comprehensive set of conclusions. Next, he revisits the historiography and situates his own work—which was just presented in the body of the thesis—within this scholarship. He also pushes his findings into a wider context by drawing conclusions about the intellectual world of the twelfth century (123). Kabala also reviews his methodology, assessing its utility in further research (127).

Nathan Perl-Rosenthal (2004) uses a "coda" that highlights considerations for future research. Because his subject was the American Revolution, he had a huge historiography with which to work. Thus, he can place his work clearly within the current historiography and show how it challenges the findings of other scholars. Perl-Rosenthal admits that his work is "a beginning more than anything else," and he raises a number of unanswered questions for future research (120).

Liora Halperin (2005) devotes part of her conclusion to integrating her personal experiences with writing the thesis with suggestions for whole new categories of analysis for the future. She effectively ties her history in with the present day to convince the reader of the subject's importance.

Exercises for Thesis Writers

The goal of each exercise in this section is to guide you through a fulfilling intellectual experience and toward a piece of scholarship you will always remember with pride. Though there is no universal prescription for producing a thesis, you and your adviser should consider these exercises as important components of the thesis process. The schedule of exercises coordinates with the Senior Thesis Seminar's syllabus and the Timetable for Thesis Writers.

The **prospectus** is one of the most important stages in the thesis project. Though no one expects your finished thesis to look anything like your prospectus—your project will almost certainly evolve as you research and write—it is nevertheless important to get your initial ideas down in writing. A well-written prospectus, though it may eventually become obsolete, is like a contract between you and your advisor, and can help you start to plot your research priorities. It is also a contract with yourself, and can serve you as a helpful reminder (especially as deadlines loom) of exactly what you did—and didn't—promise yourself you would achieve.

Reading a **sample thesis** (written by a former History concentrator) cover to cover may be the first time you confront the reality of writing your own thesis. You may ask yourself, "How can I produce something like this by spring break?" This is an important first step for organizing your thesis agenda in consultation with your adviser.

Your **annotated bibliography**, written early in the fall term, will provide a critical tool for assessing research directions. In the spring, **peer reviews** will help you to determine what options remain for improving upon your thesis. At the same time, peer reviews allow you to participate in the community of scholars composed of senior thesis writers. While immersed in unique projects, everyone benefits from exchanging insights about different approaches to historical research and writing.

As you turn your attention to revision, your **introduction** is probably the best place to start. In many ways, polishing your introduction can serve as the capstone to the entire thesis project. A well-written introduction will capture your reader's attention, explain your topic, argument, and approach, and establish your credibility as a historian.

Writing a Prospectus

The prospectus is an integral part of the thesis project and something that you should spend considerable time on creating. You might wonder why you should bother putting any effort into the prospectus when you know so little about what the finished product will be. Very few theses ever end up looking exactly like the prospectus would have suggested but that is not the point of a prospectus. It is actually about something very different than trying to divine what the final product will resemble. Rather, it allows you to put your initial thoughts down on paper and to clarify what your starting questions and source collections will be. You will invariably find new and unexpected sources that lead you down slightly different paths than you foresaw in September, and as you write, you will become aware of new arguments implicit in your work that you hadn't really imagined possible. None of this cancels out the vital role of the prospectus.

If you've never had to define or articulate your thesis project before, you will find very quickly how helpful it is to get your ideas down on paper:

- It helps you clarify for yourself what really interests you about your topic.
- It forces you to think through exactly what kind, and how much, research you will have to do to answer your own questions.
- It helps you decide which historiography is, and is not, relevant to your project.
- It helps you to foresee any logical or logistical problems you might have overlooked when you initially settled on your topic. Is it *really* possible to do this topic with the sources available to you? Can you *really* answer *all* these questions in about 90 pages?
- Last, but not least, it gives you something concrete to talk over with your thesis adviser and/or other mentor(s). It can be very difficult for even the most seasoned adviser to give you solid feedback on your project when you haven't committed to anything yet. Everything sounds good when it's just castles in the air! Having your adviser nod his/her head while you describe what you'd like to do is not the same as stepping up and giving him/her something in writing. No one can help you edit something that's never been written.

If you applied for summer research funding, you may in fact already have written something very similar to a prospectus for your grant proposal. You're ahead of the game, but that doesn't mean that this exercise isn't still important. Though you already have something on paper, it is important to use this opportunity to gather your thoughts about the fruits of your summer research. Has your project already begun to change on the basis of things that you found, or didn't find, in your summer reading? Are you still asking the same questions and using the same methodology?

The Parts of a Prospectus

So what goes into a thesis prospectus? The exact presentation may vary according to the nature of your project, but we encourage you to organize your prospectus into the following seven sections:

1. **Research topic.** What is your thesis about? Cuban-Americans during the Cuban Missile Crisis? Biographers of Charlemagne? The history of foreign language teaching at Harvard? It's important to be as specific as possible here (for example, to specify "*Cuban Americans during* the Cuban Missile Crisis" rather than just "The Cuban Missile Crisis"). At the same time, it's *not* expected that you have any sort of argument or thesis statement whatsoever at this early stage. Just knowing what you are,

and are not, going to research is enough. The argument will come later, once you're writing.

2. **Major questions.** Brainstorm at least five analytical or interpretive questions you would like to ask. You probably still have some basic factual questions at this point—what happened in 1847?—but it's important to try to push beyond those and formulate some higher-level questions that will guide your research—*why* did that happen in 1847? *How does it relate to* what happened 10 years before? Remember, too, that *not* all interesting questions can be answered in a historical study, and that many questions are of a scope not answerable within the format of a senior thesis.
3. **Preliminary bibliography.** Offer a preliminary annotated bibliography of at least five scholarly works on the topic, to show that you have a sense of where to begin your research and where your project fits into a larger historiographical context. After each reference, summarize in a sentence or two why you think that this work deserves your attention.
4. **Sources.** Identify any archival or primary source materials that you plan to examine. You need not be exhaustive, but describe the most significant texts or repositories in one or two sentences each, explaining what is there and why it interests you.
5. **Relevant coursework.** List at least two history courses (not History 97) taken in preparation for the project, and explain in one or two sentences how you think they are relevant to your plan of research.
6. **Consultants/advisers.** If you have an adviser, name him/her. In addition, or in lieu of an adviser, also name any faculty and/or graduate students with whom you have consulted, and indicate whether they might be potential advisers or mentors
7. **Research plan.** Outline a plan for completing your research in the fall semester. This may be as brief or as long as necessary to fully explain how you intend to complete enough research to make a presentation at the Senior Thesis Conference in early November and to produce at least one chapter by the end of November. If applicable and appropriate, review the research you have already done and how it has shaped your agenda for the fall.

To be approved, a thesis proposal ordinarily must be at least five pages long.

Critiquing a Sample Thesis

On the following pages, you will find a senior thesis written by Bicky David '08. Reading a completed senior thesis is a useful exercise as you embark on your own project for several reasons. First, it proves that it can be done; just like Bicky's, your pages of notes and piles of photocopies can become a senior thesis. Second, the exercise gives you a feel for the distinctive flow of a thesis, which is longer than a scholarly article (or Research Seminar paper!) but much shorter than a dissertation or book.

The sample thesis included in this handbook is by no means "perfect"; however, it does represent strong honors work that can serve as a model for your research and writing in many ways. While there are many impressive aspects of this thesis, do not assume that Bicky's style, organization, or approach is necessarily appropriate for your thesis. You should make decisions about your approach after considering the goals of your project and consulting with your adviser.

As you read the sample thesis, pay attention to its overall structure and consider some of the following questions:

- What is her central argument? What are the necessary sub-arguments?
- What assumptions does Bicky make about her subject?
- What choices of emphasis does Bicky make in presenting her research?
- How does she use her evidence? How does she cite sources?
- How does she situate her argument within a larger historiography?
- What process do you think Bicky went through to arrive at this final product?
- What kind of history has she written?
- What is the thesis really about? What is the subject?

Once you have read Bicky's work and thought about the questions above, consider the strengths and weaknesses of this thesis. Also, ask yourself if the work fits your expectations of a senior thesis. Why or why not?

Use the ample margin space to take notes as you read and reflect on Bicky's thesis. As your own thesis nears completion in the spring, you will find it helpful to look back on these notes. Ask yourself:

- Did you emulate the strengths you appreciated?
- Did you avoid the pitfalls you identified?
- What assumptions and choices did you make?
- Is the argument in your introduction the same as in your conclusion, and sustained through your chapters?

Reminding yourself of how you responded to a completed thesis will heighten your sensitivity to how readers will understand your year-long project when they evaluate your final product.

Preparing an Annotated Bibliography

The annotated bibliography is a necessary organizational exercise because it forces you to justify the inclusion of your primary and secondary sources. By prioritizing sources now in terms of how they relate to your thesis, you will save time later because some books or collections can be downgraded (or even excluded) before you study them more carefully or write about them. Finally, by organizing your sources in this fashion, you will automatically organize your thoughts for your historiographical essay (which in turn will develop into the historiographical section of your thesis), as well as generate an outline for your conference presentation.

While preparing your annotated bibliography, keep in mind that the goal is to create a document that is useful to you, not necessarily a picture-perfect model of an annotated bibliography. The annotated bibliography is simply a means to an end—namely, organizing your sources so you can make progress on your thesis.

Provisional Argument

At the top of your annotated bibliography, write one paragraph (anywhere from six to eight sentences) that summarizes the argument you plan to make in your thesis. Like the three thesis tricks, what you write here is sure to change a little and likely to change a lot before you are done. The key is to put forward a position that requires you to engage other scholarship and present evidence to support it.

Sample Provisional Argument

by Maria Domanskis

My thesis is about the use of diplomacy, specifically at the United Nations, by the United States and Nicaragua in 1983 and 1984. It will examine how the two states held different conceptions of the proper framework for interpreting the Nicaraguan revolution, with the U.S. viewing developments in Nicaragua from a Cold War position and the Sandinistas presenting their regime as a victory of a small state against an imperialist power, an issue that extended across the globe. While many have neglected to look at this aspect, instead placing the 1980s in Nicaragua in an East-West or traditional U.S.-Latin American framework, Nicaragua's redefinition of its foreign policy, based on nonalignment, demonstrates the Sandinistas' desire to work with other states, particularly those of the Third World and Nonaligned Movement, in pursuing an alternate path of development. Although the Reagan Administration, and thus the U.S. Mission to the U.N., represented the situation in Nicaragua as an internal matter that should not be addressed by the U.N., this can mainly be seen as an attempt to curb the influence Nicaragua had gained within the U.N. as a result of its pragmatic diplomacy and nonaligned status. While no great solution was to be found at the U.N. to the situation in Nicaragua, Nicaragua's use of the U.N. as an international forum to present its foreign policy and find legitimation for its regime complicates the traditional American understanding of the Sandinistas. Thus, it is necessary to examine this period when Nicaragua had a seat on the U.N. Security Council to see how it marshaled support for its policies and concerns and brought into question U.S. policy, professions of support for international law, and professed willingness to pursue peaceful solutions to the crisis in Central America.

Bibliographic Entries for Secondary Sources

After outlining the provisional argument of your thesis, you must produce annotated bibliographic entries of the secondary sources you have consulted thus far.

If you have not done so already, this is a good time to choose a style guide (Chicago or Turabian) for formatting citations.

Quota

There is no official floor or ceiling to the number of works to include in your annotated bibliography. Ultimately, you will want to discuss at least four works in the historiographical review of your thesis, so you might want to reconsider how you are situating your work if you have not yet reached that threshold. (The absence of a ceiling makes the next section regarding a hierarchy for sources especially important.) For contemplating the number of sources, you should look to your provisional argument and the section on *Situating the Thesis Topic*. Are you asking old questions and offering new answers? Are you asking questions that no one has ever asked? Your answers will help you decide whether you need to distinguish yourself from a group or set a new historiographical scene. Here are a few ways in which this could play out in your annotated bibliography:

If you have not done so already, this is a good time to choose a style guide (Chicago or Turabian) for formatting citations.

- **Age-old question.** There is a long historiographical tradition and you consider your thesis to be the beginning of the next generation. Sketch the history of the historiography by outlining how authors debated, built on, or ignored each other's work in the past. The lineage itself will determine the number of works you should review.
- **Hot topic.** A lot of work has been done recently on your topic and you want to enter the scholarly fray. Discuss why the subject has been popular (e.g., new evidence, trendy methodology, current events), how the existing literature is insufficient, and what you plan to add to the scholarly mix. The bibliography of the latest work or a state-of-the-field review essay will likely determine the number of works you should discuss.
- **Open field.** Few (if any) have asked the questions that you are asking of your subject so you need to draw connections to related bodies of literature. Surprisingly, this scenario might involve the most secondary sources because your topic will be a hub linking historiographical spokes. For each body of literature, the points above will help set the number of works to include in your review.

Hierarchy

Instead of arranging the bibliographic entries alphabetically, organize them by relevance to your thesis. If a particular book, article, dissertation, or essay is essential for appreciating the novelty of your thesis, then it should be at or near the top of the list. Such works should receive careful readings and substantial consideration in the historiographical section of your thesis. As you move down the list, there will be works that fall into some of the following categories (which are in no particular order):

- **Classics.** There is some universally known scholarship that you must acknowledge. This is important because readers outside of your subfield will look for references (whether in the text or in the bibliography) to major works they have heard of or read.
- **Tangents.** Some works approach your topic, broadly defined, but do not address quite the same issues. This will demonstrate your

command of the literature and allow you to convey clearly what questions you are (and are not) attempting to answer in your thesis.

- **Bunk.** Some scholarship is so weak that it is hard to do more than point out its flaws. While it is tempting to show your readers that you can distinguish between good and bad research, do not devote much space to a rarely cited or widely debunked work. An exception to this guideline is when the work is a best-seller or trend-setter that has (mis)informed the reading public about your topic.
- **Clusters.** Many works are so similar in approach that discussing them individually seems repetitive. While you want your readers to know how much background work you did, remember that they are looking forward to *your* evidence and analysis. Save space and show authority by grouping works into schools of thought, treating a representative sample, and relegating the others to a "See also…" footnote.

You do not need to master a book, article, dissertation, or essay that falls into one of these categories. If you know enough about it to rank it in the middle or bottom third of your annotated bibliography, then you likely have read enough of it for the purposes of your thesis.

Content

For each entry, explain how the book, article, dissertation, or essay relates to your provisional argument. Depending on how important you consider the source, the entry should be anywhere from two to eight sentences. The process of writing these descriptions places your ongoing research in a dialogue with the existing literature about your chosen topic. You can present yourself as a self-aware author by demonstrating an understanding of how your project relates to others that readers might have encountered. If you can do this effectively, then you will have established your credibility with readers and prepared them to recognize the most important points in your body chapters. Begin each entry by summarizing the basic elements of the source:

- What is the main argument?
- What kind of history is it?
- What period, theme, person, or event is the focus?
- Who are the major players in the story?
- What kinds and collections of sources are used?
- How does the author periodize the topic?
- Is the author's biography (e.g., personal connection to the subject, political views, etc.) relevant to the piece?
- When was the piece written? Is it a product of its era? Was the historical topic discussed still a current event when the piece was produced?

Most entries will emphasize one or two of these questions; this is a good thing. By examining your entries, you may discover the best way to categorize different works into schools of thought, all of which relate to your research in one way or another.
The next question is, *how* do the works relate to your thesis research? Here are a few ways to think about this:

- Are you revising or directly challengingthis work?
  - Does the interpretation of the evidence seem wrong? How so?
  - Is a particular perspective privileged?
  - Is evidence taken out of context?
  - Has the author discounted or omitted evidence? Are such choices acknowledged?
  - Is the periodization in need of revision?
- Are you complicating this work's argument with new evidence?
  - Are the work's generalizations weakened by your particular study?
  - Does the story seem overly simplistic in light of subtleties added by new research (including your own)?

    * Does the interpretation seem limited in scope given new bodies of evidence (including any you have found)?
- Are you confirming or bolstering this work with new evidence?
    * Did you find evidence that had been overlooked?
    * Has new evidence become available since publication?
    * Does this work represent an interpretive foundation that you are building upon?

Sample Entry for Secondary Sources

by Laurie Schnidman

Schaller, Michael. *The American Occupation of Japan: The Origins of the Cold War in Asia.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

A study focusing mainly upon the conflicts between MacArthur and the Truman Administration/Washington, D.C. which points to 1947 as the key year in the shift in Occupation politics. He argues that the 1947 tensions between MacArthur and Truman led to MacArthur's willingness to adopt the "reverse course" in 1948, due to Truman's escalating threats to remove him from power. Schaller's analysis is entirely economic—he casts the Cold War interactions as economically, and not ideologically, motivated. Thus, he spends much time discussing the *zaibatsu* issues, the destruction and rebuilding of the economy, and the views of how other East Asian economies can fit together with Japan's. He may be correct in arguing that after 1947 economic policy significantly changes, but I feel he glosses over the growing ideological rift and significant other factors that influenced US and SCAP thinking. My case study of the Japanese POWs points more towards 1949 as the defining year—though the shift to Cold War politics may appear in Washington as early as 1947, I don't believe that this shift is fully fleshed out in Occupation policies and specifically the POW situation until 1949. Schaller acknowledges this to an extent (p. 107), but still spends the majority of the book focusing upon DC/Tokyo interactions during this year, implying 1947's overall importance.

Bibliographic Entries for Primary Sources

At this stage of the project, the entries for primary sources are likely to be speculative, but this makes them especially important in terms of organizing your time. By now, you should have identified the major collections of primary sources for your thesis, but you may not have conducted much research. As you work through your annotated bibliography, you must articulate a provisional argument and suggest how it relates to other scholarship on your chosen topic. The next step, which is critical to good historical writing, is gathering evidence to present in support of your assertions. The process is time and labor intensive so prioritizing carefully now will help maximize the rewards of your efforts later. If focused research does not yield sufficient raw materials, then you can always work your way down the list of entries or cast an even wider net later. In preparing entries for primary sources, which will be shorter than those for secondary sources, you should summarize what you are looking for in the collections and why you need that evidence for your thesis.

Sample Entries for Primary Sources

by Maria Domanskis

United Nations. Security Council. 39th Year. Security Council Official Record (1984).

In 1984, Nicaragua continued to use the Security Council as a forum in which to air its grievances and condemn U.S. actions. The Security Council was convened on four different occasions to hear Nicaragua's complaints, meeting 7 times. While no Security Council resolution was passed, one condemning the mining of Nicaraguan ports was vetoed by the United States. The U.S. again found itself diplomatically isolated at the U.N. in relation to the Nicaraguan situation. While the U.S. tried to argue that the situation was solely internal and should not be considered at the U.N., others made the argument that the situation in Nicaragua was similar to other areas of the world where the U.S. also exercised its influence and thus the issue was one that should be addressed by the U.N. The language and approach used to address the situation in Nicaragua will be examined to determine the extent to which Nicaragua found diplomatic success at the U.N.

La Barricada Internacional, La Prensa

These are two Nicaraguan newspapers which would have presented the Nicaraguan foreign policy actions and interpretations of U.S. and U.N. actions relating to Nicaragua and Central America. *La Barricada* was the official newspaper of the Sandinistas and so the material should be expected to be in line with Sandinista policy and may even seem to resemble propaganda. *La Prensa* is currently the major newspaper in Nicaragua and was seen as the main opposition paper to the Sandinista regime. While heavily censored at times and even shut down in 1986, *La Prensa* may present a more realistic view of what was going on in Nicaragua than *La Barricada*. It will be interesting to see how the Nicaraguan government portrayed its foreign policy to its people and if this diverged from its presentation at the U.N. and in other international forums. Another thing that may be of interest from these newspapers is their treatment of the contras and U.S. involvement in the attempts at destabilizing the Sandinista regime.

Conducting Peer Reviews

Peer reviews in seminar are intended to empower you to offer and receive collegial criticism, a fundamental part of good historical scholarship. The History Department emphasizes these skills throughout the tutorial program. As you learned when exchanging "packet papers" in History 97, reviewing others' work and providing feedback is a good way to develop your talents as both a reader and a writer of history. The process helps you become your own best—that is, most demanding—editor. At the same time, you are also helping your peers improve their own projects, thereby strengthening the historical writing produced by your cohort of concentrators.

The exercise is less about the particular histories being written and more about the general art of writing history. Therefore, you do not need to worry about how much (or little) you know of your parners' topics or what they know of yours. In fact, it can be advantageous to have partners who know little about your specific topic, but a lot about the Department's curriculum and its goals. Feedback from such readers can help you make the presentation of your evidence and argument accessible to a wider range of historians. After all, you should always assume that you are the expert on your chosen topic and know more about it than your readers. Peer reviews are opportunities to assess whether details, assumptions, and connections you take for granted need to be made clearer for readers. Since your adviser may be too familiar with your research to anticipate the questions of general readers, your partners in seminar could be the best sources of this kind of scholarly support.

Peer reviews are opportunities to assess whether details, assumptions, and connections you take for granted need to be made clearer for readers.

Guidelines

Everyone shares responsibility for achieving the goals of peer reviews so all participants must adhere to the following guidelines and instructions.

When preparing feedback, do not be shy or embarrassed about **asking for clarification, elaboration, or explanation** of your partners' writing. As a peer reviewer, it is your responsibility to alert your partners to confusing points and/or passages; this is the only way to make the exercise productive and stimulating for all participants. In doing so, you are not telling authors that they have picked a bad topic, done a poor job, or taken the wrong approach; rather, you are offering them valuable insights into how a reader might interpret their writing. *You* are the ideal thesis *reader* because you are a thesis *writer* and, thus, are acutely aware of the value of good historical writing. If you are still perplexed after reading a passage over and over, do not conclude that your reading comprehension has failed you; instead, assume the challenge of helping the author convey his or her point to readers.

***You* are the ideal thesis reader because you are a thesis *writer* and, thus, are acutely aware of the value of good historical writing.**

Being a good reader requires considerable effort, almost as much effort as writing a paper yourself. Be prepared to **devote a significant amount of time and thought** to the exercise. Remember that you are counting on your partners to make the same investment in your chapter. Consider your questions carefully and phrase them constructively; this means being as specific as possible. For example, "This passage was unclear. Can you explain it to me?" is less useful than alternatives like the following:

- "I had to read this passage a few times, and I think you're suggesting X, Y, Z. Do I have it right? Did I miss something?"

- "I understand what you're arguing in passages X and Z and how these passages relate, but I don't see how passage Y fits in between. Can you explain the relationship between and X and Y, as well as Y and Z?"
- "In this section, I felt lost in the narrative. Do you plan to provide background on this in the introduction? If not, then could you spell things out more here to help the reader understand how X got to Y?"

Keeping in mind the thesis submission date, your job as a peer reviewer is to motivate your partners to do what is possible to improve the drafts that have emerged from their research. By alerting your partners to aspects of their presentation that they might not have been conscious of, you will help them come across as self-aware authors when they submit their final theses.

Peer reviews are *not* blanket invitations for peer editing. Details like **grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation are better left for final stage revisions;** they are distractions from the primary goal of the exercise, which is to ensure that students are doing the best historical writing possible. The focus of peer reviews is on fundamental elements of chapters, such as structure, analysis, and presentation of evidence. The instructions below should help you focus on these fundamental elements.

Peer reviews are *not* blanket invitations for peer editing.

In this exercise, everyone is both a reader and an author so think about the above guidelines when you are receiving feedback. The tone and content of feedback should be positive, even when critical. When it comes to receiving comments from your partners, you can help yourself more by listening than by talking or defending your writing.

Preparing for Seminar

Everyone will be assigned to a group of three. Historians engage in peer review for all published articles and journals and there is always a minimum of two readers. The peer review for your theses models itself on that process. Group members will be responsible for reading each other's work in advance and coming to seminar prepared to discuss them. Groups of three double both feedback and exposure to different techniques (organizational, interpretive, and stylistic) employed by peers. As different readers can pick up or different points or have different opinions, having two readers is an invaluable way to get extremely constructive feedback. This also reflects the thesis grading process, where your thesis will have two readers. However, productive peer review only works if each pulls his or her weight. The **deadline for submitting your peer-review chapter is non-negotiable.**

Skim your partners' chapters without taking any notes or making any marks. When done, jot down whatever you took away from the chapters. Then, read the chapters more carefully and follow the instructions for readers (below). For your own chapter, follow the instructions for authors (further below). Some of the instructions require actually making marks and notes, but many involve thinking about what you have read and marked in preparation for the seminar discussion with your partners. You can mark up the texts on screen with word processing tools (e.g., Insert/Comment, underline) or on paper with a writing implement. However you approach the task, you **must bring hard copies of all three chapters to seminar and arrive ready to discuss all three. If your group commits itself ot working hard on peer review, you will be amazed by how much your fellow students' comments can influence and improve your work. They will read your work with great care and will expect you to do the same for their essays, chapters, and introduction.**

Note: Since everyone has different writing styles, the unit of measurement for this exercise is flexible. The term "passage" is used to indicate a single sentence or string of 2-3 sentences.

Instructions for Reviewing Peers' Chapters

Locating the Central Argument

What is the central argument of the chapter? There should be a passage that indicates to you the most important point that the author is trying to convey with the evidence and analysis offered in the chapter. While essential, the central argument will not necessarily appear at the beginning of the chapter.

Double underline *the* passage (only one) that represents what you consider to be *the* central argument of the chapter.

Identifying Tasks

What tasks does the author indicate will be fulfilled in order to sustain the central argument of the chapter? Common tasks to advance the central argument include providing necessary background (historical or theoretical), presenting bodies of evidence, comparing pieces of evidence, and demonstrating causal links. For the purposes of this exercise, tasks are limited to four to encourage you to identify the connections between different elements of the chapter.

Underline the passages (up to four) that signal the tasks to be accomplished.

Does the author fulfill these tasks over the course of the chapter?

Topics to Consider

Evidence

Is there enough evidence included to sustain the central argument of the chapter? Or, does the author

- rely on more information from secondary works than primary sources?
- extrapolate from a sample too small to be considered representative of a larger group?

Are pieces of evidence sufficiently explained and/or analyzed to be of maximum value for making the central argument of the chapter? Or, does the author

- provide evidence without information that the reader needs to appreciate its significance?
- present a string of quotations but do little to connect the parts or the whole to the central argument of the chapter?

Is space devoted to the evidence proportionate to its importance to the central argument of the chapter? Or, does the author

- inflate the significance of some evidence relative to other evidence or in absolute terms?
- dwell on evidence even after effectively explaining its significance?

Accessibility

Are essential terms defined?

Would more background at any point help a non-expert reader?

Are there any areas of ambiguity about the narrative or argument?

Transparency

Do you detect anything from reading between the lines? An implicit bias or sympathy in the author's presentation? A lack of consideration of different kinds of sources or viewpoints? A subtle point that the author should make more explicit?

Transitions

Is there a logical progression from one topic or section to the next?

If a transition seems abrupt, what is missing? A simple transition sentence? An adequate conclusion of the previous topic? A smooth introduction of the next topic?

Final Thoughts

As soon as you finish reading the chapter, consider the following questions:

- What did you take away from the chapter? How would you summarize this chapter in one sentence?
- What else do you now want to know about this topic? Or, what would you expect the next chapter to cover?
- Where does the author seem most hesitant? Look for qualifiers and vague language, and encourage the author to explain the caution.
- Where does the author seem most confident? Look for generalizations and strident language, and propose counter-arguments for the author to consider.

Estimate the ratio of summary (background, discussion of literature) to original argument (presentation of primary sources, analysis).

Write down three reflections.
These can highlight the elements you found most intriguing or take the form of suggestions for addressing any of the above questions.

Write down your answers
Comparing them with those of your peer reviewers might shed light on assumptions or approaches that characterize your project as a whole.

Instructions for Reviewing Your Own Chapter

Locating the Central Argument

What is the central argument of your chapter? There should be a passage that indicates to readers the most important point that you are trying to convey with the evidence and analysis offered in the chapter. While essential, your central argument does not have to appear at the beginning of the chapter.

Double underline *the* passage (only one) that represents what you consider to be *the* central argument of the chapter.

Identifying Tasks

What tasks do you indicate will be fulfilled in order to sustain the central argument of the chapter? Common tasks to advance the central argument include providing necessary background (historical or theoretical), presenting bodies of evidence, comparing pieces of evidence, and demonstrating causal links. For the purposes of this exercise, tasks are limited to four to encourage you to identify the connections between different elements of the chapter.

Underline the passages (up to four) that signal the tasks to be accomplished.

How do you fulfill these tasks over the course of the chapter?

Final Thoughts

Consider the following questions about your chapter:

- What do you want your readers to take away from the chapter?
- What do you feel are the weakest parts of this chapter?
- What do you feel are the strongest parts of this chapter?

Estimate the ratio of summary (background, discussion of literature) to original argument (presentation of primary sources, analysis).

Discussing Chapters in Seminar

With three partners per group, there will be 15-18 minutes to discuss each chapter in seminar. This may seem like a lot of time, but it will go by quickly. Since every chapter is unique and group dynamics will vary, you are left to shape the discussion of each chapter. The instructions above will give you a framework for getting the conversation started. The following is a prioritized list of topics to cover:

1) Readers should indicate what they consider to be the central argument of the chapter. Discuss any discrepancies between the two readers or a reader and the author.
2) Partners should compare notes about tasks and how they are fulfilled. Discuss any discrepancies between the two readers or a reader and the author.
3) As time permits, readers should raise matters from "Topics to Consider" and "Final Thoughts." It is likely that each member of the group will be particularly interested in discussing one or two of these questions. Partners should come ready to address any of the items in "Final Thoughts" and may wish to write up brief answers in advance.

Following Up with Your Adviser

Work in seminar is most valuable when integrated with the adviser-advisee relationship, so you should meet with your adviser soon after peer reviews. Your partners' suggestions might lead you to do extra research, reorganize your writing, and/or change the emphasis of your chapter. Since any of these tasks could alter your work schedule and final product, your adviser must be part of the decision-making process.

You should not walk away from seminar feeling like you need to conceive your thesis anew or do weeks of additional research. Regardless of the feedback you receive, you still know the content of your project better than anyone else. As you decide how to follow up on suggestions from your partners, think about how you can do so primarily with sources you already have. At this stage, it is wise to tailor your writing to your research because there is little time to do additional research. Your goal should be to produce a final version of the thesis that is polished and reflects your understanding of its achievements and limitations.

Introducing Your Thesis

While you're not supposed to judge a book by its cover, your thesis reader may judge your project, to some degree, by its introduction. First impressions matter. With only a few weeks left before the final submission deadline, you want to prioritize your remaining tasks for revision. Your introduction may be the best place to start. A well-constructed introduction may not make or break your entire thesis project, but it can significantly improve just about any senior thesis.

At this stage in the writing and revision process, you will likely find yourself in one of two positions:

1) You wrote a draft of all your body chapters before turning to your introduction; or
2) You wrote a draft of your introduction before composing the rest of your body chapters.

In either scenario, rest assured that you have a wealth of accumulated materials from which to draw. In the first scenario, while you may not yet have a formal draft of an introduction, you do have a "first stab" at many of its components in the form of your initial prospectus, historiographical essay, and conference presentation, as well as the paragraphs expressing your central argument in each of your body chapters. In the second scenario, you have all of these materials, plus a first draft of your introduction, to help you polish your opening chapter.

When you refer to your prospectus, historiographical essay, and conference presentation, you'll no doubt notice that your provisional assessments will have changed over the past few weeks and months. Now is the time to update your arguments! The need for revision, however, should not stop you from drawing upon these resources, as well as the previous exercises in this handbook, as you work through your introduction's five major functions.

Five Functions of Your Introduction

Engage your reader's attention.

- Grab your reader's interest from the opening lines with a "hook" that makes them want to read more.
- Reread the introduction from your conference presentation and, if it proved successful, let it serve as a foundation for your opening "hook."
- See "Choosing an Opening Gambit," page 45 for inspiration and examples of potential introductory strategies (i.e., the anecdote, the funnel, and the paradox).

Orient your reader to your topic.

- Provide your reader with any necessary background information (e.g., names, dates, places, terms, and issues) so that they can locate your topic within its historical context.
- Situate your argument within its relevant *historiographical* context(s). Think in terms of "clusters" (e.g., schools of thought or bodies of scholarship) to avoid a laundry list of authors and titles, but make sure to address the most important works for your thesis.
- Consult your own annotated bibliography and historiographical essay for provisional assessments of the relevant historiography.
- See "Preparing an Annotated Bibliography," page 61 for a helpful review.

Focus your reader's attention on your argument.

- Describe as clearly as possible the particular *historical* and *historiographical* questions driving your thesis project.
- Introduce the primary sources and unique methodology that will form the basis of your analysis. Explain why these sources and this methodology will allow you to answer (as best you can) your central questions. Consider any potential limitations to your approach.
- See "Situating the Thesis Topic," page 33, for a few tricks of the trade.

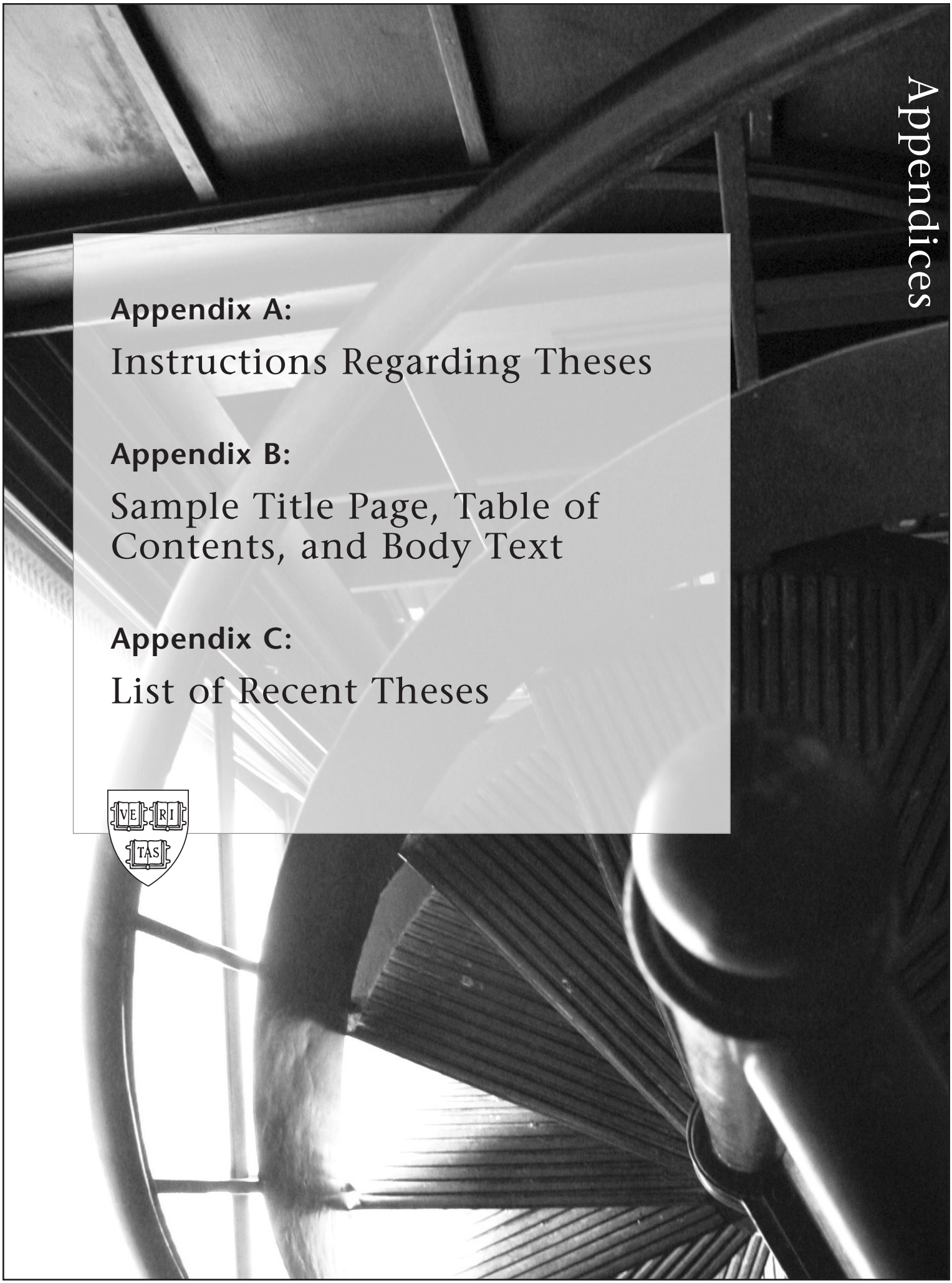
Explain your argument and its significance.

- Spell out your central argument in a thesis statement (whether a single sentence or a concise summary).
- Answer the proverbial "so what?" question! In other words, justify why your prospective reader should devote a day to reading the argument you have constructed.
- Refer to your provisional argument (from your annotated bibliography) for a draft of this section of your introduction.
- Think back to your conversations about your thesis project over the past year. How did you explain your argument and its significance to your adviser, your peers, your friends, or your family members? What strategies worked in these conversations that you might incorporate into your introduction?
- See "Learning from Sample Theses: Introductory Materials," page 49, for examples.

Outline the layout of your entire thesis.

- Construct a "road map" of your thesis so that your reader knows what to expect, and in what order, in the subsequent chapters.
- Work backwards. Create a template for your "road map" by cutting and pasting the central argument (i.e., thesis sentence or paragraph) from each of your body chapters and arranging these sentences in the proper order. *Revise* this template to avoid redundancy and ensure readability.
- Refer to an outline or a provisional table of contents for a sense of the "big picture" or entire trajectory of your thesis, as well as the key terms or markers that might differentiate the various sections or chapters.

If you address these five major functions in your introduction, you will go a long way towards establishing your credibility as a historian. With the proper investment in revision at this stage, your introduction will demonstrate to your reader that you are in command of the subject matter and that you have an *engaging, contextualized, specific, significant,* and *well-organized* contribution to make.



Appendices

Appendix A:

Instructions Regarding Theses

Appendix B:

Sample Title Page, Table of Contents, and Body Text

Appendix C:

List of Recent Theses

APPENDIX A:
Instructions Regarding Theses

I. Length

A. The minimum length of the text of the thesis is 15,000 words (about 60 pages). The maximum length of the text is 35,000 words (about 130 pages).

B. The minimum and the maximum are only for the text and footnotes. They are exclusive of bibliographies, glossaries, or appendices. For example, a thesis with 12,500 words of text and 2,500 other words is below the minimum acceptable length. If your thesis is rather lengthy, you might consider including the word count somewhere to indicate that you are under the limit.

II. Physical Layout

A. At least one copy of the thesis must be on archive-quality paper (acid-free, alkaline buffered, and of at least 20-lb. weight). This kind of paper (common brands are Xerox and Hammermill) is widely available at Bob Slate and Staples. Other copies may be on plain paper.

B. All copies of the thesis must be bound in springback binders (also available at Bob Slate and Staples). Purchase these in advance because demand can exceed supply in mid-March.

C. Print on only one side of each page.

III. Formatting

A. The title page and the table of contents should conform to the style of the sample in Appendix B.

B. Acknowledgments are not permitted in submitted copies of theses. No reference should be made to the author's thesis adviser or other informal advisers, such as tutorial leaders or House Advisers. The author may add such references *after* the Department votes on honors recommendations in May.

C. The left margin should be 1.5 inches (to make room for the binding); the top, bottom, and right margins should be one inch.

D. Text

1. Text must be double-spaced, except for block quotations and footnotes.
2. The same font should be used throughout the text and additional materials.
3. The font for text should be 12 characters per inch. The font for text in footnotes should be no smaller than 10 characters per inch.

Continued overleaf

Continued from page 81

IV. Style and Usage

A. Consult Gordon Harvey, *Writing With Sources: A Guide for Harvard Students* (1995) for use of sources. Students are responsible for understanding proper use of sources and avoiding acts of plagiarism.

1. Available in print or at *http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~expos/sources*.

B. Select one of the following guides for footnotes and the bibliography and be consistent throughout.

1. University of Chicago, *Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers,* 16th ed. (2010). Chicago's quick guide to citations is available on the History 99 website under the tab "writing resources."

2. Kate Turabian, *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations,* 6th ed. (1996)

V. The Deadline

A. Two bound copies of the completed thesis must be submitted to the History Tutorial Office (Robinson Hall 101) by the deadline listed on the Timetable for Thesis Writers. Joint concentrators should consult both programs' tutorial offices regarding submission procedures.

B. A PDF copy must be uploaded to the History 99 website before 5 p.m. by the deadline listed on the Timetable for Thesis Writers. A thesis submission will be considered INCOMPLETE if no PDF copy is uploaded.

C. Extensions may be granted by the Director of Undergraduate Studies only in cases of dire emergency, such as a disabling illness.

D. All theses or parts of theses (e.g., footnotes, bibliographies, glossaries, appendices) that are late for unacceptable reasons will be penalized. All penalties will be decided by the Board of Examiners.

APPENDIX B:

Sample Title Page, Table of Contents, and Body Text

While you have some latitude in how you format the text within your thesis, it is important that your title page follow the format mandated by the College. It is also important that your Table of Contents fulfill certain basic functions, for the sake of your readers' ability to comprehend your thesis. In this section, we offer you a template for both of these items, which we strongly encourage you to follow.

We have also included two sample pages of body text, which you may use as a tentative guide to formatting your text and footnotes.

Place your title in ALL CAPS and your subtitle in lower case.

TILLING THE VIRGIN SOIL

Youth Organized Summer Camping and the Advancement of Progressive Education,

It is always a good idea to include dates or "bookend events" to frame the thesis.

1900-1935

by

Michael Sheldon Press, Jr.

Use your full name (i.e., the one that will appear on your diploma).

A thesis submitted to the
Department of History
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts
with Honors

This language is standard for senior theses.

Harvard University

Cambridge
Massachusetts

25 March 2004

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A Step Forward in American Education 20

2. The Academicians Come to Camp 36

A Relationship in the Making 36

Surveying the Field 40

Camping and Higher Education 43

Lieberman and the Pioneer Youth 45

3. Theory versus Reality: Education in Practice 50

Walking the Line between Leisure and Education 56

4. Conclusion: Camping's Lasting Impact 61

Bibliography 64

Every introduction should contain multiple parts. Here, the author has chosen to label them with subheadings, though this is not required. First he discusses the historiography of Progressivism. Then, he provides a definition of Progressive education and discusses its historiography. Finally, he introduces the topic of the thesis: the intersection of a fledgling summer camp movement and Progressive education.

Notice how catchy titles and subheadings pique reader interest while hinting at the trajectory of the thesis. These subheadings also play with the language of the author's subjects, Progressive educators.

This author has chosen to include subheadings for every chapter. Subheadings are not required (chapter titles are sufficient), but if you use them, you should do so for every chapter.

This chapter title effectively captures the momentum of the thesis. After describing the Progressive educators' attempts to shape summer camps according to their pedagogical theories, this chapter evaluates how the educators' rhetoric (analyzed in previous chapters) translated into actual practice.

A thesis should contain a bibliography, not a list of works cited. It is appropriate to include sources that do not appear in your footnotes, but which shaped your thinking on a topic. Readers of your thesis will likely review this section to assess the depth and breadth of your research. Even as you trim coverage of sources from your text, you can still let your readers know the scope of your efforts by retaining citations in the bibliography.

Chapter 1

The Idea of Separate Confederacies, 1783-1787

> I confess I have my fears, that the predictions of our enemies will be found true, that on the removal of common danger our Confederacy & Union will be a rope of sand. There must & will undoubtedly be, for the sake of security, some confederation of states: But how many of the states will be comprehended in a Confederacy or how many confederacys there will be is yet uncertain.
>
> – Charles Thomson, 25 July 1783[1]

When rumors of a preliminary peace settlement between Britain and America reached Philadelphia in February 1783, the Confederation Congress found little cause for celebration. Delegates to Congress, after all, had far more pressing matters at hand. Faced with postwar demobilization and fiscal insolvency, many congressmen were unconvinced that the newly ratified confederation would outlast the arrival of peace. Virginia's James Madison wondered in a confidential dispatch to former delegate Edmund Randolph "whether prosperity & tranquility, or confusion and disunion are to be the fruits of the Revolution. The seeds of the latter are so thickly sown that nothing but the most enlightened and liberal policy will be able to stifle them." Around the same

[1] Charles Thomson to Hannah Thomson, 25 July 1783, in Congress at Princeton: Being the Letters of Charles Thomson to Hannah Thomson, June-October 1783, ed. Eugene R. Sheridan and John M. Murrin (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Library, 1985), 28-31 (hereafter cited as CP).

Make sure to number your chapters, and to mark the start of each new chapter with its number and full title. These should match the numbers and titles given in the Table of Contents. You may format them however you wish, but it is best to emphasize them (e.g., by centering them or printing them in a slightly larger font) without excessive ornamentation.

If it contributes to your argument, you may wish to include a pithy quotation at the head of your body text. Make sure that such quotations are set off clearly from the body text and properly cited. If you do employ such quotations, it is best to use them consistently throughout the thesis.

The first time you cite a source within a chapter, provide its full citation information. If/when it reappears in subsequent notes within the same chapter, you should employ shortened citations (see the Chicago Manual for a further explanation). If/when the same source reappears in a later chapter, you should again provide a full citation upon first reference, and then revert to shortened citations thereafter. Within each chapter, number your footnotes consecutively; restart at "1" each time you begin a new chapter. Use section breaks in Word and choose the option "start footnotes at 1 for each new section" to restart footnotes at one.

Make sure to number every page of the thesis except for the Title Page and the Table of Contents. Though you may format your page numbers however you wish, employ a consistent style throughout.

sentiment in Congress in early 1787, "that the federal Govt. in its existing shape was inefficient & could not last long."[32]

Nonetheless, the calculating Madison also sensed an opportunity. Confident that eastern citizens were "equally indisposed" to disunion or monarchy, Madison looked to capitalize on a potential groundswell, or backlash, of popular support. "I hope the danger" of partition, Madison wrote Pendleton in February 1787, "will rouse all the real friends to the Revolution to exert themselves in favor of such an organization of the Confederacy, as will perpetuate the Union, and redeem the honor of the Republican name." If nothing else, the circulation of disunionist or "antirepublican innovations" might spread the alarm about the union's frailty, which might, in turn, expedite the movement for constitutional reform. At the very least, Madison hoped that recognition of these hazards might change the mood inside the Philadelphia Convention. "The existing embarrassments and mortal diseases of the Confederacy form the only ground of hope," Madison wrote his father in April 1787, "that a Spirit of concession on all sides may be produced by the general chaos or at least partition of the Union which offers itself as the alternative" to reform. In other words, the upcoming convention's "probable diversity of opinions and prejuduces [sic], and of supposed or real interests among the States" might only be overcome, Madison speculated, by a general fear of disunion.[33]

---

[32] James Madison, Notes on Debates, 21 February 1787, in PJM, 9:290-292; Resolution of Congress, 21 February 1787, in DHRC, 13:45; and Madison to Edmund Pendleton, 24 February 1787, in PJM, 9:294-295. For the Annapolis Convention's call for a general convention, see Proceedings and Report of the Commissioners at Annapolis, Maryland, 11-14 September 1786, in DHRC, 1:181-185. For background on the events leading up to the Philadelphia Convention, see Rakove, Original Meanings, 23-56.

[33] Madison, Notes on Debates, 21 February 1787, in PJM, 9:290-292; Madison to Pendleton, 24 February 1787, in PJM, 9:294-295; and Madison to James Madison, Sr., 1 April 1787, in PJM, 9:358-359. See also Madison to Edmund Randolph, 25 February 1787, in PJM, 9:299. Southerners like Madison considered the "Eastern members" in Congress particularly susceptible to "antirepublican" (or monarchist) sentiments. On the depth of monarchical tendencies in early national America, see DHRC, 13:168-172.

This footnote makes reference to several sources from the preceding paragraph. Individual sources have been separated by semicolons. You may employ this style to avoid excessive citation, although you should identify your references in the body of your text to avoid any confusion. In cases where it might be difficult for the reader to tell which quotations or ideas are associated with which source, you may want to cite each source individually, sentence by sentence, as you reference them in the body text.

Use "sic" to denote archaic/incorrect spelling and grammar that the reader might otherwise interpret as your own typographical error. Such devices are best used sparingly; if your sources contain many variant spellings and grammatical curiosities, it is best to address them in a single prefatory note.

Footnote numbers should be placed at the end of the sentence, after the last punctuation mark.

Employ discursive footnotes to clarify points of interpretation or provide supplemental information to your reader.

Again, note the consistent formatting of the page number.

APPENDIX C:

List of Recent Theses

The following lists of recent History Department theses are intended to provide you with a sense of the diversity of topics pursued by past thesis writers. (Theses awarded Hoopes Prizes are in **bold**.) The range of places, eras, themes, and peoples suggests the latitude you have in identifying your own topic. Many of the theses listed below were produced between September and March of the given academic year.

Theses 2003-2004

First Name	Last Name	Thesis Title
Francis	Altiere	Semper, Ubique, AB Omnibus? The Importance of Antiquity in John Henry Newman's Theory of Doctrinal Development
Sara	Barnett	Sports, Gender and the American Ideal: A New Historical Perspective on the Life and Times of Babe Didrikson Zaharias, 1911-1956
Carrie	Bierman	Too Good To Be Popular, Too Popular To Be Good: Rodgers and Hammerstein and the Meaning of Middlebrow Culture
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