

Discussion Requirements

These requirements should be followed in the graded discussions unless specifically noted otherwise in the discussion post.

At the collegiate level, history courses are far more concerned with the whys of history. Facts such as dates, institutions, and persons are important, but they are only part of understanding history. Understanding why historical events and processes occurred the way they did and the connections between them is a far more complex and far more difficult skill. Discussion with colleagues to argue the importance of various pieces of evidence is the best way to arrive at this understanding.

INITIAL POSTING

The Initial posting is due by Thursday evening of the assigned week. It should be 300 words and engage with the historical issues raised in the discussion prompts. The purpose is to analyze the week's readings (both the textbook and any additional primary sources) and discuss the major ideas presented. To achieve this, you should be prepared to answer the discussion prompts AND explain and support your arguments with direct evidence drawn from the readings.

Note that you will not be able to view any other postings until you submit your initial discussion post.

SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS IN POSTS USING SOURCES

For the initial post and the responses, the point is not merely to "answer the question," but also to explain the basis for this answer based on evidence from source material. Sources are divided into three broad groups, based on their origin:

PRIMARY SOURCES = Evidence = Documents composed in the time period being studied, providing the perspective of the people living at the time. These are the most powerful basis of arguments, since they represent what historical actors saw and why they say they pursued certain actions. Most of the discussions will revolve around the analysis of primary sources.

SECONDARY SOURCES = Interpretation = Scholarly articles (peer-reviewed) or books based on analyzing primary sources. These are modern scholars discussing the events of the past.

Scholarly (Peer-Reviewed) Sources: **Secondary** (and some **tertiary**) sources which have been submitted prior to publication to reviewers working in the same field of study who provide feedback to the author and insure the source meets evidentiary and methodological standards. Scholarly sources exclusively should be used at the collegiate level.

TERTIARY SOURCES = Summaries = Textbooks, encyclopedias, Wikipedia, etc. Although some tertiary sources such as course textbooks are useful for basic information, most tertiary sources--especially encyclopedia sites such as Wikipieda, SparkNotes, and Ask.com--should be avoided in collegiate-level writing.

Popular Sources: Most websites such as PBS, NPR, or History.com are tertiary sources aimed at a popular audience, and are not scholarly in orientation. They should be avoided in collegiate-level work. Instead, seek out peer-reviewed items from the [GBC Library's journal databases](#) . If you have any doubts, just ask in an e-mail.

While you are welcome to use outside sources, the purpose of the discussions are to engage with the assigned readings, especially the **primary sources** and the textbook. Outside sources should be rarely used (if at all), and, of course, always cited, as described below.

CITATIONS

Since supporting information is being used, citations will be required (even for information taken from the textbook). Citations are required anytime that information is used from a source, regardless of how that information is used. Direct quotes and statistics should always be cited, as should paraphrases and summaries. There is no minimum or maximum number of citations required; the number is based on what evidence you are using in your argument.

Given the limitations of the WebCampus system, citations can be given in a modified MLA parenthetical format, giving the source (usually identified by the author's last name) and a page or other reference number. Citations should follow the specific datum being cited.

- **EXAMPLE 1: Summary of Specific Information taken from a Source**

The average ancient Egyptian lived in a small family group, indicated by the small size of typical Egyptian houses (McKay, et al., 26).

- **EXAMPLE 2: Direct Quotation from a Source**

Hammurabi's Code provides for capital punishment if a builder kills someone because "his work is not strong" (Hammurabi, 16).

- **EXAMPLE 3: General Knowledge not Needing Citation**

Mesopotamia is the land between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers.

The practices of proper citations are discussed more fully in the video for the Academic Integrity Quiz, available when Discussion # 2 is available.

RESPONSE POSTINGS

At least two responses to colleagues' posts are due by Sunday evening. These posts should be at least 150 words and engage with the historical arguments advanced by the original poster. As with the initial posts, evidence should be used to support your position.

Responses such as "Good job" are certainly welcome, but not sufficient. Also note that the goal is NOT to critique colleagues' writing styles, citations, or grammar, but to engage with the ideas and the historical content being argued.

Students should also feel free to post questions about the course readings in the discussion posts. As noted below, I will be in and out of discussions over the week, and will answer the questions as I come across them.

DISCUSSION ETIQUETTE

The general policy outlined in the Course Syllabus applies to all course discussions. We will likely disagree on our interpretations of the readings, but those disagreements should be handled through debate supported by evidence, not direct attacks.

Serious or repeated violations will subject the student to removal from the course.

SUMMARY POSTING

I will be in and out of the discussions each week, primarily to spark further discussion and keep an eye out for any problems. At the end of each week's discussion, I will post a summary of my views on the discussion prompts. Note these posts are not necessarily the answers, but part of the ongoing conversations.

GRADING RUBRIC

As with all work in the course, grading is based on content, grammar, and style simultaneously. The Discussion Posting Rubric is given below, and can be viewed with each weekly Discussion prompt.

DISCUSSIONS POSTING RUBRIC									
<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Ratings</u>							<u>Pts</u>	
INITIAL POST 300 words (due by Thursdays at 11:59 pm)	Initial post responds to all discussion prompts and supports arguments with specific evidence drawn from the readings.	Initial post responds to all discussion prompts, but at least one is unsupported with evidence from the readings.	Initial post responds to two of the discussion prompts and supports them with evidence from the readings, but ignores one of the prompts.	Initial post answers two of the discussion prompts, but fails to support them with evidence from the readings.	Initial post fails to answer two of the prompts, answering only a single prompt supported with evidence from the readings.	Post fails to engage with the specific discussion prompts or the assigned readings.	No post submitted.	6	
	6 pts	5 pts	4 pts	3 pts	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts		
	All evidence used in the initial post and the responses is properly cited, including both source and page number.			Significant number of citations missing or incomplete.			No citations included with postings.		2
	CITATIONS (applies to both Initial Post and Responses)	2 pts	1 pt			0 pts			

SPELLING / GRAMMAR (applies to both Initial Post and Responses)	A few minor grammatical and spelling errors that do not harm the meaning of the posts. 2 pts		Frequent or recurring grammatical or spelling errors. 1 pt		Errors to the extent that understanding the post is difficult. 0 pts	2	
RESPONSES 150 words EACH (two required by Sundays at 11:59 pm)	At least two responses which both engage with the initial poster's responses in a substantial manner and are supported by evidence from the readings. 5 pts	Two responses, but at least one fails to engage with the initial poster's responses with support from the readings. 4 pts	Two responses, but neither response engages with the initial poster in substantive manner supported from the readings. 3 pts	Only one response included, which engages with the initial poster's responses in a substantial manner and are supported by evidence from the readings. 2 pts	Only one response included, which does not engage with the initial poster's responses in substantive manner supported from the readings. 1 pt	No responses to colleagues' posts included. 0 pts	5
Total Possible Points							15