

Everyone who keeps on hearing these messages of mine and never puts them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. Matthew 7:26

DEPARTMENTAL GRADING STANDARDS

The purpose of a research paper is to give the student an opportunity to take what has been learned about the ancient world in readings and in class and to reearch and develop these ideas in formal study. Writing papers gives the student practice in conceptualizing, analyzing, organizing, and writing; whereas reading and listening to lectures is a more passive process, writing an analytical academic paper is an *active* application of what has been learned and requires organization of thoughts, articulation, and development of writing skills. Because of the importance of effective writing, papers should be taken seriously. Below is a summary of what is expect all research papers in this department.

Criteria

In all departmental courses, students will be expected to have a command of the following in all written assignments:

- basic knowledge of facts, theories, and historical, social, literary, and/or religious contexts
- knowledge of, and familiarity with, pertinent sources both primary and secondary
- critical analysis of both data, theoretical viewpoints, and sources
- correct grammar and adherence to standard reference and formatting styles

Formatting

Do not use a cover page, or those wasteful plastic covers. Use standard 8.5 x 11 white paper. Final drafts must be submitted via email in the Microsoft Word .doc or .docx format. Use a standard 12-point font. ‘Standard’ means that the font should be easily readable and neither too large nor too small. Papers must be double-spaced, with margins no larger than 1.25”. Each paragraph should be indented. Do not put spaces between paragraphs. Papers must be paginated.

A ten-page paper means ten pages; consequently, nine is not enough, and eleven is pushing it. One of the most important writing skills you can learn is how to edit yourself, so practice the art of writing for a specified length.

Language

Composing a formal academic paper is not the same thing as having a conversation. You should use formal prose. This means that slang, colloquial expressions, curse-words (unless they form part of your content), or other informal speech do not have a place in an academic paper. A ‘formal’ paper does not mean your writing must be stuffy; it simply means that you are taking your paper seriously.

Taking your work seriously means that you will hand in a paper free of unsightly typographical errors. There is no excuse for spelling mistakes in a paper. If your computer does not have ‘spell-check’, check the spelling yourself with a dictionary. If you do not have a good dictionary, many are available online. Feel free to use a thesaurus if you are looking for *le mot juste* (French for ‘just the right word’), but check and make sure that your word means exactly what you want it to mean.

Correct Use of the Apostrophe

Do not use contractions in research papers (i.e., use “did not” instead of “don’t”, “cannot” instead of “can’t”). The long-suffering apostrophe ['] is the most frequently abused and misused punctuation mark in the English language. An apostrophe may be used *only* to show possession (“the dog’s blanket”) or in contractions (“isn’t”), and *never* to pluralize (“one dog, two dogs”; *not*

“two ~~dog's~~”). The one exception is “its”, which is the possessive form of “it” (“the bird left its cage”); “it’s” = “it is”; “its” = “of it” or “belonging to it”. Words that end in the letter ‘s’ usually place the apostrophe after the ‘s’, though adding an apostrophe-s is also acceptable (“Orestes’ footprints” or “Orestes’s footprints”, never “Oreste’s footprints”). The apostrophe is occasionally used to pluralize numbers, letters, and symbols, but this too is incorrect (“CDs”, not “CD’s”, “1970s”, not “1970’s”). Since contractions are not allowed in formal prose, the only apostrophes in your paper should be those used to show possession (“Cicero’s paper has its merits, but Caesar’s paper is better than Sallust’s as well as Nero’s; Augustus’ paper is the best of all.”).

Citations

In the body of your paper, ancient sources should be cited by the ancient author’s name, the title of the work, and the section or line numbers, as when quoting the Bible; when quoting an ancient source, do not cite the page number or author of the modern translation. In your bibliography, list ancient sources under the last name of the modern translator or editor. Modern sources should be cited by author’s last name, the year of publication, and the page number, e.g. Smith (1998) 17-20. I would much prefer that you use footnotes, though endnotes are also acceptable. Do not use internal citations. Be sure to list all of your sources in a bibliography on a separate page at the end of your paper. In the field of Classics, the preferred bibliographical format is Chicago Style. For more information, see <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org>.

Sources

A research paper requires trips to the library. While the internet can be a useful starting point for finding sources, websites are not rigorously refereed, and are therefore often unreliable. You may only cite books or journals which can be found in a library. The following are only exceptions to this rule: 1) you may use the internet to find images, so long as you record the website and date of access; 2) any journal or article which is available online (e.g., through JSTOR) which is also in print is acceptable. If your bibliography cites only internet sources, you have not done college-level research. When looking for sources, please try to avoid very old and outdated scholarship. 19th-century sources are online because the copyright has run out. Please find modern sources. When in doubt, avoid sources that predate World War II.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of taking someone else’s words and ideas and attempting to pass them off as your own. Plagiarism is strictly forbidden, and any act of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero on the assignment as well as the possibility of expulsion. ANY and EVERY use of someone else’s words or ideas must be credited in your footnotes (though if you use the same source several times in one paragraph, one citation will suffice).

Questions and Help

If at any time you have questions about your paper, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am happy to help, so contact me via email, come to my office hours, or schedule an appointment.

If you would like help with your writing, the Learning Resource Center offers free one-on-one tutoring to all LMU students. It is located on the 2nd Floor of Daum Hall, and may be reached at (310) 338-2847.