

General Education Common Graded Assignment: *History 112-History of the United States II*
Primary Source Analysis

HIST 112 – History of the United States is a general education course designed to assist students in the development of critical life skills. One of the goals of this assignment is to assess student competence for each of these objectives:

- I. **Written and Oral Communication** — examine a variety of primary and secondary sources of historical information, which may include scholarly books and articles, websites and blogs, historical documentaries, biographies, diaries, letters, newspapers, novels and statistical reports (CCO1);
- II. **Critical Analysis and Reasoning** — identify the major concepts, events and issues that shaped the history of the US and defined its place in the global community up to 1865 (CCO2);
- IV. **Information Literacy**— find, evaluate, use and cite academic resources that assess historical research (CCO7);
- V. **Scientific, Quantitative or Logical Reasoning** – construct an historical argument that is based on the logical presentation of specific historical facts and that analyzes the causal factors of a historical event or process (CCO3);
- VI. **Local and Global Diversity** — determine the role that religion, race, class, gender, and ethnicity play in influencing US domestic and foreign policy to 1865 (CCO5);

In addition to the above general education objectives, this assignment assesses students’ understanding and application of the following skills and knowledge specific to ***United States History***:

- I. Analyze and interpret primary sources.
- II. Locate and identify primary sources and assess their credibility and usefulness.
- III. Place primary source materials in proper historical context using information gained in class.
- IV. Demonstrate awareness of important events and concepts in US history.
- V. Identify biases, distortions and inaccuracies in primary sources.
- VI. Explain how a particular primary source can enhance our understanding of US history.

ASSIGNMENT:

For this assignment students will select a topic from a list provided by the instructor and use the WEB and/or library databases to locate **two (2) primary sources** relating to their chosen topic. Students will then write a cohesive essay analyzing and comparing the two sources and reflecting upon what these sources tell us about the topic at hand and the study of history in general.

Primary Sources provide first-hand accounts of the events, practices, or conditions. In general, these are documents that were created by the witnesses or first recorders of these events at about the time they occurred, and include diaries, letters, reports, court decisions, speeches, photographs, newspaper articles, and creative works – poems, novels, or political cartoons. Primary Sources form the base that supports historians’ reconstructions of the past. To use primary sources with confidence, historians need to be alert to potential causes of bias, distortion, and inaccuracy in these sources. This assignment will give you practice in analyzing and interpreting primary sources and identifying such causes.

Essays **MUST** address the following:

1. The Background and perspective of each document’s creator.
Who created each document and how might their race, ethnicity gender, age, religion, educational background, professional training and/or political ideology shape their perspective and view point?
Is there anything in each creator’s background that might make them either a more or less reliable/valuable source of information?
2. The intended purpose of and audience for each document.
Why was each document created and what form does it have?
A document’s purpose and form (e.g. legal opinion, prohibition, instruction manual) will affect the sorts

of material it contains and might cause a systematic bias.

Who was the intended audience for each document and how might this shape the document itself?

3. The value and reliability of each source.

How do author, audience, purpose, and form relate to the event or phenomenon that the document describes?

Was the author in a position to have reliable knowledge of the event or phenomenon?

Does the form permit accurate reporting?

Does the author have any reason to avoid telling the truth as he or she saw it?

How reliable do you think each document is and what interpretive value does it have?

4. Similarities and differences between the two sources.

Do these sources complement or contradict one another?

Taken together, how do these sources help us to better understand the topic at hand and what are the limitations of these sources?

What, if anything, is left out or ignored by these sources?

What other kinds of documents would you want to examine to corroborate these sources and/or provide a fuller understanding of the topic?

ASSIGNMENT SPECIFICATIONS: Your paper should not be a simple a list of answers to individual questions, but a coherent essay with an introduction and conclusion. The writing should conform to standard rules of grammar and the paper should be clearly and logically organized.

- **Length:** Minimum *three* (3) pages typed in Times New Roman 12-pt font, double-spaced with 1” margins. The Works Cited page is not included in the assigned page length.
- **Citation Format:** Chicago style. See the CCBC Library website for a [style guide](#).
- **Research Tools:** Library Research Guide (<https://libraryguides.ccbcmd.edu/american-history>), library databases and the web.

CHOOSING APPROPRIATE SOURCES: To earn maximum credit, you will need to put some thought and effort into selecting your sources. You should not choose the first sources that appear in an internet or database search, but those that seem to best fit your topic and shed the most significant light on that topic.

- Your primary sources may ***NOT*** come from the class materials or PowerPoints, they must be derived from independent research.
- Your primary sources should be directly relevant to your chosen topic and should relate to each other in some meaningful way.
- Choose primary sources that are substantive. Textual sources should be more than just a few sentences long. Visual sources and creative works should come from well-known and/or influential individuals.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Primary Sources can easily be located via the GALE HISTORY Database (<https://www.gale.com/c/world-history-in-context>) or other accredited and vetted governmental or educational entities including colleges and universities and the [National Archives](#).

GRADING:

- This assignment will account for *10%* of the total course grade.
- See attached rubric for details about how your essay will be graded

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

- Please submit **TWO** copies. **One copy should include your student ID, course number and section; it should omit student and faculty names.**
- Electronic submissions should be made with the student’s ID number (900#) as the file name through Blackboard. Student and instructor names should not appear on electronic submissions.

GREAT Rubric
History 112 – History of the United States I

General Education Competency	Related Assignment Requirement	4 Exemplary Exceeds Expectations	3 Accomplished Meets Expectations	2 Developing Approaches Expectations	1 Beginning Falls Below Expectations	0 Missing content required for evaluation
Written and Oral Communication	Papers should be in essay form, should conform to standard rules of grammar and should be logically organized.	<p>Paper is exceptionally well-written: it is free of all significant errors in usage & mechanics, is extremely well-organized, paragraphs and sentences flow logically from one point to the next, and sentence structure is varied.</p> <p>Student articulates a clear and cohesive central idea and employs sophisticated vocabulary.</p>	<p>Writing meets all assignment requirements, with very few errors in usage/mechanics, paragraphs are clearly organized and easy to follow.</p> <p>Student has a clear central idea and uses appropriate, college-level vocabulary.</p>	<p>Writing fails to meet some assignment requirements and/or contains some significant errors in usage & mechanics which impede meaning. Some paragraphs may not be clearly organized and may be hard to follow, vocabulary may be overly colloquial, or there may be some improper word usage.</p> <p>The central idea is vaguely or unclearly stated.</p>	<p>Writing fails to meet most assignment requirements and contains numerous, significant errors in usage/ mechanics which greatly impede meaning.</p> <p>Paragraphs are poorly organized and lack logical focus and progression of ideas, there is improper word usage and/or vocabulary is not college-level.</p> <p>There is no clear central idea to unify the paper.</p>	<p>Writing does not meet assignment requirements: errors completely impede meaning.</p> <p>Paragraphs are disorganized, lacking focus and cohesion, and proper vocabulary is lacking.</p> <p>No evidence of a central idea.</p>
Critical Analysis and Reasoning	Analyze and interpret primary sources, compare and contrast the two sources and identify biases, distortions and inaccuracies in each source.	<p>Both documents are exceptionally well analyzed:</p> <p>the student provides a very clear and cogent summary of the most salient points/arguments contained in each.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Student demonstrates very strong evidence of critical thinking with comparisons between the two</p>	<p>Both sources are adequately analyzed:</p> <p>the student provides a clear and accurate statement of key points and ideas contained in each source.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Student demonstrates critical thinking in comparing and interpreting both sources and</p>	<p>One or both sources are poorly analyzed:</p> <p>the student has neglected to fully or accurately identify some of the main points or ideas in one or both sources.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>There is minimal evidence of critical thinking:- comparisons between the two sources may be</p>	<p>One or both sources are insufficiently analyzed:</p> <p>the student fails to identify key points and ideas,</p> <p>AND/OR</p> <p>Shows very little to no evidence of critical thinking: comparisons between sources are non-existent or</p>	<p>Student does not analyze primary sources:</p> <p>Key points/ideas are not identified, no comparisons are made, no analysis of bias, distortion or inaccuracy is provided.</p>

		documents reflecting an unusual level of insight, and there is a very thorough and nuanced analysis biases, distortions and inaccuracies that goes beyond the obvious.	identifies any obvious biases, distortions or inaccuracies.	vague or tenuous and they may have failed to identify obvious biases, distortions or inaccuracies.	extremely vague, and there is no meaningful analysis of biases, distortions and inaccuracies.	
Information Literacy	Locate and identify two primary sources that relate to the chosen topic and assess their credibility and usefulness.	Student shows skill and discernment in identifying sources that fit together well and are exceptionally well-suited to the chosen topic.	Student correctly locates and identifies primary sources that are relevant to their chosen topic	The primary sources selected may be only marginally connected the student's chosen topic and/or appear to have been selected out of expediency or haste rather than with deliberate thought.	One or both of the chosen sources are inappropriate, they are either not primary sources or they do not clearly relate to the chosen topic.	No primary sources are correctly identified. No assessment of reliability provided.
		Citation format: Chicago Student provides a very clear and accurate assessment of the credibility and usefulness of each source. Chicago style is met without error.	Student adequately assesses the reliability and usefulness of each source. Chicago style is met with only minor errors.	Student is unable to fully and clearly assess the reliability and usefulness of one or both sources. Chicago style is met with limited major errors.	Student fails to assess the reliability or usefulness of their sources or provides very weak or unconvincing assessments. Chicago style is met with numerous major errors.	No assessment of reliability is provided. Chicago style is not evident.
Logical Reasoning	Explain what these sources tell us about the topic at hand and the study of history in general. Place sources in proper historical context using information gained in class.	Student provides an exceptionally clear, explicit and compelling logical analysis of why each source was chosen and how together they help us understand the chosen topic.	Student provides a clear and logical explanation as to why each source was chosen and how these sources help us understand the chosen topic.	Student fails to fully and clearly explain why one or both of their sources were selected and provides a vague or partial explanation of how the sources help us understand the topic at hand.	Student exhibits personal biases and/or lapses of logical reasoning that prevent them from reaching reasonable conclusions. They jump to conclusions that are illogical and/or cannot stand up to the facts. There is very little factual evidence to support the student's assertions.	Logical discussion & analysis are lacking.
		Student does an exceptional job of placing documents in historical context and	Student is able to place these documents in historical context using	Student does not fully explain the historical context and makes only a tangential	Student fails to provide a logical explanation as to how the sources help us understand	Documents are not placed in historical context or are

		<p>making logical links to information gained in class.</p> <p>The student's thought process is extremely well-explained.</p> <p>Assertions are supported with an abundance of appropriate factual evidence.</p>	<p>information gained in class.</p> <p>The student's thought process is clear, if not always fully explained.</p> <p>Assertions are supported with appropriate factual evidence.</p>	<p>connection to information learned in class.</p> <p>The student's thought process is unclear and not fully explained.</p> <p>Student attempts to support their assertions with factual information, but may do so in an unconvincing or superficial way.</p>	<p>the topic at hand, and does not place the documents in proper historical context.</p> <p>The student does not logically connect information in the documents to material learned in class.</p> <p>Attempts to support assertions are incomplete and lack sufficient evidence or argument.</p>	<p>incorrectly categorized.</p> <p>Documents are not linked to class materials.</p> <p>No attempt to support assertions.</p>
<p>Local and Global Diversity</p>	<p>Determine and explain the role that religion, race, class, gender, and ethnicity play in influencing US domestic and foreign policy between 1865 and the present.</p>	<p>Student very effectively determines and explains how religion, race, class, gender, and/or ethnicity relates to the chosen topic.</p> <p>There is substantive, thorough and compelling analysis of how these factors may have shaped the ideas and viewpoints reflected in their sources, going beyond the superficial aspects of identity, and/or provides an insightful assessment of how these sources may have influenced specific discourse/policies relating to diversity or identity.</p>	<p>Student is able to explain how religion, race, class, gender, and/or ethnicity relates to the chosen topic.</p> <p>Analyzes how these factors may have shaped the ideas and viewpoints reflected in their sources, and/or is able to explain how these sources may have influenced discourse/policies relating to diversity or identity.</p>	<p>Student provides some explanation of how religion, race, class, gender, and/or ethnicity have shaped US history/policy.</p> <p>Provides brief or superficial analysis of how these factors may have shaped the ideas and viewpoints reflected in their sources, or may be able to provide only a very vague or weak explanation of how their sources may have influenced discourse/policies relating to diversity or identity.</p>	<p>Student provides very little explanation of how religion, race, class, gender, and/or ethnicity have shaped US history/policy.</p> <p>Provides little or no real analysis of how these factors may have shaped the ideas and viewpoints reflected in their sources, or fails to provide any meaningful assessment of how their sources may have influenced discourse/policies relating to diversity or identity.</p>	<p>Students provides no explanation of how religion, race, class, gender and/or ethnicity have shaped US history/policy.</p> <p>Provides no analysis of these factors.</p>