paper-writing checklist

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History 1307: United States History to 1865

Before submitting your paper, complete the following checklist.

INTRODUCTION

- My introductory paragraph tells the reader the subject of my research, and defines key terms I will use in my thesis.
- My introduction contains a clearly-stated thesis which explains how and why something happened.

PARAGRAPHS

- I have thought about how my paragraphs are arranged, and they are structured in a way that best supports my argument.
- I have checked to make sure that I completely tackle one part of my argument before moving on to the next, and I have checked to make sure that I do not unnecessarily revisit arguments I began earlier in the paper.
- Each paragraph is focused around a main idea ("mini-thesis"), which is stated in the paragraph's first sentence ("topic sentence").
- Each paragraph employs evidence supporting that idea. That evidence is analyzed; that is, I have used my own words to tell the reader why and how my evidence supports the topic sentence.
- Each paragraph has a workable transition from its predecessor.

ARGUMENTATION

- I have thought about the arguments that could be marshaled against mine, and have addressed those through refutation or concession.

QUOTING AND CITATION

- All material I have quoted appears between quote marks.
- I have minimized or eliminated block quotes. When I have used them, I have indented them on the left, single-spaced them, and not placed quotations at the start and end.
- Each time I bring in evidence that is not clearly common knowledge, I have cited the source of that information with a foot- or end-note.
• Each time I quote I have checked to make sure the quotation is properly integrated into the sentence.
• Each of my quotes clearly relates to a foot- or end-note which offers the source and page number of the quotation.
• For each of my quotes, it is clear who the speaker of the quote is, and the circumstances in which the speaker authored the quote (relevant time, place, and context).
• My foot- or end-note style conforms to the style in my style manual.
• I have included a bibliography of my sources, which conforms to the style of my style manual.

STYLE

• Each page is numbered consecutively.
• I have used a common typeface, like Courier12, or Times Roman.
• I have double-spaced the paper, and have left one-inch margins at top, bottom, and sides.
• The title of my paper clearly relates to its contents, or to the question I have been asked to answer.

EDITING

• I have proofread the paper for spelling and grammar errors.
• I have re-written the paper at least once, identifying and eliminating instances of:
  o passive voice
  o inconsistent tenses
  o subject/verb disagreement
  o dangling clauses
  o improper pronoun references
  o comma splices, run-on sentences, and sentence fragments
  o colloquial phrases
• I have read the paper aloud to myself or to someone else, listening for sentences that do not work.