Informal Writing and Formal Textual Analysis

David Perry

History 3613: The Crusades

Informal Writing Assignments (2% of your grade each)

June 18: Write a paragraph summarizing the argument of one version of Pope Urban's sermon announcing the First Crusade. (Versions will be assigned in class).

June 20: Based on your readings of Fulcher of Chartres and Madden, as well as the maps in Madden and on this Web site, make a map of the 10 geographical features (rivers, mountains, cities, etc.) that you believe had the greatest impact on the course of the First Crusade.

June 26: Write a paragraph addressing the following questions: what qualities, in the eyes of the Arab authors, make Saladin an ideal ruler and an ideal Muslim.

July 2: Write a paragraph addressing the question: were the crusades launched to places other than the Holy Land and against targets other than the Muslims perversions of the original crusade ideal?

July 9: Write a paragraph discussing Joinville's depiction of St. Louis, specifically looking at the king's character and motivations, as described by the author.

Formal Writing Assignments - Textual Analysis Exercises

First Textual Analysis Exercise - Read the guidelines, then choose one of the passages.

Choose one of the quotations on the next page and answer all four questions about it in the form of an essay. As a suggested structure, have an introduction that summarizes your interpretation of the passage, a paragraph for each of the four questions, and a conclusion drawing the parts together.

Questions (100 points)

In addition to analyzing carefully the passage you have chosen, you may also make use of information found in the textbooks, lectures, and discussion sections (without quoting extensively from them) to help answer these questions. For more detailed guidance consult the "Analyzing Primary Sources in a History Class" handout.

1. Identify the work from which this quotation has been taken: indicate the work's title, author, time and place of composition, broader historical period, and genre. (20 points)
2. Summarize in your own words the main point(s) of the passage and describe how it fits into the larger text from which it has been excerpted. (20 points)

3. Analyze the passage closely. Explain as carefully as you can the meaning of all significant words and how they work together to convey the ideas the author wishes to express. Consider the author's aims, methods, and intended audiences. You may have to refer to other parts of the text in order to explain something in the passage. (30 points)

4. Relate this passage to its historical period. What in particular does it tell you about the time and place in which it was written? What is the historical significance of this passage? Be specific and base your contentions upon evidence drawn from the text. (30 points)

Second Textual Analysis Exercise - Read the guidelines, then choose one of the passages.

Choose one of the quotations on the next page and answer all four questions about it in the form of an essay. As a suggested structure, have an introduction that summarizes your interpretation of the passage, a paragraph for each of the four questions, and a conclusion drawing the parts together.

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