This booklet contains materials that you as student not majoring in History will need to be more efficient when taking History courses. Students majoring in History have already received this material in the course HIST1013 ‘Doing History’.

This booklet will provide you with the most important information on skills necessary for being successful in such courses. Make sure that you have read it BEFORE attending classes, seminars, or tutorials, and especially before, you are preparing and setting up your first written assignments.

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Chapter 1

Some Thoughts about History

1.1. Uses of history
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1.1. Uses of history


“In all spheres of life, from personal relationships to political judgements, we constantly interpret our experience in time perspective, whether we are conscious of it or not. The mere fact of living alongside people older than ourselves makes us conscious of the past. Our sense of personal identity demands roots in the past, which are sought in the first instance in genealogy and family history. We know that we cannot understand a situation in life without some perception of where it fits into a continuing process or whether it has happened before. (…) Our sense of what is practicable in the future is formed by an awareness of what has happened – or not happened – in the past. We learn, in short, by experience. (…)

History is collective memory, the storehouse of experience through which people develop a sense of their social identity and their future prospects. Those who profess to ignore history are nevertheless compelled to make historical assumptions at every turn. Our political judgements are permeated by a sense of the past, whether we are deciding between the competing claims of political parties or assessing the feasibility of particular policies. We are all naturally curious about how our society came to be the way it is, and we all entertain some explanation on the subject, however half-baked and ill founded it may be. The pace of contemporary change does not render the past irrelevant; it merely shifts the perspective from which we weigh its influence and interpret its lessons. (…)

But whereas the individual’s sense of his or her past arises spontaneously, historical knowledge has to be produced. Society has a past which extends back far beyond the lives of the individuals who happen to compromise it any one time. The raw materials out of which a historical consciousness can be fashioned are accordingly almost unlimited. Those elements, which find a place in it, represent a selection of truths, which are deemed worthy of note. Who produces that knowledge, and who validates it for general consumption, are therefore important questions. How well the job is done has a bearing on the cohesion of society and its capacity for renewal and adaptation in the future. That is why what historians do should matter to everyone else. Their work can be manipulated to promote desired forms of social consciousness; it can remain confined to academic circles, powerless to influence society for good or ill; or it can be become the basis for informed and critical discussion of current issues.”
That is why history is so important.

1.2. What is History? A collection of opinions

“History is a pack of lies.” William Stubbs (1825-1901)

“I often think it odd that it should be so dull, for a great deal of it must be invention.”
Jane Austin (Catherine Morland commenting about history in *Northanger Abbey*)

“History, a distillation of rumour” Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881)

“What is history but a fable agreed upon” Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821)

“History is a combination of reality and lies. The reality of History becomes a lie. The unreality of fable becomes the truth.” *(L'Histoire est un alliage de reel et la mensonge. Le reel de l’Histoire devient un mensonge. L’irreel de la fable devient verite.)*
Jean Cocteau (1889-1963)

“Instead of being equally shared between its two rulers, the Reason and the Imagination, [History] falls alternately under the sole and absolute dominion of each. It is sometimes fiction. It is sometimes theory.” Lord Macaulay (1800-1859)

“History . . . An account, mostly false, of events, mostly unimportant, which are brought about by rulers, mostly knaves, and soldiers, mostly fools.”
Ambrose Bierce (1842-1914)

“That great dust-heap called ‘history’.” Augustine Birrell (1850-1933)

“History . . . is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.”
James Joyce (1882-1941)

“Poetry is something more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history.”
Aristotle (384-322 BC)

“History is philosophy from examples.” Dionysius of Halicarnassus (fl. 30-7 BC)

“In history, we are concerned with what has been and what is; in philosophy, however, we are concerned not with what belongs exclusively to the past or to the future, but with that which is, both now and eternally - in short, with reason.”
G W F Hegel (1770-1831)
“Histories make men wise.” Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

“There is a history in all men’s lives,
Figuring the nature of the times deceased,
The which observed, a man may prophesy,
With a near aim, of the main chance of things
As yet not come to life, which in their seeds
And weak beginnings lie intreasured.”
William Shakespeare (Henry IV, Part 2) (1564-1616)

“Men make their own history more wisely when they know what that history has been about.” C M H Clarke (1915-1991)

“If men could learn from history, what lessons it might teach us.”
S T Coleridge (1772-1834)

“What experience and history teach is this - that nations and governments have never learned anything from history, or acted upon any lessons they might have drawn from it.”
G W F Hegel (1770-1831)

“History is a gallery of pictures in which there are few originals and many copies.” [On voit que l'histoire est une galerie de tableaux ou il y a peu d'originaux et beaucoup de copies.]
Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859)

“History repeats itself. Historians repeat each other.”
Philip Guedalla (1889-1944)

“Does history repeat itself, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce? No, that’s too grand, too considered a process. History just burps, and we taste again that raw-onion sandwich it swallowed centuries ago.” Julian Barnes (1946-)

“History is more or less bunk. It’s tradition. We don’t want tradition. We want to live in the present and the only history that is worth a tinker’s damn is the history we make today.”
Henry Ford (1863-1947)

“[History] hath triumphed over time, which besides it, nothing but eternity hath triumphed over.”
Sir Walter Ralegh (1552-1618)

“Men wiser and more learned than I have discerned in history a plot, a rhythm, a predetermined pattern. These harmonies are concealed from me. I can see only one emergency following upon another as wave follows upon wave, only one great fact with respect to which, since it is unique, there can be no generalizations, only one safe rule for the historian: that he should recognize in the development of human destinies the play of the contingent and the unforseen.”
H A L Fisher (1856-1940)
“Human blunders usually do more to shape history than human wickedness.”
   A J P Taylor (1906-1990)

“Indeed, history is nothing more than a tableau of crimes and misfortunes.” [En effet, l’histoire n’est que le tableau des crimes et des malheurs.]
   Voltaire (1694-1778)

“History . . . is, indeed, little more than the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind.” Edward Gibbon (1737-1794)

“The history of England is emphatically the history of progress.”
   Lord Macaulay (1800-1859)

“The happiest woman, like the happiest nations, have no history.”
   George Eliot (1819-1880)

“Good historians are the most scarce of all writers.”
   Horace Walpole (1717-1797)

“A people without history
   Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern
   of timeless moments . . .”
   T S Eliot (1888-1965)

“The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.”
   Karl Marx (1818-1883) & Friedrich Engels (1820-1895)

“The world’s history is the world’s judgement.” [Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht.]
   Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805)

“History is the essence of innumerable biographies.”
   Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881)

“Read no history: nothing but biography, for that is life without theory.”
   Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881)

“History, like poetry, music, painting, sculpture and dancing - is one of the great comforters which men have put between themselves and death - to make their living and dying more bearable.”
   C M H Clarke (1915-1991)

“Man is a history-making creature who can neither repeat his past nor leave it behind.”
   W H Auden (1907-1973)

“If you know your history, you’ll know where you are coming from.”
Bob Marley

“Finding our own way through history is both a search for fuller content, and, simultaneously, a search for surer standards of right judgement.”
Sir Keith Hancock (1898-1988)

“It is the task of the historian and the myth-maker to tell the story of how the world came to be as it is. It is the task of the prophet to tell the story of what might be. The historian presents the choice: history is a book of wisdom for those making that choice.”
C M H Clareke (1915-1991)

“The importance of an historical event lies not in what happened but in what later generations believe to have happened. History is a process of collective remembrances.”
E G Whitlam (1916- )

“History is not what you thought. It is what you can remember.”
W C Sellar (1898-1951) & R J Yeatman (1898-1968)

“It has been said that though God cannot alter the past, historians can; it is perhaps because they can be useful to Him in this respect that He tolerates their existence.”
Samuel Butler (1835-1902)

“Great abilities are not requisite for an historian . . . imagination is not required in any high degree.” Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

“Ignorance is the first requisite of the historian - ignorance, which simplifies and clarifies, which selects and omits, with a placid perfection unattainable by the highest art.”
Lytton Strachey (1880-1932)

“The historian, essentially, wants more documents than he can really use.”
Henry James (1843-1916)

“Whatsoever might be the future date of my History, the life of the historian must be short and precarious.” Edward Gibbon (1737-1794)

“It takes a great deal of history to produce a little literature.”
Henry James (1843-1911)

“War makes rattling good history: but Peace is poor reading.”
Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

“History is the new food … it’s sexy, man!” (Lucinda Buxton, 1959- )

“History has called us into action [against Saddam Hussein].” (George W. Bush, 2001)
“‘That will do’, he said sharply. ‘It is a myth! It does not exist! There is not a shred of evidence that Slytherin ever built so much as a secret broom cupboard! I regret telling you such a foolish story! We will return, if you please, to history, to solid, believable, verifiable fact!’

And within five minutes, the class had sunk back into its usual torpor.”

(J K Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, 1998)

‘Pat, who was unconcerned about individuals, slashed at the flower-heads. “I’ll be an historian. That’s what I am going to do. It’s the only hope – learning how we got to what we are.’

(Jane Gardam, *Old Filth*, 2004)

“History is just one fucking thing after another.” (Alan Bennett, *The History Boys*, 2004)

“The problem is that history isn’t tidy – it doesn’t have tidy beginnings, middles and ends.” (Mike Dash, 2006)
Chapter 2

Note-Taking from Lectures and Books

2.1. Note-taking

Good note-taking is one of the most important skills for you to learn in your first weeks at university, because this is how KNOWLEDGE is transmitted from one person to another. When you read a book and take notes on the content of the text, or when you jot down important points made by your lecturer, you become a small link in an unbroken chain stretching right back to ancient Europe and China and extending forward in time to your own friends and future students. This process of TRANSMISSION demands of you a very high degree of

- **ACCURACY**

- **CLARITY**, and

- **COMPREHENSIVENESS**

In other words, your NOTES must reflect what you have read or heard as accurately as possible so that the IDEAS are transmitted in their original form and with their original meaning.

Secondly, the ideas being transmitted must be CLEAR and easy to understand, even though they are sometimes noted down in a highly abbreviated format.

Finally, the ideas you wish to transmit must be recorded in their FULLNESS of meaning, and care must be taken to retain subtleties of meaning from the original.

This is not a simple task; proper note-taking skills may take many years to perfect. Note-taking is therefore a serious activity, one which you should spend some time thinking about before developing habits that will stay with you for a lifetime. Note-taking is obviously a crucially important skill for a university student to learn, but it is also a TRANSFERABLE SKILL that is of great use in the workplace. Employers always appreciate employees who can be relied upon to take accurate notes of what is expected of them before proceeding to undertake a task. Note-taking is therefore not just an academic activity that is only of use at university; it is an important LIFE SKILL that you will use daily once you enter the workforce.
Note-taking may be divided into two separate activities that require different but similar skills:

1.) taking notes from LECTURES or VERBAL PRESENTATIONS, and

2.) taking notes from BOOKS and other WRITTEN SOURCES.

We will examine the skills required for both these activities separately, but remember that three general rules apply to note-taking exercises in both cases:-

ACCURACY

CLARITY

COMPREHENSIVENESS

Whenever you take notes, therefore, you should ask the following three questions:-

1. Are these notes an ACCURATE record of what was said or what I have read?

2. Are my notes CLEAR, well-organised and easy to follow?

3. Have I noted down ALL the main points?

If you can answer 'yes' to all three questions then you will know that you have taken a good set of notes which will be of use to you when you come back to read them at some time in the future (either for exam preparation or writing an essay).

2.2. Lecture notes

When you are listening to a verbal presentation of information, you must remember that the most important thing required of you is to LISTEN to the speaker. If you do not pay very close attention to the speaker, you are likely to miss important points being made. Therefore, you should aim to take AS FEW NOTES AS POSSIBLE, but notes that will be meaningful when you review them after the lecture.

Some students take far too many notes, often trying to write down everything, which the lecturer says to them. This is a waste of time because a lot of the information being given to you in a lecture will also be available in the textbooks on your reading list. What you should really be listening for and noting down are the lecturer's OPINIONS and ANALYSIS of the material being discussed. The detailed content of a lecture is really only secondary to the lecturer's opinions and analysis. Detailed content can always be reviewed in books after the lecture, but the lecturer's opinions and analysis can only be noted down accurately at the time they are being expressed. Students who try to take too
many notes often copy down the detailed content but miss the more important opinions and analysis being offered by the lecturer.

There are ways of avoiding falling into this trap. First of all you should prepare for the lecture by reading through the LECTURE OUTLINE before the lecture begins. In most courses you will be given an outline of the lecture ahead of time (but often only at the beginning of the lecture), so you will already know what points are going to be made in advance. A thorough reading of the lecture outline is the best preparation for good note-taking. In some courses, lecture outlines are available on the internet. You should always print these out well ahead of time.

It also helps to prepare for a lecture by reading the relevant sections of a TEXTBOOK on the subject before attending the lecture. In this way, you will already be familiar with some of the material to be covered in the lecture and you will therefore be able to focus your attention on taking note of the things that are new to you. You should never expect your lecturer to give you ALL the information you need. Learning is a co-operative and collaborative activity and you must therefore be prepared to play your role in the lecture by being an INFORMED LISTENER.

Another good way to make sure you do not spend too much time taking notes rather than listening is to try to keep eye contact with your lecturer. If you are looking up at your lecturer rather than down at your notes you will be more likely to take notes of only the important points being made. You will also be more aware of the lecturer's BODY LANGUAGE and FACIAL EXPRESSIONS, and these will often give you a hint as to which are the most important points being made in the lecture.

Most students find it very difficult to concentrate on what the lecturer is saying at the same time as taking down notes of what has just been said. This is perhaps one of the most difficult skills to master in your first year, especially when the lecturers will all be using English, a language which does not come easily to most first-year students in Hong Kong. You will also have to cope with differences in accent and voice production among the many teachers who will be lecturing to you. You must therefore develop a way of taking notes that takes account of these factors.

Students develop their own personal system of SHORTHAND for writing down lecture notes. Each student has his or her own system, but whatever system you adopt you must ensure that you are able to understand the notes you have taken. It is always a good idea to REVIEW your notes soon after the lecture, and certainly before the end of the day. When reviewing your notes you can add other notes that you were not able to take down at the time. Be sure, however, that you always review your notes before filing them away. Once you have filed them it will be very difficult for you to recall exactly what was said in the lecture unless you have complete notes.

The most important thing to remember about note-taking is that you should use a system with which you are both confident and comfortable. If one system does not work well, try
another until you find a method that works for you. You will already have adopted a system of note-taking in your first week at the University, but you might like to review your note-taking methods in the light of what you have read now. You must remember that these are simply guidelines. If you already have a good system, which produces ACCURATE, CLEAR and COMPREHENSIVE lecture notes, stick with it.

2.3. Taking notes from books

In this chapter, we focus our attention on the second area in which you need to have effective note-taking skills. This is taking notes from books and other written sources. The skills discussed today will be of particular importance to you as you begin to do the research for your first essay, but they are also transferable skills, which should prove valuable to you in other courses and in your life after graduation. To know how to read a book (or an article, a government report, or any other document) carefully and extract the essence from it in usable form, so that you can retrieve it when it is needed, can be of use in almost any responsible job that you might hold.

When reading a book you will have much more time for taking notes than when you are listening to a lecture. The notes you take when doing research for an essay should therefore be much more THOROUGH than those that you take during a lecture. Be careful, however, not to take too many notes. Only record in your notes information that will be helpful for your essay, or that you might want to use in revising for a final test or an examination. Do not write down names or numbers that you do not expect to use, just because they are there.

Note-taking implies SELECTION, which in turn depends upon the ideas that you are developing along the way. It is an active enterprise, not a passive one. You must constantly think about the questions you wish to answer, and the themes you wish to pursue, and select your evidence accordingly. For example, two researchers, one studying government policy toward agriculture and the other studying the actual living conditions of farmers, might well extract very different sets of notes from the same government report on farming. Each would write down only what he or she found potentially useful for his or her project, the former emphasising how certain officials tried to shape policy, the latter focussing on what the report had to say about rural conditions. Your reading notes, like your lecture notes, are for your benefit, so in order to make the most of them, you must consider carefully just what YOUR aims are in taking them.

You must also keep an accurate record of WHERE your information was found. You will need this information to cite your sources in the footnotes for your essay. When taking notes from a book, article or document, you must remember to include the following:
a.) Identify

- the title of the book
- its author
- the place and date of publication

It is best to do this at the top of your page. You will need this information for your footnotes and bibliography. You may also wish to record the date you read the book and took your notes. The library call number for the book will help you to relocate the book if you need to consult it again.

b.) You must make a note of the page number from which you extract any piece of information. Once again, you will need this for your footnotes. It is best to record the page numbers down the left hand margin of your page. When you turn over to a new page, make sure you remember to note down the new page number.

c.) Enclose any direct or verbatim quotations in 'inverted commas' or "quotation marks." This will warn you that when you come to use this information in your essay you must first convert this material into your own words or else use quotation marks (this process will be discussed in Chapter 3). This is extremely important, since one of the most common failings of students is plagiarism (often unintentional): using the phrasing of the sources, rather than your own words, which is a kind of intellectual cheating or fraud, passing off as your own something that you did not actually write yourself. (This is a serious academic violation, and in the extreme cases can lead to failing a course, or even expulsion from the University.)

Most of the time, it is better to PARAPHRASE or SUMMARIZE what you are reading rather than quote it directly. This not only protects you from possible plagiarism, but it ensures that as you go along you understand what you read. If you cannot paraphrase what you have read, that is a sign that you probably do not understand it! As a general rule, only copy directly those FEW passages that are either so difficult to understand that you need to decipher them later or so elegantly expressed that you may wish to quote them in your essay.

Photocopying is NOT a substitute for note-taking. The advent of the photocopier, in many ways a boon to scholars and students, is also a trap. All the machine does is transfer information from one piece of paper to another; it does not insert it into your mind! The tough process of comprehending the material and analysing it – what does this mean? is it credible? how does it contribute to the argument you are making? does it contradict other sources you have read? – still has to be done. Excessive photocopying also increases the likelihood of lapsing into plagiarism. Since you have not taken the time to read the source carefully and to write down only the important points, it is more likely that when you are writing your essay you will use the source's words, rather than your own.
You should also remember that HIGHLIGHTING pieces of text with a highlighter pen is only half of the process of note-taking. It is good to select the material, which is important for your research, but simply highlighting the text does nothing to ensure that you fully process that information. The act of rewriting the information in your own words helps to fix the information in your mind as well as producing a permanent record of the process to jog your memory in the future. It is therefore wise to reduce the amount of highlighting you do and take notes instead. And remember, NEVER use a highlighter pen in a library book.

Try to keep your notes as SIMPLE and as NEAT as possible. This will make your notes easier to use when you come to writing the essay. You may also find it helpful to adopt a system of highlighting the important points or ideas as you are taking down your notes. Various systems can be used. These include combinations of underlining, CAPITAL LETTERS, asterisks (*), indentation from the margin, etc. Work with a system that you find comfortable and simple to use, and that does not waste your valuable reading time. Once you have completed your reading and note-taking using these few simple rules you will be able to begin writing your essay knowing that you have an accurate and comprehensive set of notes to work from.

The most important thing to remember about note-taking is that you should use a system with which you are both confident and comfortable. If one system does not work well, try another until you find a method that works for you.

When you are taking notes from books and other written sources, remember the three rules of effective note-taking:

- ACCURACY
- CLARITY, and
- COMPREHENSIVENESS*

"Comprehensiveness" in taking notes on written sources is slightly different from what it is in lecture notes. For a lecture, you need to make sure you cover all of the SPEAKER's main points, since you will not hear them again. With books, you want to take down all the information that YOU need; if you decide later to change your emphasis or focus, you can go back and re-read the same material, taking notes on points previously omitted.

Finally, you should FILE your notes using a well-organised system. Most students use an alphabetical indexing system for finding their notes after filing them away. Use the author’s surname for filing and finding your notes (just like finding books in the Library). It is wise to hold onto the notes you take for all three years of your undergraduate degree. You never know when they might come in useful!
Chapter 3

The Historical Essay

3.1. The question
3.2. Searching for evidence OR doing the research
3.3. Taking notes
3.4. Correlating and analysing your data
3.5. Writing the essay
3.6. Thinking about style
3.7. History Department “House Style” for presentation of essays
3.8. Footnotes in the historical essay
   3.8.1. When should I use footnotes?
   3.8.2. Format of footnotes
3.9. Bibliography
3.10. Plagiarism and how to avoid it

The historical essay is a specialised genre of professional writing, which has an established set of "rules" to help you express your ideas in a clear and well-ordered form. Before examining these rules in detail, however, it is necessary to understand the PURPOSE of an historical essay.

The historical essay:

1. examines a specific question of historical interest;
2. presents evidence in a well-ordered and clear manner;
3. arrives at conclusions based on a critical analysis of the evidence used; and
4. demonstrates the writer's overall competence in and command of the subject chosen.

In order to write an essay that accomplishes all these aims you will need to follow a plan that will guide you from the beginning through to the completion of your essay. You should begin by considering the question that you have been asked to answer.

Hints on presenting your final version of the essay are contained in subchapter 3.7 at the end of this chapter outlining the “House Style” used in the History Department. You should observe this “house style” in order to ensure that you follow the recommended style required by the Department of History.

3.1. The question

Sometimes you will be assigned a question to answer, while at other times you will have the opportunity to choose a question that interests you. (Sometimes in advanced courses,
you may even be allowed to write your own question.) Once that you have your question you must pause and THINK before you do any other preparatory work for the essay.

First, examine the question carefully. What exactly is it asking you to do? You must be sure of this before you begin your research, because misunderstanding the question at this early stage will lead you to answer it incorrectly. Many students go wrong because they just grab at the "topic" of the sentence (e.g., the Revolutions of 1848) and assume that they should write down everything they know about that topic. But this is NOT usually what is asked: "Tell Us Everything You Know About The Revolutions Of 1848"! Instead, you are customarily asked to consider the topic from a particular angle or perspective, and to SELECT from among "Everything You Know" those facts that are relevant to that particular perspective, fitted together in a logical argument.

The first thing to do is to look at the main words in the question. What are they asking you to do? These are some of the most commonly used operative words in historical essays:

- "Discuss", "Assess", "To what extent", and "Comment on"

are normally asking you to give a balanced presentation of the evidence on both sides of an issue.

- "How" and "Why"

are asking you to make a critical judgement about the cause of an event or movement.

- "Compare" and "Contrast"

are asking you to make comparisons or contrasts between two or more events or movements.

- "Describe"

asks you to provide basic, important information about the topic of the question.

Note that the operators may be COMBINED in a question, e.g., "Describe the major interpretations of the Spanish-American War, AND assess their validity". In order to answer this question well, you must address BOTH parts: you must tell the reader what the major interpretations are, and then you must indicate which you find most convincing, and why.

Once you are sure you know what the question is asking you to do, you may begin to think about how you are going to answer it. The process of writing an historical essay may be divided into three parts:
1. The search for EVIDENCE and the extraction from it of the data (information) you need to answer the question

2. The correlation and critical analysis of these DATA and their application to the question

3. The presentation of RESULTS (as facts, interpretations, conclusions) in a clear and readable fashion

3.2. Searching for evidence OR doing the research

Once you are sure that you understand what the question is asking you to do, you can begin your research and collect the data you need. Quite often, you will be given a reading list to guide you in locating the most appropriate sources of evidence for your essay. Pay particular attention to the readings on such lists, but do not stop there. You should also try to read as widely as possible on the topic you have chosen. Usually you will want to begin with more general books before moving on to more detailed studies.

You may also search the Internet. If you do, you should be aware that using the Internet and the World Wide Web present special problems and challenges. These issues will be dealt with in Seminar 5.

As you begin reading through the evidence, you will quickly accumulate raw material from which you will ultimately construct your essay. You will probably begin to get ideas about how to answer the question while you are doing your research. Jot down these ideas as you take notes from your sources, but be sure to distinguish between YOUR ideas and the ideas that you are extracting from your sources.

Often you will find that the evidence for an event or idea is conflicting or even in total disagreement. It is your job to get to the bottom of such conflicting interpretations before choosing which approach to take in your essay. Eventually you will have to decide for yourself which of the arguments is the strongest or most consistent.

Try to consider both sides of an argument as you read. You should keep your mind open during the early stages of evidence collecting. Examine what the various authors have to say and weigh the evidence with which they back up their arguments. You may ultimately decide that several views or approaches are appropriate in answering your question. If so, you will have to explain the differences of opinion that your evidence presents. But if one argument is clearly wrong and another is correct, you must say so, remembering always to back up your statements with the relevant evidence.
3.3. **Taking notes (also see Chapter 2 notes)**

You must make sure to take thorough notes while you are doing your research. This should include an accurate record of where your information was found. You will need this information to cite your sources in footnotes. When taking notes from a book, article or document, you must remember to include the following:

a.) Identify the book, its author, the place and date of publication. It is best to do this at the top of each page. You will need this information for your footnotes and bibliography. You may wish to record the date you read the evidence and took your notes. The library's call number for the book will also help you to relocate it if you need to consult it again.

b.) Make a note of the page number from which you extract any piece of information. Once again, you will need this for your footnotes.

c.) Enclose any direct or verbatim quotations in inverted commas ('_') or quotation marks (" "). This will warn you that, when you come to use this information in your essay, you must first convert this material into your own words, or else use these marks to indicate that you are using someone else's words (see below under "Style").

Try to keep your notes as simple and as neat as possible. This will make them easier to use when you come to writing the essay. You may also find it helpful to adopt a system of highlighting the important points or ideas as you are taking down your notes. Various systems can be used. These include combinations of underlining, CAPITAL LETTERS, asterisks (*), indentation from the margin, etc. Work with a system that you find comfortable and simple to use, one that does not waste your valuable reading time.

Some people believe that only after you have completed your reading and note-taking should you begin to think about writing your essay. Most historians, however, are already formulating some tentative ideas as they read and take notes. Be careful, however, not to "fall in love" with your first thoughts on the topic. If after reading one source, you begin to develop a THESIS – a basic answer to the question – keep checking it as you read other sources, and be ready to change it, or even abandon it entirely, if it does not fit with the new evidence. Remember, there is no harm in getting something "wrong" in your first draft, so long as it's "right" in the final version!

3.4. **Correlating and analysing your data**

By the time you have finished your reading, you will have a good idea of the general structure of the thesis that you are going to present in your essay, and the arguments that you will be using to justify this thesis. Some people prefer to wait a couple of days to mull over their ideas while others find it better to get started on the writing of their essay.
without too much delay. Whichever approach you adopt, remember to allow yourself plenty of TIME to develop your thinking and make the most of your evidence. It is very hard to write a good "last minute" essay!

Before you begin writing, you must prepare a formal **PLAN** of attack, listing the principal points of your argument and the appropriate evidence to back up each of them. Your essay plan should be written with one point for each idea or paragraph of argument in the essay. Only when you have finished **WRITING DOWN YOUR PLAN** should you begin to write the essay, taking each point in its turn. Remember that in writing your essay you should observe the formal order in which an historical essay must be presented.

3.5. Writing the essay

Your essay must be presented in a clear and orderly fashion. For this reason, you should divide your essay into three sections:

i.) INTRODUCTION

ii.) DEVELOPMENT

iii.) CONCLUSION

Together, these three sections provide a straightforward organisational framework around which you should be able to construct any historical essay.

The **INTRODUCTION** should state your thesis (the main theme of your answer) and demonstrate to the reader that you have understood what the question is asking. You should also define any special terms that are open to more than one interpretation and you will normally also need to state the chronological limits of your essay – what period you are covering. It is important to have a strong opening, leaving your reader in no doubt that you are in command of the topic. The introduction should therefore state in a few lines the main argument and the conclusion of your essay. Your introduction should make your reader eager to read on.

The **DEVELOPMENT** represents the bulk of the essay. This is where you present the evidence to support the statements you have made in the introduction. This section of the essay must be well structured and concise. You should treat each point that you wish to make in a separate PARAGRAPH. Paragraphs often open with a short introductory sentence giving the main idea in that paragraph; continue with a number of longer sentences presenting the evidence in support of that point; and conclude with another shorter sentence summarising the point made in the preceding sentences.

There must be a thread of organised **ARGUMENT** running through the essay that has the effect of building up towards the conclusion. The idea expressed in one paragraph should lead naturally and smoothly into the idea presented in the next. It is often quite difficult to
decide on the order in which individual points in the argument are presented, but an obvious structure should eventually become clear. This is one reason it is an advantage to write an early draft of your essay: so that you can re-read it later and see if your points make sense in the order you have chosen.

The CONCLUSION will form the last paragraph of your essay and should appear to come as a natural and obvious result of the reasoned argument that you have presented in the development of the essay. The conclusion should briefly summarise the whole argument: it should re-state your thesis. Make sure you include all the main points you have made in the development of your argument. The final sentence, like the first, should be a strong one to make sure that your reader is left with a clear idea of what your conclusions are.

Remember, an essay is an exercise in which you are trying to convince your reader of your thesis. The best way of doing this is to stick to your argument throughout the essay, avoid being sidetracked, and be as CLEAR, CONCISE, and PERSUASIVE as you can.

3.6. Thinking about style

Because an essay aims at presenting your arguments and evidence as clearly as possible, you should keep in mind the following points:-

LEGIBILITY: Your reader must be able to read the essay. Make sure that you use a word processor, type your essay (double-spaced), or write it out clearly and neatly. There is nothing more frustrating for your tutor than to mark an essay that is full of good material but is almost impossible to read.

ORIGINALITY: You are being asked to give your view (your opinion, your thesis) on a particular historical problem, so it defeats the purpose of the exercise if you copy from someone else's ideas. If you use someone else's ideas without giving them due credit, you will be guilty of PLAGIARISM. You can avoid plagiarising another author by following the advice below (under "References") and the material on citations in sub-chapters 3.8 and 3.10.

Another and much more serious form of PLAGIARISM is the copying of an essay written by someone else. You may be tempted to use other students' essays to help you answer your questions. Avoid this temptation at all costs. You are sure to be caught by your tutor, and this will mean automatic FAILURE. Plagiarism is perhaps the worst crime that you can commit as a University student, since it involves intellectual dishonesty. In extreme cases, it can lead to your expulsion from HKU.

Copying others' work, moreover, is a short-term solution to your problem and will not help you in the long run. Essay writing is a means towards the end of learning to think and write more critically and analytically. This will not happen if you take short cuts.
REFERENCES: If you do use someone else's work you MUST give them due credit. You must therefore cite the sources of your evidence wherever you are repeating something you have read in a book, and you must also cite the source of any verbatim quotation. You may be tempted to quote at length from the books you read for your essays. This is not a good idea, as it is your views expressed in your own words that we want to read, not someone else's. You will normally be penalised for excessive quotation, sometimes referred to as "scissors-and-paste" writing. Try to avoid using long verbatim quotations; instead you should PARAPHRASE (put the idea in YOUR OWN WORDS) as much as possible.

LANGUAGE: should be clear and concise. Do not 'waffle', 'ramble' or 'pad'. Say what you need to say in as few words as possible and then get on to the next point. Learn ECONOMY of language.

While these stylistic points are particularly applicable to writing an historical essay, you will find that they are also of enormous use in preparing you for a wide range of writing tasks. Writing skills are transferable across disciplines; developing these skills at University will assist you in finding rewarding employment after you have graduated.

3.7. History Department “House Style” for presentation of essays

You will soon be submitting an academic History paper for the first time but you may not be familiar with some of the basic elements of presentation expected by the Department of History. In private correspondence, or some kinds of commercial ventures, it is acceptable or even advisable to try to make your writing look different! This is not what we are looking for in academic papers. We expect your assignments to conform to a standard model of presentation, explained below. We look for “difference” in your ideas, not your typeface.

The following rules apply specifically to first-year History courses, but should probably serve as a good general guide to usage in other History and HKU courses:

- Use unlined A4 white paper. No odd sizes, no colours.
- Use one side of the page only.
- Type or print (from a word processor) if possible. Seminar assignments may sometimes be handwritten.
- The text should always be double-spaced, i.e., with a blank line between each printed line. (Footnotes may be single-spaced.)
- Use “normal” fonts, such as Times New Roman, Courier, or Univers. Avoid exotic typefaces such as ARIAL BLACK, Coronet, Copperplate Gothic, Marigold, Matisse, or Westminster.
- Do not use *italics* except in book titles and other specified usages. Do not use **boldface** except, if you choose, for the title of your essay.
- Type size should be roughly 12 pitches, not much larger or smaller.
- Margins should be approximately 1 inch (2.54 cm) at top and bottom, 1.25” (3.16...
cm) on left and right. We will not be measuring your margins, but we will notice if they are very much larger or smaller than these specifications.

- Each page (after the first) should have a page number, which may appear either at the top or at the bottom of the page.
- If it is more than one page long, your paper should either be stapled together in the upper left corner or fastened securely in a plastic binder. Do not use paper clips; they fall off and get lost.
- Your name and student number should be clearly written in a visible location, such as the top right corner of the first page.
- Formats for footnotes and bibliographic references will be provided in conjunction with Chapter 3.8.2. while electronic citations will be covered in Chapter 4.

### 3.8. Footnotes in the historical essay

The primary purpose of footnote citations in an essay is to acknowledge sources for quotations or ideas which are not your own. It is both a means of giving due credit for the ideas of others and also a way of protecting yourself from charges of plagiarism (stealing someone else's ideas). It is therefore important that you should acquaint yourself with the basic rules of footnoting at the beginning of your university studies.

In general, only two rules need to be kept in mind when trying to decide whether it is necessary to use a footnote:

1) When you make a direct or verbatim quotation (that is, a word-for-word quotation) from a document or a secondary source (a book or article) you MUST always acknowledge your source. These sorts of quotations should be made sparingly – you should generally try to put the ideas of other historians into your own words.

2) You must also acknowledge an author when you use any of his/her ideas, even when you are not making a direct quotation. Whenever you need to consult your notes while writing your essay, you should make sure that you insert a footnote to acknowledge your source for that information.

"Do I have to footnote every single thing I say?" you may be asking. No. When the information is a matter of general knowledge, which might be found in almost any book on the topic, you do not need to footnote it (see below). When in doubt, follow these rules; if you are still in doubt, acknowledge your source.

### 3.8.1. When should I use footnotes?

First-year students usually find it very difficult to decide exactly when they should use footnotes in their essays. This is a skill that takes a long time to develop, but it is one of the most important that historians have to learn. Remember, you do not have to footnote
absolutely every piece of information you glean from your readings. Generally speaking, statements that are accepted by historians as basic factual information do not need citations. For example:

The liberal revolutions of 1848 occurred in several European countries.

Abraham Lincoln was President of the United States during the Civil War.

Henry Bessemer developed a new method for making steel in the 1850s.

Each of these statements would generally be regarded as simply true, not a matter for argument. The facts themselves are not DISPUTED or controversial; there is no ANALYSIS of the factual data in these statements; and no OPINIONS are expressed about the people and events. It is therefore not necessary to provide footnote citations acknowledging your sources of information.

Much of the information in your essays will fall into the category of basic factual data like these and you do not need to acknowledge the sources of this information, unless you are quoting particular data sets such as statistics. But there will also be much information in your essays based on the analyses and opinions of other historians whose books you have read. In these cases, when you repeat information that contains ANALYSIS or OPINIONS from someone else's writing, you must ALWAYS acknowledge your sources in footnotes. Compare the following statements with the three quoted ones above:

The liberal revolutions of 1848 were masterminded by middle-class bourgeois intellectuals who were determined to replace the old repressive political regimes of Europe with more liberal forms of government. These movements were particularly strong in Austria, Germany, and France.

Abraham Lincoln's policy of ‘saving the Union’ at all costs was the most important factor in the outbreak of the Civil War.

The process of steel making developed by Henry Bessemer was not only technologically superior to earlier processes; it also secured for Britain an unassailable leadership in world steel production.

In each of these statements, OPINIONS are being expressed, based on the ANALYSIS of historical data. If these opinions are your own, you do not need to provide footnote citations, but if you have read these opinions in your textbooks, you must provide references to those textbooks.

The sources of STATISTICAL DATA must always be acknowledged in your footnotes. These types of information include trade figures, population data, war casualties, government expenditure, immigration figures, and all other data that have been pre-analysed and put into a more readily usable format for you.
### 3.8.2. Format of footnotes

There are many different ways of writing footnotes. In general, however, you should remember that four things are necessary:

1) the name of the AUTHOR of the book or article,
2) the TITLE of the book or article,
3) the PLACE (city) and DATE (year) of publication, and
4) the PAGE NUMBER from which your information has come.

Titles of books should be underlined or put into *italics*, but the titles of articles in journals or collections of essays, or the titles of individual chapters within books, should be put in single inverted commas ('') or quotation marks (" "). Titles of journals should, however, be underlined, or put in *italics*, as if they were book titles. Sometimes books do not show a place of publication, or a publisher, or a date. In this case, simply write the author and title with "n.d." (i.e., no date) after it.

Although different departments and different academic publishers have different rules for some of the details of how to cite sources, such as punctuation and capitalization, it is a good idea to get used to writing to a specific 'style sheet' rather than just making it up as you go along. The rules and examples that follow are part of the 'house style' for the first-year History courses, and should be acceptable for most other courses in the Department of History. You need not try to memorize them ("First name, last name, comma, title in italics, no comma, brackets . . ."), but please refer to this section again when you get to the final stages of typing your essay.

Cite page references using this form: p. 112 for a single page, or pp. 27-29 for a run of pages.

Remember that footnotes are so called because they are found at the foot of the page. Please therefore remember to place your footnotes at the bottom of the page to which they refer. Do not collect your citations at the end of the essay (endnotes), although you may be permitted to do this in other courses at this University. Also remember to number your footnotes from the beginning to the end of the essay and insert "call" numbers within the appropriate sections of the text of your essay. (In other words, there should be a number in the text corresponding to the number on each footnote at the bottom of the page.)

These are some examples of footnotes that you might find in an undergraduate essay:


Often you will want to give a number of references to the same book in your footnotes. You do not have to repeat the full title of the book every time you refer to it. The author can be mentioned by surname only, with an abbreviated form of the title. For example:


8. Sinclair, 'British industry in imperial expansion', p. 84.

You can abbreviate footnotes even further when you refer to the same source a number of times in a row (in succession). The Latin term 'ibid.' (meaning 'in the same place') and the page reference are all you need to use. For example:


12. Sinclair, 'British industry in imperial expansion', p. 84.


Make sure to underline or italicise the abbreviation *ibid.* whenever you use it.

The most important thing to remember about using footnotes is that they must always be CLEAR and PRECISE. The reader of your essay must be able to follow your footnotes easily, and must be able to identify your sources if he or she wishes to verify the statements you have made. It is therefore very important that, before you submit your essay, you check that all the footnote references are absolutely CORRECT. This may seem like a big job, but it is necessary if you want your essay to be accepted as a piece of professional writing. You will find that this type of scrutiny is very common in the world of work, where precision is a skill highly valued by employers.
If you use materials from the Internet, you may also have to provide proper footnotes for the same reasons as noted above. While the rules for what has to be footnoted remain the same, the methods of footnoting electronic media are somewhat different. These methods will be discussed in the next chapter.

### 3.9. Bibliography

At the end of your essay, you should provide an ALPHABETICAL LISTING – alphabetised by the FAMILY NAME of the author – of books and articles that you have used in your essay. This is called a bibliography. The format for individual entries in the bibliography is similar to that in footnotes, but please note that you should: (a) list the authors with their family name first, (b) only include page numbers when referring to articles from journals or edited volumes, and (c) you should include the publisher of a book as well as the place and date of publication. For example:


Fahrmeir, A. K.  

Hearder, H.  

Sinclair, J.  

Wang Gungwu.  

Remember that the author's family name comes first, followed by his/her other names or initials. (Chinese names, in which the family name normally comes first, appear in the same order in both footnotes and bibliography; Western names are reversed, with the "surname" moved from the end to the beginning.) If you are not able to identify the author, you should use the body that is responsible for publishing the book (as in 'Department of Trade' above).

### 3.10. Plagiarism and how to avoid it

Plagiarism is a growing problem in schools and universities all over the world and you will no doubt have already heard something about it. Plagiarism is basically a failure to acknowledge your sources of information or trying to pass off someone else’s work as your own. It actually takes many different forms, some more serious than others, but ALL forms of plagiarism should be avoided at university level. Historians are particularly
strict about citation and acknowledgment of sources and the more mechanical aspects of this will discussed in this subchapter. For those of you who are interested in exploring the history of this tradition within the historical discipline over the last 1500 years, you should read Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Harvard, 1997) and Gillian Evans, *Breaking the Bounds* (Cambridge, 2004).

On 13 July 2005, the Acting Dean of the Faculty of Arts issued the following note to all students in the Faculty, on plagiarism in assessments and examinations:

“All students are reminded that plagiarism is a serious academic offence. The Faculty of Arts upholds the principle that plagiarism in any form is unacceptable and any student found plagiarizing will be subject to disciplinary action. Plagiarism is defined in the Regulations Governing Conduct at Examinations – “as the unacknowledged use, as one’s own, of the work of another person, whether or not such work has been published”. Please read the following paragraphs carefully.

2. Coursework or dissertations submitted for assessment and examination purposes must be the student’s own work. Any passages quoted must be clearly marked as quotations and properly attributed to the authors concerned. Paraphrases or summaries of other people’s work or ideas must also be properly footnoted.

3. The standard practice regarding quotations is:
   (a) Short quotations should be enclosed in quotation marks.
   (b) Quotation in prose of more than about sixty words should be separated from the body of the text by extra space above and below.
   (c) The author’s name, source, and page number of each quotation should be clearly stated.

4. The standard practice regarding summaries and paraphrasing is:
   (a) The paraphrase or summary is clearly indicated as such, using phrases such as ‘x says that’, ‘x claims that’, ‘in x’s view’, etc.
   (b) The author’s name, source of the idea and page number should be clearly stated in the form of footnotes.

5. Further information can be obtained from various handbooks on writing, such as Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations* (which is available in the Main Library), or the Graduate School booklet, *Plagiarism and How to Avoid It and Preparing and Submitting Your Thesis – A Guide for MPhil and PhD Students*. The Graduate School Handbook also contains some useful sections on the offence of plagiarism. Copies of the last three documents are available for reference in the Faculty Office and departmental offices. Your department may also have some guidelines on this subject. If you have any questions about this subject, do not hesitate to consult your teachers or, if appropriate, your supervisor or members of your Departmental Research Postgraduate Committee, or the Graduate School.
6. Plagiarism is viewed seriously and the penalties cases where plagiarism is proved can be severe, up to and including the withholding of a degree and not in any case less than failure in the paper where plagiarism has occurred.”
Chapter 4

Electronic Citations

4.1. Citations
4.2. Evaluating internet sources
4.3. Some hints and rules
   4.3.1. Finding the right site
   4.3.2. Evaluating the site

The World Wide Web or Internet has become an important research tool in the past decade. It is often the place that we turn to first when we begin our research. It is important to use these resources wisely and carefully; not all the material out there is trustworthy, so we must carefully evaluate what we find before we use it. The guidelines on ‘Evaluating Internet Sources’ considers these issues.

Aside from problems of evaluating Internet resources, we must also carefully provide proper citations for materials that we find. The basic rules for what must be cited are the same whether we are referring to printed materials (books, journals, newspapers) or digital resources. You must treat information gathered from the Web in the same way that you treat information taken from books. It must be clearly acknowledged if you incorporate it into your own work, either in electronic or hard format (on paper).

4.1. Citations

There are numerous guidelines for citing electronic sources, but one of the most widely used is the Modern Language Association (MLA) style. The MLA homepage is located at <http://www.mla.org/> with links from the homepage to "MLA Style", from there to the FAQ list, and then to "How do I document sources from the World Wide Web in my works-cited list?" A copy of the MLA rules is attached to this set of guidelines and you should take time to read them carefully before the class.

Many of the rules are similar to those, which we use for scholarly citation of printed sources. An electronic citation must therefore include the following:

- name(s) of authors, editor, compiler, translator, etc.
- title of the source used
- date of electronic publication or latest update

However, there are other rules, which are particular to electronic sources. An electronic citation must also include the following:

- date when you accessed the site
The most important thing is the URL (Universal Reference Locator), because the person reading your work must be able to gain access to the sites you have acknowledged (just as the reader must be given the opportunity to access any library materials, which you accessed through your footnotes).

You can also include other important information, which helps to identify your source:

- name of institution or organization associated with the web site
- numbers of paragraphs or pages within the site (if any: unfortunately, most web-based materials are not paginated so it is virtually impossible to point to the exact location of a quotation that lies within a large document)

The MLA website has examples of citations for:

- scholarly project
- professional site
- personal site
- book
- poem
- article in a reference database
- article in an electronic journal
- article in an electronic magazine
- work from a subscription service
- posting to a discussion list

Other academic associations have their own citation styles. Attached to this guideline you will find the citation style recommended by H-Net (History Net). The Chicago Manual of Style has its own style sheet and points students to other useful websites about citations.

### 4.2. Evaluating internet sources

The amount of information on the Internet and the World Wide Web (WWW) seems to double every time you blink; there are now billions and billions of documents available; trillions of words; and phenomenal amounts of images, recordings and videos. This is a rich resource for a student to use and many do: a survey of American university students in 2002 showed that nearly 75% of them turned to the Internet to begin their research.

Phenomenal growth of the WWW as an information tool has also led to a number of problems:

→ Too much information: this makes it difficult to find what you need
→ Choice is so wide: how do we make decisions?
Criminal and anti-social use of the web has raised moral and legal concerns (for example, false medical claims or false rumours about companies)

In this set of guidelines, we focus on several interlinked issues related to internet sources used by historians:

A. Efficient use: how to avoid wasting time
B. Effective use: getting the information needed
C. Critical use: judging the usefulness of sites
D. Creative use: being innovative, using your initiative.

Because of the size and complexity of the Internet, one of the things, which you must learn, is how to be a critical user of the WWW. This is particularly important when using the Web for research purposes. Unlike a university library, there is little or not control over what goes onto the Web.

At a university library:

→ Books are chosen by lecturers
→ The library contains the most-up-to-date information (as well as older information)
→ Readings lists from courses direct you to the most appropriate books
→ Books are an accepted, authoritative and peer-viewed part of academic research (although many books are not considered “academic”, most are reviewed and at least somewhat authoritative).

The WWW is not any of these things:

→ Anyone can establish a website
→ Some information is up-to-date; some is not
→ Some information is unreliable, even grossly unreliable
→ Reading lists for courses do not normally include websites
→ The Web lacks authority in an academic context (academics are reluctant to publish their research on the Web because of this).

How, then, can we use the Web for academic research in an

→ efficient
→ effective
→ critical and
→ creative way?

4.3. Some hints and rules

4.3.1. Finding the right site
Search engines are the best place to start if you do not have references to websites. Terms used must be chosen carefully. For example, “industrial revolution” will score thousands of “hits”. Therefore:

→ Refine your search by using qualifiers: Britain, America, Birmingham, Marx
→ Proper names of important people are very helpful
→ Names of authors who have written on particular subjects may also be helpful (but not many academics are publishing on the Web yet)

The variation in the number of hits is striking: why does it exist? Part of the answer is that there is a difference between “spiders” (programmes that actively search the Internet for new web pages to collect or index), and indexing programmes to which authors have to submit their websites for indexing (a far more passive approach). When you decide which search engine you prefer, you should try to discover how it does its job.

Once you have a list of sites from the search engine, you need to check through the sites quickly to see which ones are of most use. Use bookmarks for the most useful sites, or write down URL addresses so that you can go back later.

Follow links from one site to another. Links are often at the end of a site and will take you to similar or related sites.

Contact authors of helpful pages by email links (if present). They may be able to tell you about other useful sites.

### 4.3.2. Evaluating the site

Always evaluate a site critically before you use the information contained in it.

WHO has created the site?

→ What does it tell you if the author is not identified?
→ Is the author attached to a reputable institution? (An unattached author may, however, be highly respected)
→ Is it a commercial site? (www.xyz is a commercial site. www.xyz.edu is an educational site.)
→ Verification of the site is very important before you use any information contained in it.

WHAT is the purpose of the site?

→ Does the site tell you?
→ Can you guess the purpose (if no purpose is explicitly stated)?
→ What does it mean to you if the purpose is not clearly stated?
→ Is the purpose of the site compatible with your needs?
→ What are the dangers or pitfalls here?

HOW reliable is the information

→ It is necessary to do some preliminary reading first. It is not always a good idea to go to the Web first. You must become an informed reader (this is true of materials in a university library too: there is garbage as well as gemstones on the shelves).
→ Does the information fit in with or agree with what you already know?
→ What is the source of statistics, etc.?
→ Are the original sources listed?
→ Is it a balanced account?
→ Do you detect any bias or subjectivity on the part of the author?
→ Does the site provide links to other sites?
→ Is the information useful?
→ When was the information posted or updated?

All the questions must be asked and answered quickly if you are to make effective and efficient use of the Web. This is a special type of training which you need to have and you must practice it often.

As you use the Web, you will realise that it is useful for gathering certain types of information:

→ Statistics
→ Up-to-date information
→ Current affairs information
→ Financial information

As time passes, many academic institutions are attempting to organize tools, which will help students approach materials on the Internet intelligently and critically. Here are a few of examples, but there are many more:

http://obelix.lib.hku.hk/irms/history.html This webpage was developed by the University of Hong Kong and Dr Peter Cunich of the Department of History, University of Hong Kong. It points users in the direction of some websites that are useful for historians.

The Asian Studies WWW Monitor, edited by Dr T. Matthew Ciolek, critically evaluates websites related to Asian studies.
Merlot (Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching) is a
continuing project by the California State University system to evaluate Internet
resources and assure website quality.

Footnote: Pew Internet Project, “The Internet Goes to College: How Students are Liviiing
in the Future with Today’s Technology” (Sept 15, 2002)
for the Past: How to Sift the Good from the Bad,” Perspectives, vol. 41, no. 5, May 2003,
p. 27

For those, who are interested, other websites provide considerable information on the
growth and history of the Web and the Internet:

Internet Demographics and eCommerce Statistics
http://64.166.24.70/research/stats/wwstats.html

Internet Sizer
http://www.netsizer.com/

African Internet Status
http://www3.sn.apc.org/africa/afstat.htm

Internet Domain Survey
http://www.isc.org/ds/

How many online?
http://www.nua.ie/surveys/how_many_online/index.html

Internet performance
http://www.mids.org/topics/index.html

Cooperative Association for Internet Data Analysis
http://www.caida.org/outreach/info

Old WWW Surveys
http://www.gvu.gatech.edu/user_surveys
http://www.mit.edu/people/mkgray/net/

CyberAtlas (see “Traffic Patterns“etc.)
http://cyberatlas.internet.com/

History of the Internet, including the WWW
http://www.isoc.org/internet-history/

Estimated figures of the number of people online in each language zone (native speakers)
http://www.glreach.com/globstats/index.php?

Irresponsible Internet Statistics Generator
http://www.anamorph.com/docs/stats/stats.html
Chapter 5

Oral Presentation Skills

5.1. Types of oral presentation
5.2. Preparation
5.3. Presentation

History students are required to make many different types of oral presentations during their course of studies. Quite often, such presentations will require nothing more than voicing your frank opinion about a particular idea or statement during a seminar or tutorial, but at other times it will be necessary to make a more formal presentation based on detailed readings and research. This chapter outlines the main points you should consider in building up the various communication skills used in making oral presentations. These skills will also be very important in the workplace, because most jobs require a high level of effective communication skills, and without these skills, you will find yourself at a distinct disadvantage compared with your more skilled colleagues.

5.1. Types of oral presentation

There are many different forms of oral presentation, but the most frequently used forms of oral presentation in university studies are:

a.) contributing information to seminars and tutorials (prepared),

b.) responding to (answering) questions in seminars and tutorials (unprepared),

c.) asking questions in seminars and tutorials (normally unprepared),

d.) making a full report to a seminar or tutorial (prepared),

e.) leading discussion in a seminar or tutorial (prepared or unprepared), and

f.) making a formal presentation to a larger group of listeners (prepared).

In some of these cases, the information will be rigorously prepared and well structured (like an essay) but in others, there will be little time to prepare an answer and you will have to think on your feet. Thus, you must develop two separate sets of skills:

* highly structured critical analysis of a problem, and

* spontaneous thought and response to new ideas.
Both of these skills are important in solving problems and both are used in seminars and tutorials. The History student must be FLEXIBLE in such situations. Use prepared material when appropriate, but break into spontaneous thought and response when necessary (for example, when you are asked a question). Most first-year students find it difficult to determine when they should use these two approaches, but in general, you should always opt for a spontaneous approach once a formal presentation has been completed. The emphasis in seminars and tutorials is on GROUP WORK, and working in groups is always more effective when the communication between members is informal and spontaneous. You should therefore aim at DISCUSSION rather than simply reading your prepared materials to the audience.

5.2. Preparation

Most students have little difficulty preparing a highly structured response to the questions that they are asked to pursue in a seminar or tutorial. But there are a few general points that must be kept in mind.

* always READ CAREFULLY the questions you are asked and make sure that you do all the research necessary to present a comprehensive report;
* keep an OPEN MIND when you are doing your research and be prepared to come up with a number of different and sometimes conflicting conclusions. The resolution of problems in the evidence can sometimes provide the most productive discussions in seminars;
* TALK TO YOUR CLASSMATES about the question that you have been given. You will often find that many minds working on a problem come up with solutions more quickly when there is OPEN DISCUSSION at all stages of the problem-solving process, not just at the presentation stage;
* try to organise your ideas and arguments into POINTS rather than writing out long responses to the questions that have been asked. It is much easier to make a good presentation from short notes rather than from reading out a long text. Whenever possible, in fact, try to AVOID READING YOUR PRESENTATION, as it is very difficult to do this without boring your listeners and thus losing their attention. Remember, communication requires BOTH a speaker/writer and a listener/reader, and if you lose your audience, you have stopped communicating! You're just wasting your time, no matter how elegant your essay or speech;
* Make sure that you get to the seminar ON TIME so that you do not miss any of the discussion. Punctuality will also demonstrate to your classmates and teacher that you are keen to be involved in the group’s discussions.
5.3. Presentation

When making a presentation to a seminar or tutorial group, remember the following points:

* SPEAK CLEARLY, so that you get your point across effectively.
* Be ECONOMICAL in presenting the findings of your research. Do not ramble or spend too much time on any one point. Remember that a seminar or tutorial is meant to be for DISCUSSION, so the sooner you finish your report the sooner your classmates can join in the discussion.
* Make sure that what you are presenting is RELEVANT to the question that you have been asked to examine. Try to stick to the point and follow your ARGUMENT through to its CONCLUSION.
* Make sure that your presentation has a proper STRUCTURE to it (just like an essay). Begin by INTRODUCING the question you are going to discuss; proceed to DEVELOP your ARGUMENT by making several points that lead to an obvious CONCLUSION. The other group members should be able to follow your line of argument easily. They must be able to understand the points you are trying to make. If they are unable to follow your line of reasoning, they will become lost and/or bored and you will not be able to convince them of your point.
* Make sure that you speak to EVERYONE in the group and not just to your teacher. It is your job to get everyone in the group enthusiastic about the topic and you must therefore present your material in an enthusiastic and interesting way.
* Like the essay, a verbal presentation is a RHETORICAL EXERCISE, so you must be as CONVINCING as you can.

When you are responding to a presentation made by one of your classmates, or if you are leading, the discussion after a presentation has been made, remember these points as the discussion develops:

* Make sure that what you are saying is RELEVANT to the discussion.
* Try to follow the ARGUMENT and do not change the flow of the discussion to a different subject until you are sure that the group has exhausted all possible leads and interpretations.
* Always try to contribute to the discussion, no matter how small it may be. Group exercises such as these should strive to be INCLUSIVE of all members of the group for them to be effective and of value to all participants.

Remember, DISCUSSION is the most important activity in a seminar. In order to receive a good assessment for your contributions to seminars you must demonstrate both your skill at preparing material for delivery to the group and your ability to respond spontaneously and think on your feet.
Chapter 6

Use of Primary Sources

6.1. On primary sources
6.2. Using primary sources

6.1. On primary sources

Where does historical knowledge come from? For most people, it comes from history teachers, history books, or other writings, speeches, or visual portrayals (e.g., movies) based ultimately on the work of historians. But where do historians get their knowledge? Beyond what they have learned from earlier historians, how do they know what they know?

History is ultimately based on critical reasoning about EVIDENCE, and what counts as evidence in history are PRIMARY SOURCES. These usually take the form of written documents — which is why we practice "document studies" — but they can also be oral history records (representing spoken, rather than written, accounts) or even physical artefacts. What they have in common is that they generally represent FIRST-HAND information about the topic. In legal terms, they are "eyewitness" accounts, not "hearsay" evidence. (Ask yourself whom you would believe about a party or sporting match that you missed — someone who was there, or someone who just heard about what happened from somebody else?)

Ideally, all our primary sources should come directly from participants in the event we are studying, or from eyewitnesses. In practice, we often have to compromise. When there are no first-hand accounts, our "primary source" may be some other record from the period. Even if the author did not take part in or see the event described, such as a contemporary historian, journalist, diarist, or letter-writer, commenting upon what he or she had been told, like Sima Qian (Ssu-ma Ch'ien) at the court of the Han Emperor, they may nevertheless be quite reliable sources of information. But the source would still be considered "primary" if it is as close as we can get to the event itself, since we no longer have any first-hand accounts available to us.

Anything later, based on these primary sources, is a SECONDARY SOURCE, and so is likely to be less valuable when we are trying to do original research. Your textbooks are all secondary sources; so are the lectures in your History courses; so are your essays! Obviously some of these ones are more reliable, or more insightful than other ones, but what they all have in common is that the writers or speakers are telling us about what happened when they themselves were not "there".
6.2. Using primary sources

Historians need to know how to use primary sources intelligently. “But”, you may be thinking, “I'm not a historian. I'm not even sure I want to be a history major!” That does not matter. What is important to remember is that what you are learning here are transferable skills, which you can use in other university courses or in any job that calls for something beyond the abilities of a clerk. A journalist uses primary sources all the time, and so does every government official or business executive – or executive-in-the-making – who is asked to "find out" about some topic and "report back" on it. If you know how to use historical primary sources, you will be well equipped to handle this.

There are three basic elements that historians need to consider in using primary sources:

1. **LOCATING** primary sources. If you go on to do serious research in history, whether in second and third-year courses, as a post-graduate doing MPhil or PhD, or as a professional, this will be one of your major tasks: to FIND the sources that you need. You will constantly ask yourself, "What do I want to know about this event or this period? What are the kinds of primary source materials that might exist? Who might have taken part in this, or seen this, and left some record of it? And if these records have survived, where might they be, and how can I get to them?" The historian must be a detective!

2. **READING** primary sources. This may sound straightforward, but often it is not. For many kinds of history, the sources may be in a language that you do not understand, e.g., French or Classical Chinese. But even if you think you "know" the language, you may not always be 100% sure of the meanings of a text. Sometimes the words themselves are unfamiliar; sometimes the words make sense, but the sentences do not, because the author is using structures or images that lie outside your "normal" language or cultural background. And even when you are sure that you understand each individual sentence, you still need to comprehend the author's ARGUMENT, to see what point he or she is trying to make, and what evidence and logic are deployed to make that point, including emotional language designed to sway opinions.

It is your responsibility to understand the text. Unlike a conversation with a friend or family member, in which both parties share a mutual responsibility to communicate clearly, historical sources do not "owe" you anything! You need to take the time, and use the tools needed (including a good dictionary, which should always be beside you as you read) to make sure that you comprehend them fully.

Obviously, this is a most important transferable skill. If you know how to read a document carefully, getting its full meaning, not just a general impression of what it is about; you have developed a very valuable talent for ANY course or executive job.
3. **ANALYSING** primary sources. Of each document, we should ask: How reliable is it? What are its limitations, its biases, or blind spots? What is its historical significance? What does it tell us that we did not already know? How does it affect what we already "knew"? Does it expand, modify, or contradict our previous "knowledge"? Answering questions like this is a lifetime's work for historians.

In approaching such broad themes, it is often useful to start out with more specific, smaller questions about your source:

1. **WHO** wrote the document? Ideally, we would like to know not just the author's name, but his or her position (office, title), social class, nationality or ethnicity, religion, political leanings, and anything else that might "explain" him or her. (If the author is a group, ideally we would like to know the composition of that group.)

2. **WHERE** was it written or published? This will not always be relevant, but sometimes it may suggest something about authors who are otherwise imperfectly known. We recognise that anything published in Pyongyang (North Korea) over the last 50 years is likely to represent a particular political viewpoint, even if we do not know the author's name.

3. **WHEN** was it written? The best primary source is often that which is composed closest in time to the event described; your memory of what you had for breakfast this morning is likely to be clearer than your memory of what you ate on your 10th birthday. Many men and women write their memoirs only in the later stages of their life, when their memories are failing and they are trying to polish their image retrospectively, so these are less valuable than contemporary letters. On the other hand, sometimes delay gives more time for mature reflection.

4. **FOR WHOM** was it written? Every document -- every statement any of us makes -- has an intended AUDIENCE. Sometimes this is only you, as in a diary or poem that we do not wish anyone else to read (though we may dream of an ideal, imaginary reader who will come along someday and appreciate it). Sometimes this is one other person, as in a private letter. Sometimes it is a group: e.g., a committee, a social club, or political faction. Sometimes it is the public, as in a speech, a government report, a letter to the newspaper, or a book. Often it is some combination of the above: you may write a report for your boss that you expect to be passed on to others in the organisation, or a private letter that you know may eventually be published. This leads us to …

5. **WHY** was it written? In some ways, this is the most important question. Every utterance has a PURPOSE. Sometimes students just assume that the only purpose is "to tell the truth", but a moment's reflection will tell us that is not an adequate answer. The sky is blue, but only one-year-old children who have just learned to talk will go around all the time saying, "The sky is blue! The sky is blue!" as if they have just discovered it. The rest of us only bother to tell the truth (or, for that matter, a lie) when it serves some purpose: to convince our audience to act a certain way or believe a certain idea, to fulfil
an assignment, to pass a test, to start up a conversation with someone, to make money, to enhance our reputation and earn a promotion or win an election, etc.

There is nothing wrong with this, so do not assume that discovering why a document was written somehow discredits it. Your job as historians is NOT to try to find some "objective" source that will tell you "the truth" for its own sake, with no other purpose, and then reject everything else as biased and subjective. It is to try to understand the purpose of EVERY source, and use this knowledge to help you assess its usefulness in your own pursuit of truth.

All of these questions may be answered in part by internal evidence (i.e., by inferences from the document itself), in part by external evidence (what you can learn about the document, its author, and its context from other sources, primary or secondary). Most of the time, even in serious professional scholarship, our answers to these questions are incomplete. In a first-year history course, they most certainly will be! But it is important that we ask them anyway. Never assume, unthinking, that it does not matter who wrote a document, or where, when, for whom, and why it was written. This insight should be valuable to you in other academic courses, and throughout your life.

Using the Internet and the World Wide Web presents special problems and challenges. Please review the materials in chapter 4 for guidance on using the Internet for historical study. You will also want to keep in mind that materials found on the Internet must still be fully cited when appropriate.