

# 2020-2021 US History Research Paper Guidelines

## “POTUS”



### 1. The American Presidency.

There is no doubt that the presidency of the United States is a hot topic of at the moment and therefore we will use it as a focus for our research paper project this year. You will choose a president from the twentieth century and analyze, assess, and provide insight into their presidency. This is neither a biography nor a report on the president; the paper will need to demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of a chosen aspect of the presidency and present an argument on what that administration achieved or failed to achieve, and why this was the case. You should begin by considering which president you want to make the topic of your paper. From there you should identify an aspect or policy of that president. It can be foreign or domestic policy. What you should not do is try to provide an exhaustive examination of every aspect of the individual's time in office.

Here is a list of the presidents you may choose from:

1. William McKinley 1897-1901
2. Theodore Roosevelt, 1901-1909
3. William H. Taft, 1909-1913
4. Woodrow Wilson, 1913-1921
5. Warren G. Harding, 1921-1923
6. Calvin Coolidge, 1923-1929
7. Herbert Hoover, 1929-1933
8. Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1933-1945
9. Harry S. Truman, 1945-1953
10. Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953-1961
11. John F. Kennedy, 1961-1963
12. Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-1969
13. Richard M. Nixon, 1969-1974
14. Gerald R. Ford, 1974-1977
15. Jimmy Carter, 1977-1981
16. Ronald Reagan, 1981-1989
17. George H.W. Bush, 1989-1993
18. Bill Clinton, 1993-2001
19. George W. Bush, 2001-2009
20. Barack Obama, 2009-2017

**2. Locate sources that will allow you to conduct the research on the historical aspect of your project.**

If you can't find any useful sources then you won't be able to research the topic. Finding the sources is a major part of any research experience. You will need a **minimum of 6 secondary sources** (books or journal articles) on the topic. As part of this project you **must incorporate primary research**. The most likely form of primary research that you can use would be historical editions of newspapers or government documents. To locate these sources **you may need to gain access to a library outside** of the school. There is no requirement that you buy books. Thankfully, every president of the twentieth century has a presidential library that provides easy online access to the material you will need.

**Once you have identified your sources you need to have them approved by Mr. Isherwood. The use of unapproved sources will *drastically* impact your grade. This is worth repeating – using sources that Mr. Isherwood has not approved will *drastically* impact your grade.**

**3. Complete Annotated Bibliography**

Using the Chicago Manual of Style format, you must compile an annotated list of the sources you intend to use. You should include a short summary of the source's topic and how you intend to utilize the source. You will complete this assignment in **NoodleTools**.

**4. Conduct your research.**

You now need to read your sources and identify the pertinent information on your topic. You will need to take notes. Good notes are essential to completing a good paper.

**(i) Checking the validity of a source**

It is unlikely that you will need to read the whole book on a topic from cover to cover. Do not just start reading the books that you find because they have titles that seem to suit your topic. Look through the source, checking the table of contents and the index if it has one. This should give you an indication whether or not the source is useful or not.

**(ii) Read the relevant sections of your sources**

Read the sections of the sources that appear most relevant. Take notes as you read. From these notes you will complete your notecards. You should also examine the remainder of your source to determine if you missed anything or may present other avenues of discussion that you had not considered. From a quick scan you should be able to determine whether or not you need to read more of the book.

When reading a source it will be important to determine and make note of the author's thesis – what are they arguing in their books and what positions are they taking on any important debates on the topic. There are several ways to determine the author's thesis. One is to read book reviews. You will find these online and through the EBSCO Host research database available through the library website. Another way to do this will be to focus your reading on the parts of the book that typically reveal an author's purpose for writing the book: the preface, introduction, the conclusion, and, often, the first chapter.

**(iii) Using Notecards**

You must create **60 notecards** from your research. You should create these cards using the online program NoodleTools. You must share your cards with Mr. Isherwood. The deadlines for completing your cards are listed below.

Each card should contain the following:

**A) The bibliographic information for the book based on the Chicago Manual of Style**

This will be critical when you come to writing the paper and you want to include citations. Make sure to include the page number.

**B) A subheading or subject heading**

Arranging your cards and therefore your research information by subject will help you later on when you come to planning and writing your paper.

**C) A useable piece of information or data pertaining to your research topic**

Each card should contain at least one piece of information. You may include direct quotes. Using the NoodleTools program you have the option of completing a paraphrased version of a quote. It will be helpful for you to include as much information that the source provides on an issue on the one card. Do not put information from multiple sources on the one card – this will only lead to confusion when writing your paper. By including the subheading or subject heading at the top of each card you will be able to easily group cards from multiple sources when preparing your paper.

**5. Arrange Your Notes and Make an Outline**

Arrange our notecards by subject. Put them in an order that makes sense to you. From this create a more refined outline of the paper. This tentative outline will be subject to change – indeed as you complete your research it is highly likely that you will want to change aspects of the paper. Part of researching is learning more about a topic. As you learn more about your topic you will likely find that you want to change how you are addressing the paper. The use of a tentative outline, however, will help guide your reading and research allowing you to identify more useful aspects of your sources.

A sample tentative outline may look something like this:

**Contemporary News Topic:** United States Relations with Iran during the Carter Years

**Hook:** United States and Iran Reach Deal on Nuclear Enrichment – Source: NY Times, Nov 24, 2013 – But when did relations with Iran go bad and why?

**Research Paper Topic:** Historical relations between the United States and Iran. Has it always been this way? Focus on the Presidency of James Carter from 1977-1981.

- I. Introduction: US Relations with Iran – significance of current negotiations between the two countries. How did relations between the US and Iran deteriorate? Was there a time when the two countries were allies? – The turning points of the Iranian Revolution and the Iran Hostage Crisis.
- II. Tentative thesis: US relations with Iran in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century were strong - hostage crisis and change in leadership in Tehran began decades of distrust.
- III. Part 1. US relations with Iran pre-hostage crisis.
- IV. Part 2. Carter Administration Iran policy.
- V. Part 2. US relations with Iran post-hostage crisis.
- VI. Part 3. How does this inform our understanding of the tensions between the two nations?
- VII. Conclusion

As the research for this paper many potential sub-topics could arise – the role of the United States in the Middle East as a whole , the role of oil in international relations, and a whole host of others – that the researcher may deem more important than those raised in the outline. They may even lead the researcher to change the direction of the paper. But as the researcher here started with a basic framework and research question in mind, they avoided reading too broadly and ending up with too much background and not enough specific, useful information.

## 6. Develop your thesis

As you complete your notecards you should be in a much stronger position to refine your thesis – the argument of the paper. The thesis provides the central unifying theme around which every sentence relates. The thesis statement also provides the infrastructure upon which the essay will be created. In other words, from reading your thesis statement it should be clear to any reader:

- (a) The topic of your paper
- (b) The specific aspects of that topic you will address
- (c) The position you are taking on the topic

## **7. Write a First, Polished Draft.**

Once you have organized your notes, start writing your rough draft. Follow your outline. Use your note cards to provide your information – you should not be going back to your sources at this point. As you write and use the notecards, insert citations in the form of footnotes into your paper.

### **Regular US History:**

The paper must be:

- 8 pages
- 12 point
- Times New Roman font
- double-spaced
- Chicago Manual of Style format

Once you have your first draft completed, go back revise, edit, and rewrite it. Then, do it again. A useful part of this process will be to read the paper out loud. This will help you identify phrases that don't make sense and simple grammar errors that should be eliminated.

Submission date for polished draft version of the paper is: April 5

Mr. Isherwood will examine this version of the paper and return it to you with guidance on how to edit and improve your paper.

## **8. Make edits and submit Final Research Paper**

Incorporate the proposed changes to the paper and resubmit by the deadline.

**Research Paper Schedule:**

Tuesday, November 17	Topic Selection
Monday, November 23	Annotated Bibliography
Monday, December 7	20 Notecards
Monday, January 18	40 Notecards
Monday, February 8	Thesis Statement
Monday, February 22	60 Notecards
Monday, March 1	Outline
Monday, April 5	Polished Draft
Thursday, May 20	Final Draft