



UCL

HISTORY DEPARTMENT

STUDY SKILLS

PLEASE READ AND RETAIN FOR FUTURE REFERENCE

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Reading

History is a subject which requires students to work independently a great deal of the time, and to do a lot of reading. As such, it is advisable to develop efficient study skills, in order to ensure that you are well prepared for classes and essays, and ultimately exams.

Reading skills

The volume of reading that you will be required to do means that it is important to be able to develop skills to enable you to acquire information and assess arguments fairly quickly. Successful students will be able to identify the most relevant passages, sections and chapters within the articles and books they read, not least through judicious use of contents pages and indexes, and to recognise that not every item on a given reading list will need to be read in its entirety, or read with the same level of intensity throughout. Good writers will guide readers through their work, and their approach, along with the main points of their argument, ought to be discernible fairly quickly.

Note taking

Successful students will also be those who are able to develop efficient note taking skills. The key is to take neither too many nor too few notes, and to ensure that these notes are clear, accurate, and logically organised. Ensure that your notes record thoroughly the details regarding the source from which they are taken, in terms of the author, title, date, and so on, as well as in terms of page numbers. This will guarantee that you will be able to footnote correctly (see below), and save a great deal of time if you find it necessary to revisit particular sources for clarification and further elucidation. It will also serve to protect you from unintentional plagiarism (see below), particularly if you ensure that your notes indicate very clearly when you have quoted directly from a given author.

Library resources

Given the pressure on library resources, students need to persevere in order to obtain the required readings for seminars and essays, but this process is made a great deal easier by the wealth of resources at your disposal, beyond the reading rooms in UCL library.

UCL library should obviously be your first port of call, given its proximity, and that every effort is made to ensure that it contains the most relevant material for your studies. If books are on loan, remember that they can be recalled. If there is particularly high demand for certain items, your tutor ought to be able to have the loan period changed, although only when the book is actually in the library, and not already on loan.

In addition to the books on the shelves, however, certain book chapters (in photocopy), and certain particularly popular books, have been placed by tutors on what is called the 'teaching collection'. These items should be marked on reading lists with an alphanumeric code (e.g. TC1362), or with the term 'issue desk', and can be obtained for a short period from the issue desk, for use in the library, and for copying.

Equally valuable is the possibility of using many other libraries in the vicinity of UCL.

These include:

- Senate House Library. The Library for the University of London, within a stone's throw of UCL, and for which all undergraduates should automatically be registered. The library's collections complement, rather than merely duplicate, those of UCL.
- School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES) Library.
- Institute of Archaeology library.
- Institute of Historical Research (IHR). You may need a letter from your tutor in order to gain admission, but the advantage of this library is that books cannot be borrowed, and so can be assumed to be available.

- British Library. Now admits undergraduates, although it is probably best treated as a library of last resort, other than when writing extended essays and dissertations. Again, since books cannot be borrowed, there is more likelihood of items being available.

Online resources

Increasingly, many of the sources that you will be required to read are available online, as well as in hard copy in the library. These electronic resources take two main forms:

- Online course reading lists. Many tutors have taken advantage of a facility provided by the library, whereby course reading lists are reproduced on the library's website, with links to 'pdf' files of key readings, many of which will have been digitised by tutors. These lists can be accessed from the main web page of the UCL library, by means of the following stages: 'Information about'; 'online resources'; 'reading lists'; 'search the online reading lists'. You will then be able to enter the relevant lecturer name or course code.
- Online journals. Many (but by no means all) scholarly journals now offer their content electronically via 'pdf' files, although not all back issues will necessarily be available yet. These can be accessed from the main catalogue page of the UCL library, under 'electronic journals'. These should be available remotely to UCL students, although you will be prompted to enter your UCL userid and password. It is also useful to remember that Senate House Library subscribes to a slightly different selection of electronic journals, which can be accessed through their webpage, although you will need your Senate House library barcode (from your library card) in order to access these remotely.

Evaluating Online Sources

You should try to apply the same critical intelligence that you use when you are reading books and articles in hardcopy to any online sources that you are consulting. Web pages are created with a purpose in mind by an individual or an organisation. They do not simply "grow" on the web like mushrooms in dark cellars. So, before you can begin to evaluate the reliability of web-sources you need to ask and answer a few simple questions:

- Who created it?
- Why did they create it?
- How good are the author's credentials?

Scholarly books and articles usually go through a rigorous process of editing before they are published. They are read and evaluated by anonymous experts in the field before a publisher sets them in print and distributes them to the reading public. Many web-pages are not subject to this kind of scholarly evaluation before they are made available to readers. Anyone can put anything on the web in just a few minutes. What you have got to do is to distinguish between the reliable and the questionable. You should hold the author and their argument and evidence to the same degree of credentials, authority, and documentation that you would expect from something published in a reputable printed source such as a book or a journal article. In scholarly publications such as monographs or journal articles, the credibility of most writings is proven through footnote documentation that shows the reader where the author found the information that forms the basis of their argument. Saying what you believe in a book, article, essay or a website without documentation is little better than just expressing an opinion or a point of view.

Some final points

- Avoid Wikipedia! **Anyone** can edit a Wikipedia article.
- There is an excellent website at www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html. It explains at greater length than is possible here how to evaluate

web pages. Do take a look at it if you have any doubts about the credibility of a web source that you have found.

- Most subjects do have useful and reliable resources available online, and course tutors will typically include these on their course handouts. The History Department website also lists a number of recommended online resources. However, because of the limitations and dangers noted above, some course tutors strongly discourage students from the use of quotations or citations from the web in coursework essays. A great deal of online material has simply been compiled from books and articles that are available in the library and included on course bibliographies. If this is the case, an online citation betrays laziness and technical incompetence – ideas and information should always be properly referenced. If in doubt you should consult your course tutor.
- You may sometimes be tempted to cut and paste whole sections from web-pages straight into your essays without acknowledging your source. DON'T – doing so would constitute plagiarism.

Oral Presentations

Oral presentations in tutorials and seminars are a regular and important part of your work. Such presentations have at least two functions. They enable you to educate other students by exchanging ideas and information, and they give you the chance to learn communication skills that will be of great benefit to you after graduation. Most employers are looking for graduates who are literate *and* articulate.

There are a few basic rules you should follow when giving a presentation:

- Prepare carefully what you want to say and practise giving your presentation the night before you are due to deliver it. Ensure that your presentation is the right length. If your tutor has asked you to speak for ten minutes, do not prepare a presentation that lasts for five or twenty minutes. (Pay attention to time *during* your presentation as well!)
- Do not read out a prepared piece of prose. Speak from notes or use a visual aid (handout or overhead) to structure your talk.
- Your presentation should pose a question and then provide a coherent answer. You do not need to narrate or describe events.
- Begin your presentation by giving the audience a brief summary of the main points of your argument.
- Speak steadily and clearly. Do not speak too quickly, because other students will be trying to take notes. Vary the pitch of your voice and the speed of your delivery. If you do not, you will sound monotonous and boring.
- Try to maintain some eye contact with your audience. It is the only way for you to judge whether or not you are having an impact on your listeners.
- Bring your talk to an end by coming to a definite conclusion. 'I guess I will stop there' is not a definite conclusion!

Written Coursework Assignments

Written coursework assignments for most History courses comprise essays of c. 2,500 words but some courses also require book reviews and assignments of other types. Students who are new to the department will find it helpful to keep the following points in mind. You should remember that these generally provide guidelines, not immutable rules, and that different teachers have different expectations of their students. Teachers' requirements for coursework should be made clear in handouts issued at the start of term.

- Your coursework assignments should be word-processed. **Please use double-spacing, 10, 11 or 12 point text, leave margins of at least 2.5cm, and please number the pages.**
- Scrupulous attention must be paid to the word limit. This should not be a matter of simply writing 'enough' words, however. Writing a good short book review (e.g. of 1,000 words) or essay (c.2,500 words) involves excluding points, as well as including them. Allow yourself time to write an overlong assignment and then edit it to fit the word limit, and perhaps even to redraft your work thoroughly, to ensure that the argument is consistent and logical.

Assignments submitted during term will be returned corrected, as well as marked, but the extent of correction will vary from teacher to teacher. Students should study comments and corrections carefully and, if in any doubt about the teacher's meaning, ask for an explanation.

Teachers will make time available for private discussion of all assignments submitted on time. In any event, they will always be prepared to talk privately to students about their work, as will Personal Tutors. The process of returning written coursework is an extremely valuable aspect of the learning process, and the idea is that students should expect to do more than merely turn up in order to be handed their marked work. Indeed, the idea is that they can engage in a constructive discussion of the written work, so that strengths can be identified and encouraged, and weaknesses noted, in order that they might be rectified in subsequent coursework.

Book reviews

In the context of the study of history, the measure of a successful review of a book is not necessarily the cleverness of judgemental critique. A good review is one that is able to convey to someone who has not read the book what its theme, content, sources, method, and argument(s) are, and, in the field of history, how the work is located in relation to the previous scholarship on the appropriate issue. Reading a book from cover to cover is not the most economical way to find answers to these questions. It is a good idea to pay special attention to any foreword/preface or introduction (which may reveal the genesis of the work and make clear whether the author is responding to an on-going debate and/or adopting a particular method or approach) and to the conclusions (which ought to outline what the author considers the distinctive contribution of the work). Surveying the index can also be very revealing of which sources and/or topics are of primary importance to the author's argument. If the book assigned for review has been published some time ago, some account of its reception is also a valid part of the review. You can get an impression of this from previous scholarly reviews of the work. Feel free to quote and discuss contrasting reviews as part of your discussion. Such reviews usually appear in academic journals and many can be easily traced by searching (with the title of the work) in electronic periodical databases, such as JSTOR (www.jstor.org), accessible through the UCL library website.

Coursework essays

In addition to the general guidelines regarding written assignments above, for essays note also the following:

- In essays full references must be provided for any point that is neither 'common knowledge' nor your own original argument. ('London is in England' is an example of common knowledge. 'London was the Los Angeles of the nineteenth century' might be

an example of the latter.) See page 8 for details of formatting and also for the definition of plagiarism.

- You should append a complete bibliography at the end of a coursework essay. This should list all books or articles you have read for an essay (even if these items are not cited). Bibliography entries should be in alphabetical order by author's surname. See page 8 for details of formatting.

Historical Inquiry

Essay writing is more than a process of synthesising other people's writings. While understanding the existing literature is a necessary first step to writing a good essay, it is not, in and of itself, constitutive of a good essay.

As you are well aware, historians spend a great amount of time and energy arguing with each other over ways to interpret texts and 'events.' In your essay writing, you need to engage with those debates, and with the historiography relating to specific topics. That is, rather than simply outlining the points that have already been made, you need to have your own perspective and your own argument. In order to do so within the word limit, you need to make a focused and specific argument.

Argument

All written work should be constructed around a thesis, which should be clearly and cogently presented; the reader should not have to hunt for it. Treat your material (anecdotes, examples, quotations) as evidence and make clear how you understand its significance. Citing the argument of a famous historian does not constitute evidence – you need to explain why you believe one historian's analysis is stronger than another's. Try to argue from your material (rather than using it to 'illustrate' a point or argument that you have chosen). Transitional paragraphs (and 'topic' sentences) do more than assist smooth prose; they sharpen and clarify the argument, and help to guide the reader through the essay, and instil confidence regarding the author's grasp of a topic, and of their own argument.

A conclusion is an essential component of a good piece of writing. It should restate the thesis, summarise the argument and possibly raise new questions which further research might answer.

Style and the Mechanics of Writing

Good expository prose of any kind should be both clear and interesting. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- Be direct – answer the question. Do not embark upon a general survey of the subject or a narrative of events. Remember to ask yourself the question, 'So what?'
- Don't review factual content of books and articles.
- Keep your prose free of jargon.
- Write short sentences, but try to avoid overly short (single sentence) paragraphs. These are best left to journalists.
- Be sure to define your terms. What do you mean by 'class' or 'democracy' or 'feminist'? Successfully answering a question will often depend upon defining key terms and concepts, and failure to do so will hamper your argument, and result in a lower mark.
- Avoid passive sentence constructions wherever possible. They omit crucial information. ('It has been argued' is a passive construction – it does not tell the reader who has argued. Write instead, 'Professor Smith has argued...'.)
- Avoid constructions such as 'It is interesting to note that...' or 'It is important that...' These waste the two most important parts of your sentence: the subject ('it') and the verb ('is').

- Think conceptually and in terms of broad historical processes and problems (e.g. urbanisation, sovereignty).
- Remember that your own critical thought must be evident in the essay. 'I prefer the second book on the reading list' is not a very subtle thesis.
- Any history essay is necessarily also a work of historiography. That is, it is concerned with both the past and how historians have understood, described and analysed the past. Try to be explicit about the different interpretations you have encountered and recognise them as arguments. If one historian says 'yes' and another says 'no' you do not effectively reconcile their disagreement by asserting 'maybe'.
- Proof-read, proof-read, proof-read! A computer's spell checker will not notice if you have typed 'bun' instead of 'nun.' If you find it difficult to proof-read your own work, try reading your essay aloud or giving it to a friend (preferably not a history student) to read.

Citing/References

A well-written essay includes clear and consistent documentation giving clear references to all documentary material and modern views discussed, so that readers (and the examiners) can locate them easily. This is achieved by references and bibliography (see further below) working in tandem.

References to literary works or documents can often be incorporated in the main text (e.g. 'Tacitus (*Hist.* 2.13) tells us ...' or 'The epitaph of the Veranii (*CIL* VI 41075) records ...'), but references to modern scholarship are better given in consecutively numbered footnotes or endnotes. In addition to direct quotations, all concepts and ideas that are not your own should be indicated. The examiners will pay careful attention to your scholarly apparatus and you may lose marks if they think it is defective. Plagiarism – the theft of someone's intellectual property – is a serious offence and will be dealt with harshly. Be very careful when taking notes from a book or periodical. Always note page numbers, and put any direct quotation (even if it is just two or three words) in quotation marks. In your essay, try to keep direct citations to a minimum and to paraphrase in your own words whenever possible (if you paraphrase, you still **must** give credit to the author; see the section on plagiarism below). Cite material in order to analyse it; use it as evidence in support of **your** argument.

In your reading you will come across many different systems of referencing. Also, in the presentation of bibliographical information, you will also observe considerable differences in typographical conventions between languages (for instance, note the divergent capitalisation rules for titles between English and German and between them and the Romance languages) and, within languages, between different national traditions. There are simple rules that you should follow. The most important is that you should be that, whatever system you use, you should be consistent and always give a reference in such a way that any reader who wanted to follow up one of your references would be able to find it in a library, archive, or on the internet with the minimum of time and trouble. The following guidelines are based on usage predominating in British English in the arts and humanities sector (cf. social scientists, e.g. archaeologists and anthropologists, who tend to prefer the 'Harvard', or author/date, system).

As long as a direct quotation is less than three typed lines there is no need to separate it from the rest of the text. Use ellipses (...) to indicate the omission of material. Place footnote references immediately **after** the punctuation mark following the section of text to which the note is pertinent (whether full stop, comma, semi-colon, etc). For example:

In a study based largely on works of political theory, Joan Landes has treated 'the structures of modern republican politics...as part of an elaborate defence against women's power and public presence.'¹ By looking at women's actual political activity in revolutionary France, however, Olwen Hufton has effectively challenged this account of modern republicanism's *necessary* exclusion of women.²

¹ J. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), .203-204.

² O. Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

References in footnotes/endnotes should include the following details:

Books

For books, the author's initial(s) and surname, title of the book, place of publication, publisher (optional), date of publication, and relevant page number(s). The title of a book should be underlined or *italicised*, e.g.

S. Carey, *Pliny's Catalogue of Culture: Art and Empire in the Natural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 33-50.

Articles in periodicals

For articles in periodicals, the author's initial(s) and surname, article title, name of the journal, volume number and year of publication, and relevant page reference (the full page extent of an article should only be referred to in notes, if the whole of the article is pertinent to the point; otherwise reserve this full information to the bibliography). The titles of scholarly journals should be underlined or *italicised* but the titles of articles, or chapters in books, should rather be placed within single quotation marks, e.g.

C.P. Jones, 'The Claudian monument from Patara', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 137 (2001), 161-168.

Encyclopedia entries/chapters in edited volumes

For encyclopedia entries/chapters in edited volumes, similarly to journal articles, the author's initial(s) and surname, article title, name(s) of editor(s), title of the volume, place, publisher, and year of publication, and relevant page reference (as above), e.g.

N. Purcell, 'Pausilypon' in S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (edd.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1129.

C. Kokkinia, 'Ruling, inducing, arguing: how to govern (and survive) a Greek province' in L. De Ligt et al. (edd.), *Roman Rule and Civic Life: Local and Regional Perspectives. Proceedings of the Fourth Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Roman Empire, c. 200 B.C.-A.D. 476), Leiden, June 25-28, 2003* (Amsterdam: Gieben, 2004), 39-58.

On-line resources

For on-line resources, the author and title/description of the page(s), which should be underlined or *italicised*, the full URL in brackets, and date accessed, e.g.

G. Purpura, *Elenco di costituzioni imperiali* (www.unipa.it/dipst/dir/pub/purpura/costituzioni_imperiali.htm), No 30. Accessed 29 February 2010.

Similarly for an online edition of a book:

H. Grotius, *On the Law of War and Peace*, trans. and abridged A. C. Campbell (Kitchener, Ontario: Batoche, 2001), 12; found at <http://www.ecn.bris.ac.uk/het/grotius/Law2.pdf>. Accessed on 29 September 2011.

Take care when using on-line material. Not everything on the web is reliable. See page 2 for 'Guidelines on Evaluating Online Sources'.

Documentary sources

For documentary sources cited directly, use individual reference numbers in archives or, for published collections known by standard abbreviations, entry numbers rather than the page and volume number of the publication, are preferable. For example.

The National Archives, Kew, CAB24/12. Cabinet Paper GT 657, 5 May 1917

POxy 1814 [NOT: *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* XV (1922), 214-216].

Handouts/oral communications

Occasionally, you may need to cite material distributed in class without publication information or you may want to refer to points made in lectures or seminars. Simply be as precise and accurate as possible. For example:

Robert Bruce, 'The Powder Keg', photocopy distributed in class, p.49.

Simon Hornblower, 'The Peloponnesian War', lecture, 12 December 2001

It is good practice always to include a complete reference to a source the **first** time you cite it in a footnote. However, for second and subsequent citations, it is permissible to use an abbreviated form of citation giving the author's surname and a short title/journal acronym, e.gg.

Carey, *Pliny's Catalogue*, 35

Jones, *ZPE* 137 (2001), 167

Kokkinia, 'Ruling, inducing, arguing', 43

Purpura, *Elenco*, No 30.

Bibliography

At the end of your piece of written coursework you must add a bibliography of all the modern scholarship (books, articles, archaeological site reports, etc.) that you have consulted. The bibliography as a whole must be in alphabetical order of authors' or editors' surnames. Individual entries should follow the same format as the first reference in your notes, except that the author's surname is better listed first and the forename (or initial/s) second. In cases where there is more than one author or editor, only the first name is given in this format; the second and subsequent names should be given in the order: forename (or initial/s) and then surname. You should NOT include page references in the bibliography except for journal articles and chapters in collected volumes, where you MUST cite the page range (i.e. the first and last page number of the whole article/chapter, separated by a hyphen).

Carey, S., *Pliny's Catalogue of Culture: Art and Empire in the Natural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

Christol, M., *Essai sur l'évolution des carrières sénatoriales dans la seconde moitié du III^e siècle ap. J.-C.* Études prosopographiques 6 (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1986)

Consolino, F.E. (ed.), *Pagani e cristiani da Giuliano l'Apostata al sacco di Roma: Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi (Rende, 12/13 novembre 1993)*. Studi di Filologia Antica e Moderna 1 (Soveria Mannelli/Messina: Rubbettino Editore, 1995)

Coşkun, A. (ed.), *Roms auswärtige Freunde in der späten Republik und im frühen Prinzipat*. Göttinger Forum für Altertumswissenschaft, Beiheft 19 (Göttingen: Duehrkohp und Radicke, 2005)

Jones, C.P., 'The Claudian monument from Patara', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 137 (2001), 161-168

Kokkinia, C., 'Ruling, inducing, arguing: how to govern (and survive) a Greek province' in L. De Ligt et al. (edd.), *Roman Rule and Civic Life: Local and Regional Perspectives. Proceedings of the Fourth Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire*

(*Roman Empire, c. 200 B.C -A.D. 476*), Leiden, June 25-28, 2003 (Amsterdam: Gieben, 2004), 39-58

Purpura, G., *Elenco di costituzioni imperiali*

(www.unipa.it/dipstdir/pub/purpura/costituzioni_imperiali.htm).

Plagiarism

A definition of plagiarism is, 'passing off other people's work **intentionally or unintentionally** as your own work for your own benefit'.

Essays, while based upon what you have read, heard and discussed, must be **entirely your own work**. It is very important that you avoid plagiarism, that is the presentation of another person's thoughts or words as though they were your own. To cite the UCL Registry Website:

'Any quotation from the published or unpublished works of other persons must ... be clearly identified as such by being placed inside quotation marks, and students should identify their sources as accurately and fully as possible. A series of short quotations from several different sources, if not clearly identified as such, constitutes plagiarism just as much as does a single unacknowledged long quotation from a single source. Equally, if a student summarises another person's ideas, judgements, figures, software or diagrams, a reference to that person in the text must be made and the work referred to must be included in the bibliography.

Recourse to the services of "ghost-writing" agencies (for example in the preparation of essays or reports) or of outside word-processing agencies which offer correction/improvement of English is strictly forbidden and students who make use of the services of such agencies render themselves liable for an academic penalty. Use of unacknowledged information downloaded from the Internet also constitutes plagiarism.'

Plagiarism, whether from published or unpublished material, from online resources, or from another student's work, is a serious examination offence, akin to cheating, and will be severely dealt with. Students who have been found to have committed an offence may be excluded from all further examinations.

To avoid plagiarism in essays, you must carefully record who said or wrote what. Both when taking notes and writing essays, always make clear what is your work and what is the work of others. Please read the guidance below for some examples of what is and what is not plagiarism.

Below is a section from J. R. Ferris's *Men, Money and Diplomacy: The Evolution of British Strategic Foreign Policy, 1919-1926*.

The need to settle the role of the recently established RAF dominated inter-service relations in the 1920s. Due to the resulting controversies, whenever the services came under pressure they attacked and weakened each other rather than forming a united front. However, the depth of these differences has been exaggerated. It is wrong to argue that the Cabinet and the older services misunderstood the value of airpower and constantly sought to abolish the RAF. They were impressed by airpower. Only once did the politicians really consider abolishing the RAF. Most naval officers wished to end its role in naval aviation and between 1919 and 1922 the army wanted to take over the rest of the RAF, yet the older services just once seriously attempted to eliminate it. Otherwise they sought simply a guarantee that the RAF would meet their aviation requirements and at most demanded the creation of their own separate air units. However Trenchard may have construed these demands, they did not constitute attempts to eliminate the RAF. The abolition of that service was a political possibility only between December 1920 and December 1921.

Example 1

The paragraph below is an example of simple plagiarism: the writer is creating the impression that these are his/her own words, but in fact the words have been taken deliberately from different parts of *Men, Money and Diplomacy*, without any mention of the real author.

The need to settle the role of the recently established Royal Air Force dominated inter-service relations in the early 1920s. It is wrong to argue that the Cabinet and the older services misunderstood the value of airpower and constantly sought to abolish the Royal Air Force. Only once did the politicians really consider abolishing the Royal Air Force. The abolition of that service was a political possibility only between December 1920 and December 1921.

Example 2

This is still plagiarism: the writer gives the name of Ferris and of his work, but tries to create the impression that he/she is summarising Ferris' view in his/her own words, when in fact the words are copied directly from Ferris.

Ferris noted that the need to settle the role of the recently established Royal Air Force dominated inter-service relations in the early 1920s. He believed that it is wrong to argue that the Cabinet and the older services misunderstood the value of airpower and constantly sought to abolish the Royal Air Force. Only once did the politicians really consider abolishing the Royal Air Force. The abolition of that service was a political possibility only between December 1920 and December 1921.¹

¹ J.R. Ferris, *Men, Money and Diplomacy. The Evolution of British Strategic Foreign Policy, 1919-1926* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 7.

Example 3

This carefully avoids plagiarism by footnoting each point and is in itself acceptable, though a whole essay written like this would be given very low marks for lack of independent thinking.

In *Men, Money and Diplomacy* J.R. Ferris noted that 'the need to settle the role of the recently established Royal Air Force dominated inter-service relations in the early 1920s.'¹ He also suggested that it would be mistaken to believe that 'the Cabinet and the older services misunderstood the value of airpower and constantly sought to abolish the Royal Air Force.'² In his opinion 'Only once did the politicians really consider abolishing the Royal Air Force. The abolition of that service was a political possibility only between December 1920 and December 1921.'³

¹ J.R. Ferris, *Men, Money and Diplomacy. The Evolution of British Strategic Foreign Policy, 1919-1926* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 7.

² Ferris, *Men, Money and Diplomacy*, p. 7.

³ Ferris, *Men, Money and Diplomacy*, p. 7.

Example 4

This avoids plagiarism in a different way: it makes it clear that the writer is summarising Ferris' view, and shows just a little independence from his work.

In his important re-examination of British foreign and defence policy in the early 1920s, J.R. Ferris has suggested that relations between the army, navy and air force were dominated by a single issue, the need to decide upon the role of the Royal Air Force in the post-war era. But, contrary to the opinion of other historians, Ferris asserts that both Cabinet ministers and the

army and navy understood the significance of airpower. Consequently, the abolition of the infant air force was only a political possibility for a relatively brief period in 1921.¹

¹ J.R. Ferris, *Men, Money and Diplomacy. The Evolution of British Strategic Foreign Policy, 1919-1926* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 7.

NB. Examples 3 and 4 are not intended as models to be followed, but are to illustrate how plagiarism can be avoided.

Self-Plagiarism

Besides ensuring that all essays you submit are your own work, you must also avoid self-plagiarism. This means that you must not submit the same piece of work (with or without merely stylistic variation) in order to gain credit more than once. The same criteria apply to self-plagiarism as to other forms of plagiarism, and it is liable to incur the same penalty. This does not mean, however, that you are prohibited from answering an exam question on a topic that overlaps with a coursework essay. It would be unkind to deny students the chance to answer exam questions on the topics they know best, although tutors will obviously try to ensure that an exam question takes a rather different form from that used for coursework essays. You should also be careful to answer the question that is asked.

Writing and Learning Mentor

The Department has a Writing and Learning Mentor who is available to help undergraduates of all abilities improve their essay writing and research skills. Contact details and further information will be circulated at the start of the academic year.

Submission of written assignments

You must submit an electronic copy and two hard copies of all assessed pieces of coursework. Only one hard copy of Special Subject dissertations is required.

Electronic Submission

Electronic submission of all assessed coursework to Turn-it-In via the Moodle page for the relevant course is compulsory. For guidance on the process, refer to individual course booklets and the departmental website.

Hard Copy Submission

Two hard copies of each piece of coursework should be submitted placed directly in staff pigeon holes into the departmental Reception within 24 hours of the Turn-it-in submission deadline. These must be accompanied by a completed departmental cover sheet, available in the information corridor outside Room G06. For further details of the requirements please refer to individual course booklets.

Examination Guidelines

The following section is an edited version of material that you can find on the UCL Student support site at www.ucl.ac.uk/support-pages/information/coping-with-exams. It has been adapted from information originally produced by the Counselling Service at Royal Holloway, University of London and they retain copyright. It aims to give practical guidelines to handling the time leading up to examinations, as well as some tips about the exams themselves. Many of the suggestions are simple or 'obvious', but they are often overlooked.

Revising for Examinations

You should try to start a revision programme in good time before the exams. Whilst you do not want to 'peak' too early, leaving revision too late is an excellent recipe for stress. And always remember that doing the work takes less effort than thinking about doing the work!

It is essential that you organise your time carefully. People are different in how they react to revision plans. When these go wrong – as they often do – it is usually because they were planned too tightly and did not allow for sufficient flexibility. Plans need plenty of blank space to allow for the unexpected. Bearing this in mind, draw up a weekly timetable for yourself, firstly putting in everything you need to do: meals, sleep, lectures, supervisions, shopping, laundry etc. Then allocate time for revision and time for relaxing and enjoying yourself.

Try to be realistic about how much time you can aim to spend revising. As a guide, if you divide the week into 21 units (one per morning, afternoon and evening) you should aim to work in total for no more than 15 units per week, as it has been shown that ability to work effectively over a prolonged period decreases over this level. That will leave you with 6 units (e.g. 2 full days or 1 full day and 3 evenings) to do other things. Leaving time to do other things is not wasting time. On the contrary, it will help you to work more effectively.

Plan how you will use your time during your revision periods. Make a list of the topics you want to revise, decide what order to learn them in, and how much time to spend on each. If you have other tasks to complete (e.g. reading, note-taking) you also need to decide how much time to spend on these. It is a good idea at this point to look at past examination papers. Do not try to 'spot' questions because your teachers will not deliberately repeat questions that they have set in previous years. But past papers will give you some idea of the ways in which questions are likely to be worded. Make sure you know the format that the exam will take, in terms of the number of questions you will be expected to answer, and whether or not the paper will be divided into sections, or have compulsory tasks. Tutors may change the format of exams from year to year, and you should therefore not rely solely upon past papers for guidance, but you are entitled to raise the issue in revision classes.

Be realistic about what you can achieve and stick to your deadlines. If you have too much work for the time available, use the following questions to help you prioritise:

- Which are the most important topics?
- Which subjects do you know best already, or are easiest to get 'up to scratch'?
- Which topics, if any, are compulsory?
- For which subjects do you already have the most information/ research/material?

Set specific goals for each revision period. Keep them realistic. Make a list of them and tick them off as you achieve them so you can see what you have done. Allow more time for subjects you find difficult. Check out what you do not understand.

There are several ways to motivate yourself when you are revising:

- Plan rewards for yourself when you have achieved goals – some people find chocolate biscuits irresistible.
- Start with the easier or the more interesting subjects to establish a work routine – once started, a routine becomes easier to maintain.
- People vary in how long they can concentrate, so experiment and find a work pattern that suits you. Taking regular, short breaks when you are working – for example, 10 minutes out of every hour you work – is likely to help you concentrate for longer.
- Mix topics frequently. Mix easy and difficult, interesting and dull, and shorter and longer topics.
- Try to work in a comfortable environment (not too hot/cold/noisy) and remove distractions if possible. Find out where you work best, e.g. in the library with a friend, or alone in your room.
- Try to revise in an active way: do not just read notes through, but perhaps make a list of key points. Writing reams of new notes is very time-consuming and is not an effective method of revising! Test your memory as you go along and try to devise questions/answers concerning the information you are learning.

Some people find it helpful to use memory aids such as memorising a trigger word which is associated with a 'chunk' of information, making a trigger word out of the initial letters of key points or names, or finding a way of visualising information.

Spend some time going through past examination papers and practise answering questions within the allotted time. It doesn't matter if your attempts go wrong to start with - in fact, now is the time to make these mistakes! Such practice will give you a good idea of the format of the exam, the sorts of questions you could get, and will give you invaluable practice in planning and structuring answers under time pressure. It makes no sense to get your first 'practice' at this during the real exam!

Sleeping

Some people suffer from lack of sleep when they are revising or during the examination period. These are a few tips to help you if you are one of them:

- Don't work in or on your bed – keep bed for relaxation and sleep.
- 'Switch off' before going to bed: stop working at least an hour before you intend to sleep and spend the time doing something more relaxing e.g. listening to music, talking to a friend, having a bath, doing relaxation exercises, taking a stroll.
- If you stick to a regular bed time and getting up time it will be easier to maintain good sleeping patterns.
- Too much alcohol will prevent you from sleeping properly and will tend to make you tired the next day.
- Do not 'catastrophise' not being able to sleep well - i.e. stop telling yourself that you will not be able to do anything the next day if you cannot get to sleep. Even when you are not sleeping much, you will still be able to function well, think logically and do difficult mental tasks. It is mundane, vigilance-type tasks and mood (e.g. irritability) which are mainly affected by lack of sleep. Most people manage to sustain sleep deficit over a few days (but not weeks!) before needing to 'catch up'.

On the day of the examination

Do not go to the wrong venue! Make certain that you know where the exam will take place. If you are unfamiliar with the location, work out how to get there and how long it will take in advance. Arrive at the exam hall comfortably in time but not too early.

Avoid unnecessary panic – allow plenty of time for getting caught in traffic or a bus not turning up.

Don't confuse yourself by trying to cram new material. Most people have a short-term memory of about 40 minutes so if you must do something in the time immediately before the exam, revise facts such as dates or names that you find difficult to remember.

Take at least two pens into the examination hall with you. If you do not, you can be almost certain that the single pen you do have will run out of ink at some point during the examination.

When you receive the exam paper

Make sure you have the right paper – mistakes can happen! If in doubt, check with an invigilator.

Make sure you know your candidate identifier number and remember to put it at the top of the exam booklet. If you do not, we will not know who wrote your script and you may be marked as absent and receive a mark of 0.

Read the rubric at the top of the exam paper – take particular note of how many questions you have to answer.

When you open the paper, allow yourself time to read **all** of the questions slowly and carefully – take care not to miss out any pages of the paper. Don't panic that you aren't writing immediately, even if everyone around you is. When you choose your questions, make

sure you understand exactly what you are being asked. Avoid any that contain a word or phrase you don't understand as you may guess incorrectly. Underline key words or phrases in the questions so that you have them fixed in your mind.

Answering the questions

Remember that you don't have to answer the questions in order – you may wish to start with your strongest area to help you relax and feel more confident about tackling the other questions.

Answer the correct number of questions and divide your time equally between them – or according to the marking scheme if questions have different weighting. With essay questions, you will get more marks overall by doing three (say) average answers, than by doing two brilliant ones but leaving the third question undone! If you find that you have overrun your time on one question, stop, leave a blank page and begin work on the next question. You may find that you have time at the end of the examination to return to the incomplete question and finish it.

Types of question

Most questions of examination papers for History courses will fall into one of two types; the 'gobbet' commentary or essay question. Below are tips on approaching each of these two types.

Writing 'Gobbet' commentaries

The unattractive term 'gobbet' denotes a common method of teaching and assessment in history in British universities and relates to setting students to write a short analytical commentary on a short extract ('gobbet') of a historical source, which is usually a text but may also be an image, graph, or statistical table. This type of exercise is used in some secondary school examinations but, if you have encountered it in the context of literary criticism, you need to be aware of the different expectations of a historical gobbet commentary. A good answer will demonstrate an understanding of the relevant period and of non-obvious aspects of the source, as well as powers of inference. A simple way to approach the task is to begin by explaining what one needs to know to make sense of the source, then going on to show what it can tell us beyond what is already known. The following structure may serve as a useful model: (1) what needs to be known for the source to make sense, comprising (i) a brief introduction explaining the broad historical context to which the source belongs; (ii) a description of the specific characteristics of the source (known in relation to the study of documents as 'diplomats'), i.e. genre, medium, authorship, recipient/audience, structure, setting, etc.; (iii) where significant (especially for the historiography of the topic to which it relates) consideration of the 'afterlife' of the source in different contexts (think, for example, of the Elgin/Parthenon Marbles); and (iv) the content/subject matter of the source; (2) what this source in particular adds to what is generally known.

Answering examination essay questions

Do not plunge in and immediately begin writing an answer to the first question. It is essential to spend five minutes planning each essay answer – this is **not** wasted time. Jot down a series of bullet points that you think are relevant and important. This will help you to sort out your ideas into a logical and coherent argument. You may wish to plan all your answers at the beginning of the exam – it can be helpful to have this to refer to if you begin to panic as time ticks away.

After doing your plan, look back at the question and check that you will be answering the question asked. You must answer the question the examiners have set, not the question you wanted them to set, or the question that they set last year and for which you have prepared an answer. Resist the temptation to reel off everything you know about a topic – referring back to the question in your answer can help keep you on track and show the examiner you are addressing the question.

A good exam answer is bound to be shorter than most coursework essays and will not be accompanied by the same scholarly apparatus of footnote references and bibliography, but it should display the same characteristics:

- It should be constructed around a thesis, which should be cogently presented.
- It should contain evidence references to specific events, people, dates, etc, to lend credibility to your generalizations.
- It should be written in clear, direct and simple prose.
- You should take care to define any technical terms that you use.
- It should contain you own critical thought.
- It should begin with an introductory paragraph explaining your over-arching thesis and how you intend to structure your essay to answer the question and it should end with a concluding paragraph in which you draw all of the strands of your argument together and provide a final, conclusive answer to the question.

Try to present your answers neatly. Number your answers clearly, take a new page for each question and cross out anything you don't want the examiners to read. Most importantly, **write legibly!** Your examiners will go to great lengths to read even the worst handwriting, but there are limits, and remember that on the front cover of each examination booklet there is the injunction that "You are warned that the examiners attach great importance to legibility, accuracy and clarity of expression". If your examiners cannot read what you have written, or if they cannot understand it, you will not get many marks for your efforts.

Finally, think very carefully before leaving the exam hall early. Use any spare time to re-read your answers. You can spot and correct any obvious misspellings and you may remember a crucial point you had forgotten.