**Research Paper**

**Overview:**

This assignment will take the place of a final exam so, like an exam, its purpose is to utilize all of the skills that you have developed over the course of the semester. For this paper, you will need to conduct research to find reliable secondary sources, analyze and summarize arguments, defend a unique thesis, and use formal language.

**Format:**

Your paper should have a clear, original thesis which is well-supported by scholarly research. You should organize your paper consciously in order to present your ideas as persuasively and logically as possible. Although this paper does not need to be structured with 3 main body paragraphs, you will need to have an introductory paragraph that introduces your thesis, multiple body paragraphs that focus on presenting evidence to support your thesis, and a concluding paragraph that summarizes your argument. You must use reliable academic sources and integrate them properly. You must write in complete sentences and use an appropriate academic tone. Your paper should contain no significant grammatical or mechanical errors.

**Topic:**

Your paper will consider the transforming depictions of one historic figure, event, or subject. Just as we looked at how the story of Bonnie and Clyde has changed over time, you will discuss how and why sources in at least two separate time periods or rhetorical situations present different perceptions of the same topic. You will choose your own topic. This assignment is intended to encourage critical thinking, as a strong paper will demonstrate that all sources are selective in the information that they emphasize.

Examples of events: the writing of the Declaration of Independence, the sinking of the Titanic, the Watergate scandal, the Salem witchcraft trials

Examples of historic figures: Robin Hood, Superman, Joan of Arc, George Washington, Mickey Mouse

**Example of a topic and argument:**

Perhaps you’ve seen the 1997 movie *Titanic* and you want to write your paper on the ship. In a typical research paper, you would just read a few books or articles and then restate that information by explaining the main events of the ship’s sinking. For this paper, though, you would focus on comparing depictions of the sinking. As you look at primary sources, like newspaper articles from 1912, you might find that those articles had little interest in the third-class passengers that died, yet the movie focused almost entirely on a third-class passenger. In your paper, you would explain why the depictions are so different, using secondary sources to compare what “really” happened with what the articles and movie choose to present. Your thesis would be that, compared to the early 1910s, mainstream media in the mid-1990s was more interested in focusing on the average person than on the rich. Your thesis statement would be: “Comparison of newspaper articles from 1912 with the 1997 Hollywood movie reveals that mainstream depictions of the Titanic have become more focused on sympathizing with the suffering of the third-class passengers than on praising the behavior of the first-class passengers.” Your body paragraphs would provide specific examples from the articles and movie plus evidence from secondary sources.

**Grading policy:**

The paper will be graded for formality, quality of research, and depth of critical thought. A detailed rubric will be circulated closer to the due date.

**Format:**

The paper must be **5 full pages long**. It must include a **Works Cited (bibliography) in MLA format which does not count towards the paper’s page length**. The paper must cite at least **5 sources.**