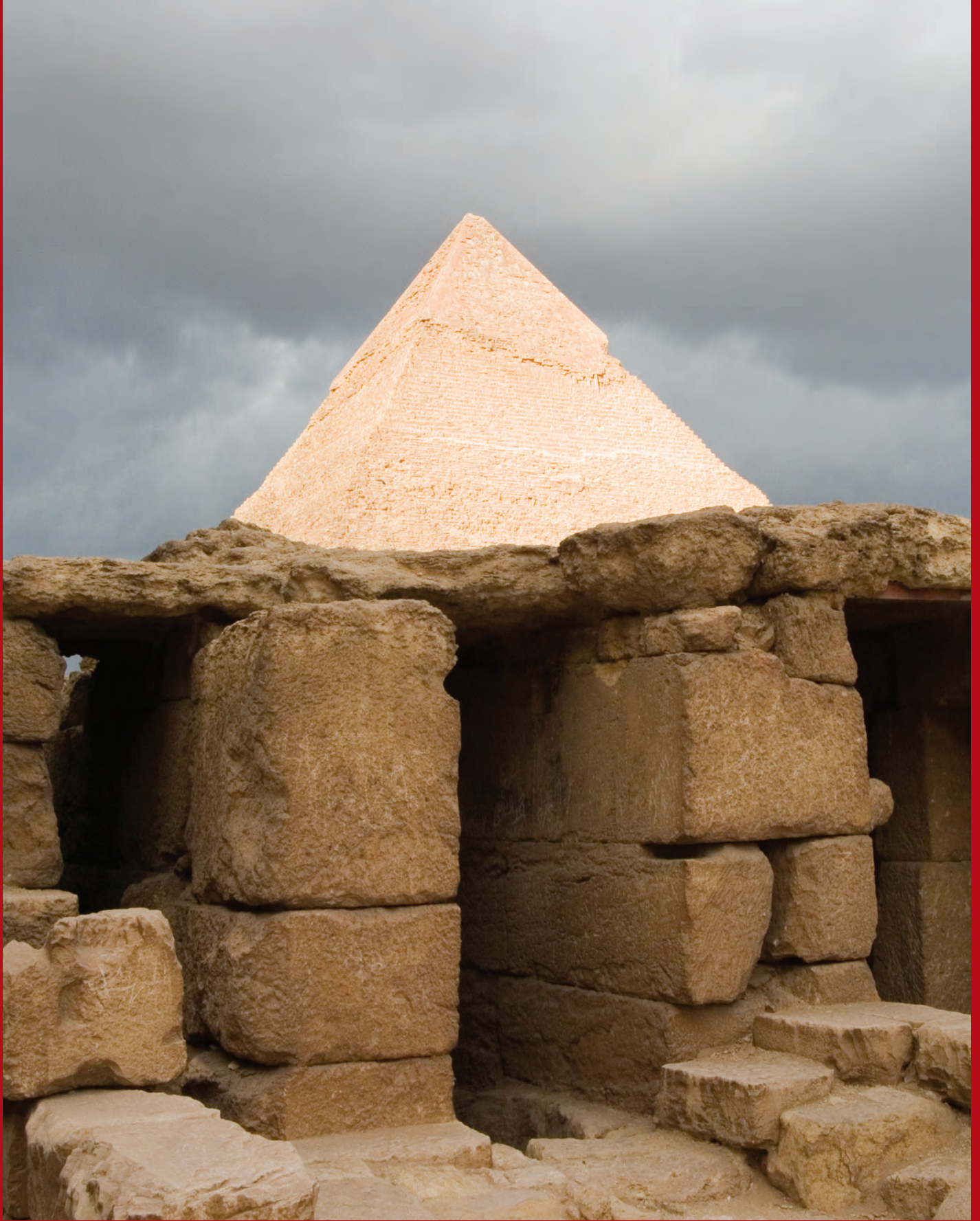


A Guide to Writing for Societies of the World 38

Harvard College Program
in General Education
Faculty of Arts and Sciences
Harvard University



HARVARD
COLLEGE



A Guide to Writing for Societies of the World 38

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Pyramid Schemes: The Archaeological History of Ancient Egypt

General Introduction to the Course



This course surveys ancient Egyptian pharaonic civilization (about 3,000–332 B.C.) as an example of ancient complex society. It emphasizes Egyptian material culture — pyramids, temples, tombs, settlements and cities, art masterpieces and objects of daily life. We will explore major developmental themes that defined the Egyptian state — the geographical landscape, kingship, social stratification, and religion. Our chronological path includes excursions into Egyptian art, history, politics, religion, literature, and language (hieroglyphs). We will also touch on contemporary issues of object repatriation, archaeology and cultural nationalism, and the evolution of modern Egyptology. Includes field trips to

the Egyptian collections of the Peabody Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, along with immersive 3D computer model viewing of the Giza Pyramids in Harvard's Visualization Center. Students will come away with an appreciation for a remote ancient Egyptian belief system that produced outstanding monuments and intellectual traditions. Critical thinking will help debunk many popular myths about ancient Egypt, and highlight Egyptian perspectives that contrast with modern approaches to state, society and material culture. Students need no prior experience with Egyptology. The course will cater to those “just passing through” ancient Egypt, but will also lay the groundwork for potential concentrators in the subject and related archaeological/historical fields.

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introduction

Research Paper Assignment



The research paper for this course is designed to further your investigations into the field of Egyptology. You should choose a topic that excites you – it can be a further examination of topics we have touched on in class, an extension of the ideas covered in your readings, or any subject related to Ancient Egypt. (For example: are you heading to medical school? Then you might explore Egyptian mummification practices.) Whatever topic you select, the primary goals of the assignment are:

- To pursue a topic that interests YOU
- To dive deeper into the Egyptological sources (beyond Wikipedia and “Aunt Minnie’s Egyptian vacation website”)
- To experience scholarship first hand, preferably with a trip to the Widener stacks (Egyptological scholarship is not all online...yet!)
- To exercise your critical thinking: formulate a thesis statement, chase down a mystery, summarize the state of the art research on a topic, and draw your own assessment and interpretation.

As an exciting way to start exploring your selected paper topic, your second iMovie assignment (due long before the paper due date) is meant as a “teaser” to get you started on your research. So think of your second iMovie as less of an additional assignment, and more as an “investment” in your final paper, a fun way to lay out your ideas in a graphical medium that should inspire your continuing research. For more information on both of the course’s two iMovie assignments, see the companion document called “iMovie Assignment Guide for Societies of the World 38.”

A. Paper Requirements

Date of Final Submission: The paper is due by 5 pm on the final Friday of the regular semester (prior to the start of Reading Period); location(s) to be announced. For an overview of the criteria that will be used to grade your paper, see Section H below, “Research Paper Grading Rubric.”

Page Limit: 8-10 pages. Don't forget to insert page numbers!

Font and Font Size: 11 point, Times or Times New Roman

Spacing: Papers should be double-spaced throughout

Endnotes/Footnotes: Your paper must include notes, but you are free to choose whichever style you prefer, so long as you are consistent throughout your paper. The most commonly used formats for notes are The Chicago Manual of Style, The American Psychological Association (APA), and the Modern Language Association

research

(MLA).

Formatting guidelines for these and other styles are readily available online.

See, for instance, the “Research and Citation Resources” available at the Purdue University Online Writing Lab:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>

Or the “Citation Styles” resources available through Williams College Libraries:

<http://library.williams.edu/citing/styles/>

Bibliography/Title Page: Though your paper must contain both a Bibliography and Title page, neither of them counts toward the final page count for the paper.

B. Choosing A Topic/Devising An Approach

The field of Egyptology makes use of a number of disciplines, and you are free to choose the approach that most appeals to you. Some examples include:

- **An Archaeological/Anthropological Approach:** Look at the archaeological evidence from a particular site or sites and address a larger theme: what evidence do the artifacts or architecture provide? Think about the larger implications of the site you’ve chosen – does this site tell us something unique about a particular aspect of Egyptian civilization?
- **A Literary Approach:** Choose a particular literary piece from one of the historical time periods covered in class and analyze it for its social, political or religious significance. Consider cross-cultural comparisons, if applicable.
- **An Art Historical Approach:** Select a specific work of art such as a sculpture, tomb painting, statue, or piece of jewelry, and explain how this piece informs us about the religious, political and/or social aspects of Egyptian society. How can art serve as a window for understanding a particular cultural or historical moment?





- **A Historical Approach:** Write a brief history of a significant issue in Egyptology, making sure to advance a specific thesis that describes the significance of that history (see the online list of topics for examples). This type of approach should not just be a list of facts and dates. Rather, take an analytical view of the evidence you've collected during your research, making sure that the history you write is aimed at clarifying our understanding of the issue in question, or at answering a particular research problem by adopting a historical perspective.
- **A Comparative Approach:** Compare two Egyptian artifacts, or two social, political, religious, or linguistic issues, or other topics pertinent to ancient Egypt. The items you compare should be both similar and yet different enough to produce a fruitful argument. If you compare two things that are almost identical, then you risk having little to say. By contrast, if you pick two things that are entirely unrelated (say, a pyramid and a sporting event) then you will likely find it difficult to locate any common ground for comparing them.

As you can see in the examples above, different approaches and topics lead to different kinds of arguments. For instance, some papers concerned with the interpretation of a visual artifact may involve more formal analysis (supported, of course, by research and secondary evidence), while others may require historical arguments in which that same artifact is examined within its cultural context. Both arguments are valid — just be sure to determine what you'd like to explore, how you'd like to explore it and how you can most effectively communicate it. Remember that in choosing a topic for your final research paper, you should consider your interest in the subject as well as your level of skill in that area. A preliminary list of paper topics can be found on the course website; you are not limited to this list!

C. Forming An Approach to Your Research (Thesis Statement)

As you begin to narrow your options for the paper, you'll want to pinpoint a specific question that you would like your research and paper to address. A good research question:

1. Speaks to a genuine dilemma, problem, or issue about which scholars will likely have different interpretations.
2. Leads you back to the available evidence and can be investigated within the assigned length of the paper.
3. Focuses on the specific even if it concludes with the general. It should be grounded in a specific topic, artifact, or issue, even if it covers larger themes along the way.

D. Doing Your Research

Finding Sources

A good way to begin is to read one of the many general works or encyclopedias devoted to Ancient Egypt (such as D.B. Redford, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*; on reserve). You also may want to look at reviews of recent books written in your area of interest. There are many publications on reserve for this class. Please follow the website links to both the Reserve Reading List and Library Resources for good starting points.

Bibliographic Requirements

The bibliography you turn in at the end of the paper should include at least 3 scholarly articles and 2 books (not including the required texts for the course). You are welcome to use dictionaries and encyclopedias such as Wikipedia for reference, but these should not be the main source of cited material for your paper – that is, they will not count toward the source requirements listed above. Also, be critical when reviewing Egyptian-themed websites for research: beware of amateurs, and don't believe everything you read! When in doubt, check in with your TF or the professor.

E. Writing Your Paper

Introduction

Your introduction should be no longer than 1 page. It should begin with a general statement that orients the reader to your topic. The introduction should then describe your specific research question (thesis statement) that articulates the primary argument of your essay. Finally, it should tell the reader how you intend to prove your thesis.





Body

All papers should contain well-defined body paragraphs that represent and analyze the data associated with your thesis. You may need to describe the historical background and the current state of the problem, before moving on to your own interpretations and conclusions. Each body paragraph should logically lead the reader to the next step in your argument. You can achieve this through well-written transition sentences, in which you show readers exactly how a paragraph builds upon its predecessor.

Quotations and paraphrases are an important part of defining your argument, but they should not replace independent thought. In general, no more than 10–12% of a page should be devoted to a quotation or summary of someone else's work (unless you are doing an in-depth analysis of an ancient text). Additionally, you should make sure that all cited material is interpreted succinctly and woven into the paper. Be sure to introduce and explain all quotations thoroughly, since any quotations you provide should not stand alone but instead be carefully selected to bolster an independent argument.

At some point in your paper, you should also refer to any counterarguments that might be posed against your thesis. You need to evaluate and finally refute each counterargument in the process of proving your thesis. Be sure, however, that any counterarguments you provide present a real question or issue that a reader might have about your paper. Don't simply create a counterargument that doesn't really exist. Instead, you should look over your argument carefully and critically, and think about potential problems or criticisms that other readers might notice.

Conclusion

A conclusion should summarize the information you have gathered and the arguments you have made throughout the paper. You do not need to introduce new information here, but you may want to connect your essay to a larger issue or theme. The goal is to write a conclusion that summarizes your essay, and convinces the reader of the position you have taken.

F. Editing and Revising

A great argument is meaningless if it is not communicated logically and intelligently. There is no substitute for reading through a paper and revising it several times before the final submission. This includes looking for spelling and grammatical errors, but also the overall effect of the paper with regard to style and tone. When reading your paper, ask yourself the following questions:

Argument

- Is there one main argument in the paper?
- Is the thesis interesting and complex?
- Is the thesis clearly stated at the beginning of the paper?
- Is the argument of an appropriate scope for the assignment (i.e., not so limited that it will only lead to 5 pages, but not so large that it will lead to 20)?

Structure

- Is the paper clearly organized and logically structured?
- Do the introduction and conclusion fulfill the goals stated above (i.e., introducing the reader to your research question/thesis statement [introduction] and summarizing the argument of the essay [conclusion])?
- Do body paragraphs present the history and current state of the problem, with specific examples that support your arguments?
- Does the paper contain smooth, logical transitions between ideas?
- Are arguments coherent within paragraphs?

Style

- Is the paper easy to understand, grammatically?
- Is the paper concise and to the point? Simplicity and clarity never fail!
- Are grammar and spelling correct throughout the paper?
- Do all sentences and word choices adequately express your meaning?

Sources

- Does the paper offer supporting evidence from your chosen sources for each of your points?
- Has the paper overlooked any obvious or important pieces of evidence?
- Is the evidence properly cited?
- Is the bibliographic information correct?



editing

G. Additional Writing Resources

Harvard University Writing Center

Barker Center 019

617-495-1655

<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/>

The Writing Center offers hour-long, one-on-one conferences with trained staff to help with various stages of paper planning, writing and editing.

Bureau of Study Counsel

5 Linden Street

617-495-2581

<http://bsc.harvard.edu>

The Bureau of Study Counsel offers academic and psychological support through services including counseling, consulting, and peer tutoring, as well as workshops in writing.

House Tutors in Academic Writing

Several undergraduate houses have resident or non-resident writing tutors who hold regular drop-in hours to help students with their writing. Contact your House Tutor for further information.



H. Research Paper Grading Rubric and Revising Checklist

Student Name: _____

Organization and Coherence (35 pts.)

- ___ Uses logical structure
- ___ Quality of introduction and conclusion
- ___ Coherent paragraphs and smooth, logical transitions
- ___ Body paragraphs support thesis with examples and specifics
- ___ Argument and ideas easy to follow
- ___ Argument of appropriate length for the assignment

Comments: _____

_____/35

Style and Mechanics (20 pts.)

- ___ Appropriate word choice, precision in thought
- ___ Sentences flow nicely, with grace and purpose
- ___ Proper syntax, verb tenses, agreement, etc.
- ___ Correct spelling, punctuation, etc.

Comments: _____

_____/20

Ideas (35 pts.)

- ___ Good, defensible thesis statement of appropriate academic level
- ___ Sound argumentation
- ___ Shows insight and probes beneath the surface

Comments: _____

_____/35

Use of Primary and Secondary Sources (10 pts.)

- ___ Sufficient and appropriate citation of evidence
- ___ Judicious choice of evidence

Comments: _____

_____/10

Total Score (100 pts.) ____/100

grading

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