

Dear folks,

Welcome to the new semester for HIST 265 – History of Michigan!

I want to remind you of your responsibilities. Make sure that you start by reading the "Getting Started" section. Most of your questions will be answered by doing so. Please watch this Announcements page for the most current information on course matters.

Next, make sure that you complete all of your assignments in a timely fashion. For Week 1, those assignments include your Introduction, your Week 1 Critical Thinking exercise, and your Week 1 Discussion Board assignment. Please note: **when responding to an assignment in the class YOU MUST CITE YOUR SOURCES!** If you do not, the assignment is considered plagiarized and you will not receive credit for your work. See below for an explanation of why citing sources is so important and why we don't cite general-interest encyclopedias (especially Wikipedia).

You'll notice that there are four books required for this course. Because this is an upper-level history course, you need to be familiar with how historians understand Michigan history and what in fact it means to study the history of a state. Unfortunately, there isn't one book that will give all this information. Instead, you'll need to divide the reading between the textbooks and other assigned readings that can be found on the Web site or online. Each of the texts is important (and necessary) in its own way.

You should have enough primary and secondary material in these sources to answer any questions that come up in the course. As a result, I **do not** want you to use general-interest encyclopedias, including Encarta, Britannica, Americana, and others. That's grade-school material, and you're a college student—you're beyond that.

Start with **Bruce A. Rubenstein and Lawrence E. Ziewacz, Michigan: A History of the Great Lake State. 4th edition. Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2008. ISBN: 978-0882952574.** This is a narrative history text. It tells the basic history of Michigan from its beginnings to the present day (or pretty close to it).

The source you'll most commonly use after Rubenstein and Ziewacz is **Joe Grimm, editor and compiler. Michigan Voices: Our State's History in the Words of the People Who Lived It. Detroit, MI: Detroit Free Press/Wayne State University Press, 1987. ISBN: 978-0814319680.** This is a collection of primary sources; as the subtitle indicates, it uses the writings of people from the state to tell the story of Michigan's history.

In addition to these two basic sources, you also have two monographs. Monographs are books that advance historical knowledge by analyzing and interpreting the primary sources of history. The first monograph is **Susan Sleeper-Smith, Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes. Amherst, MI: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001. ISBN: 978-1558493100.** Sleeper-Smith's book analyzes the relationship in French America between Native Americans and French colonists in Michigan and the Great Lakes area. The second is **Charles K. Hyde, The Dodge Brothers: The Men, the Motor Cars, and the Legacy. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2005. ISBN: 978-0814332467.** This looks at the emergence of two important figures in the early American auto industry.

Finally, there are some sources that need to be downloaded from Ucompass or accessed over the Internet in order to complete some of your assignments. Links and other information on how to find these will be found in the individual packets.

American Black Journal, interview with Berry Gordy. Michigan State University archives

Hattie S. Bartanen and James O'Meara. Interviews. February 2008 Oral History Digitization Project, Finnish American Historical Archive, Finlandia University

Clarence M. Burton, William Stocking, and Gordon K. Miller, eds. The City of Detroit Michigan 1701-1922. Detroit: S.J. Clarke Publishing, 1922

James Dalliba, A Narrative of the Battle of Brownstown. New York: David Longworth, 1816

Silas Farmer, The History of Detroit and Michigan. Detroit: Silas Farmer & Co., 1884, 235-271

Marie Caroline Watson Hamlin, Legends of Le Detroit. 2nd edition. Detroit: Thorndye Nourse, 1884

Al Harvey and Robert Olander. Accounts of the 1913-14 Copper Strike and the Italian Hall Disaster. February 2008 Oral History Digitization Project, Finnish American Historical Archive, Finlandia University

Samuel Chase Hodgman, Letters, July 16, 1863, August 7, 1863, and November 22, 1863. United States Civil War Collection, Western Michigan University.

It's important that you read all the books and other sources in order to fully understand Michigan history and the ways in which it influenced the history of the United States in general. The Critical Thinking assignments (and, to some extent, the Discussion Board assignments) are meant to tell me that you've completed the reading and that you understood it. That's why I want you to use those sources when answering the assignments--unless I tell you otherwise.

When you're ready to submit your Critical Thinking essay, please use the Assignments tab on the left-hand margin of the page. That will allow you to submit your response online. **Please don't email your essay to me unless you absolutely have to.** The Assignments tab allows me to track your assignments more easily and will help (I hope) keep me from being inundated with email.

Again, I can't overemphasize the importance of citing your sources each and every time you hand in your assignments. Citing sources is what makes us historians--it shows how we based the assertions we're making on the sources we've consulted. It's vital that you cite the sources you use to answer the questions. If you choose to quote from the sources, you must place the text you use in quotation marks AND indicate the page from which the text was taken. **For this course we use the APA stylesheet**, because it has only a minimal amount of special formatting and therefore can be uploaded with little or no changes.

A short discourse on plagiarism--and why not to do it. Plagiarism is using another person's work without acknowledgment. This means that any attempt to represent someone else's work as your own counts as plagiarism, whether you intended to plagiarize or not. It includes, but is not limited to,

- Copying material from the textbook or any other source without placing the copied material in quotation marks and identifying the source it came from;
- Copying material from any Internet source without placing the copied material in quotation marks and identifying the source it came from; and
- Using ideas or concepts from another source without identifying and crediting that source appropriately.

As you can see, plagiarism is a pretty broad category. It's easy to plagiarize unintentionally, simply by forgetting to note your sources. For this reason, I will most often have you rewrite and resubmit assignments that I determine have been plagiarized. It will be a lot easier on both of us if you're careful to use quotation marks where appropriate and to cite and attribute your sources in everything you submit.

The real reason not to plagiarize, however, is because it defeats the whole point in offering the class in the first place. My job is to teach you how to think critically about the sources you're reading, how to draw conclusions about the things you've read, and how to formulate your own ideas based on the understanding you've gained in your reading. In addition to being a form of intellectual theft, plagiarism avoids the critical-thinking process altogether. A plagiarized paper shows that you haven't learned anything.

How to cite sources (and why we don't cite Wikipedia) Different disciplines use different ways of citing sources. The four most common methods of citing (or stylesheets) are the APA (American Psychological Association), the MLA (Modern Language Association), the AMA (American Medical Association) and Chicago (University of Chicago Press). Many college courses use Kate Turabian's book *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. For this course, I'm asking that you use the APA format, because it's formatting is easy to use when submitting electronic files.

You can see different examples of how these stylesheets work at the following Web site:

<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocAPA.html>.

Why am I asking you to do this? The short answer is because this is a history class, and history is a discipline. The thing that makes us historians (as opposed to historical reenactors, family genealogists, and those people who show up on *Antiques Roadshow*) is that we follow a discipline: a set of rules that let us understand the past in an ordered fashion. To really act as a historian, you need to

document your sources so that people who read your analysis can reconstruct your thinking based on the sources you used. Without that step, you might as well be making things up—and historians don't do that.

When you cite a source, what you're saying (in effect) is, "This is the place where I got my information. I believe that it's accurate and reliable, and that it's been as careful as I've been to follow the historical method. Therefore, it presents an accurate view of a historical event, person, or situation."

In fact, what you're doing by citing a source is appealing to an authority. The authority may be a person who lived at the time of the events you're researching (a primary source) or who was actually present at the events (a very good primary source), or the work of a historian who has considered primary and secondary sources, put them in context, and presented his or her ideas to other scholars, soliciting their comments and criticism. That's the problem with citing sources like Answers.com, WikiAnswers, or any other general-interest encyclopedia, online or not. We can't tell if these essays are written by experts who are knowledgeable in their area. Their work isn't peer-reviewed, and we have no idea if they've followed the historical method or not. The problem with Wikipedia in particular is that it's not trustworthy. It doesn't follow the historical method, and we shouldn't be citing it in a historical paper.

Now, it's not anyone's *fault* that Wikipedia's not trustworthy—it's the way the encyclopedia is set up. Wikipedia is designed so that anyone can edit it, and that makes it a very comprehensive resource. But since everyone can edit it, that means that no one has control over the content—and that in turn means that individuals can change or select the facts to represent their own point of view.

Spinning Wikipedia articles is actually a fairly common practice. A recent story, aired on National Public Radio's Morning Edition, told about the advent of a new online scanning tool that tells you the location of computers that were used to change Wikipedia articles. "If you follow the IP address trail," the Morning Edition writer stated, "you'll see that often the editors of an entry are 'interested parties,' not just encyclopedia nerds who want to make sure the facts are straight."

Examples abound. For instance, someone using a computer at the headquarters of Diebold Election Systems, a company that makes voting machines, deleted fifteen paragraphs from its Wikipedia entry. The paragraphs told about concerns over the security of the machines made by the company and about its CEO's fundraising for President Bush in 2003. According to an article in the online magazine *Wired.com*, people using computers at Wal-Mart, the CIA, and at former Montana Senator Conrad Burns's office changed Wikipedia entries associated with their interests, spinning the text so that they appeared in the best possible light.

That's why we don't cite Wikipedia—we have no clue if the views that are being reflected in the entries are the truth, or simply what someone wants us to believe.

To conclude: please don't cite encyclopedia articles when composing your Critical Thinking essays. The information you need to finish the assignments can be found in your texts and in the recommended reading for the week. The essays are meant to show that you've read and understand the readings; if you just pull the information from the encyclopedia, you haven't shown me that you've done the readings.

If you need to communicate with me, I will hold virtual office hours in this course's Chatroom on Sundays between 7 and 8 PM. You can also email me with any questions; usually I access the course on Wednesdays and Sundays, but I will respond to your questions by the following Sunday evening. **Please note:** because of the way my Ucompass account is set up, I can only receive emails that originate within Ucompass. You need to send any email messages to me from your Ucompass account to my Ucompass account. Otherwise I won't get them.

It is always a little hectic at the beginning of the semester, so if you run into serious problems make sure to email me: kshepherd@henryford.ucompass.com. Now, let's get to work!

Ken Shepherd