

HIST 124 – Exam Study Strategies

EXAM FORMAT

- **Two-Part, Three Hour Exam**
- Part I: Primary Source Analysis
 - Engage with documents and sources like those provided in the *Visions* textbook
- Part II: Essay Question
 - Synthesize course material and draw conclusions about broad themes and discussion points

HOW TO STUDY

- **Strategies for primary documents**
- Think contextually
 - Engage with documents within their context
- Think thematically
 - Envision documents as part of a course theme
- Think critically
 - Address how topics seek to contest or support a historical narrative discussed in the course
- **Strategies for essay writing**
- Thematic evidence
 - Use evidence from the course that supports or contradicts a course theme to show your understanding
- Informed discussion
 - Utilize course sources like the *Visions* textbook to inform your understanding and ground it in scholarly sources
- Thoughtful conclusion
 - Apply your knowledge of the course and its themes to show how HIST 124's methods, information or lessons are relevant to broader historical contexts

HOW TO STUDY (CONTD)

- **Practicing primary documents**
 - Analyze *Visions* (independently and in groups)
 - Past Exams (Exam Bank)
- **Practicing essay writing**
 - Write essay outlines
 - Make outlines for likely questions, using evidence from the course to improve your memory and recall
- Review overarching course themes
 - Discuss key course themes in groups, analyzing their usefulness for certain possible questions
 - Summarize and review major points regularly – even 15 minutes' work can help!
- Past Exams (for past years' essay questions)
 - Examine past exams to see how the prof phrases questions, and which parts of the course are usually highlighted



STUDY AND EXAM PREP RESOURCES

- *Visions* textbook
 - Primary sources contained within the textbook make for great practice for Part I and scholarly evidence for Part II
- Professors and seminar leaders are still available to answer questions
- SASS online resources and templates cover key academic and writing skills:
 - Time management
 - Writing history essays
 - Compare and contrast essays
 - Memory strategies

COMMON MISTAKES

- Mass memorization
 - Attempting to memorize the entirety of the course, without addressing course themes or frequent topics
- Overwriting
 - Using extra or overly complex words to make your answers seem longer and more substantial than they are: focus on evidence and argument
- Lack of analysis
 - Statements describing sources rather than thinking critically and analyzing them for their content
- Fact fishing
 - Including facts in your essays or answers to make your work seem correct without considering whether facts add to your argument
- Time crunch
 - Running out of time on the exam as you spent too much or too little time on one section. Practice beforehand!

PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR

- Take stock of strategies
 - Many of the useful learning strategies that work in HIST 124 also apply to other history classes, or indeed other disciplines entirely!
- Remember the experience
 - Learn from your first-year exam and apply the lessons to the winter exam and other courses:
 - What worked and what didn't?
 - Which strategies should I use?
 - Should I ask for help next time?
 - Where did I go wrong and where can I improve?

