

Greg Shaya

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Prof. Greg Shaya

History 209: Europe Since 1945

Rome Isn't What It Used To Be:

The Old and the New Italy in Federico Fellini's *Dolce Vita*

The purpose of this sample paper is simply to demonstrate the format of a short paper for a history class based upon the Chicago citation style. To begin with, let me share a few notes on the layout. Use one-inch margins and an easy to read 12-point font. Include your name, date, and class information in the upper left-hand corner. Include a title, centered above the text, without bold or italics or question marks (unless you are quoting someone). The best titles will grab your reader's attention and convey the main point of the paper. See above for an example.

The text should be double-spaced and left justified, with the first line of paragraphs indented. If you include a quotation of four lines or longer, you should "block indent" the quotation: indent one half inch on the left and right margins. Some ask for single space, some for double space. I will accept either (or anything in between). Here is an example:

Look here. This is what a block-indented quotation looks like. It's at least four lines. Look here. This is what a block-indented quotation looks like. It's at least four lines. Look here. This is what a block-indented quotation looks like. It's at least four lines.

If you want to indicate that the lines that follow the block-indented quotation are part of the same paragraph, you should not indent the text after the quotation.

Let me offer some general remarks on footnotes and citations. When should you use a citation? You should use citations (in whatever form) to identify the source of direct quotations, to identify the source of important ideas, to point to other books or articles, to give essential background that does not belong in the text, or to develop interesting tangents that do not belong in the text.¹ As you can see, citations can do a lot of different kinds of work, but the most essential is this: they take your reader directly to the sources you are discussing.

There are a handful of different citation forms. Typically, they vary by discipline. Psychologists and sociologists have their preferred style of citation, as do historians. We most commonly use the documentation style of the *Chicago Manual of Style* from University of Chicago. You will see the details in Chapter 7 of Mary Lynn Rampolla, esp. 7d and following.² I will just point to a few details. Note the distinction between footnote style and bibliography style. Note also that you do not need to include a bibliography or a works cited page in a paper using full footnotes unless you are asked for one.

A few other suggestions to get you started on the right foot (excuse the pun). Footnotes should be numbered sequentially through the paper. Do not reuse numbers. They should be placed at the end of the sentence, generally speaking, and always after any marks of punctuation. The footnote should specify the page in question, unless you

¹ Al Franken, in *Lies (and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them)* (New York: Dutton, 2003), has a brilliant send-up of the ways that popular authors use footnotes to give their work false authority. See Franken, *Lies*, 12-16.

² Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, 5th ed. (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007), 104.

are making general reference to a work. You can indicate a page and the following page by adding “f” to the page number (eg, 53f). You can indicate a page and the following pages by adding “ff” to the page number (eg, 53ff), though it is best to indicate the complete range of pages if you can. The bibliographical information should be taken from the title page of the work in question. So, if no author is listed, you can simply write “Anonymous” in place of author. You can indicate that no publisher information is provided (“n.p.”) or that date of publication is missing (“n.d.”).³

What else can I add about the mundane requirements of formatting? A few further mechanical points. You must include page numbers for every page after the first page. Staple your pages together. Feel free to print your papers double sided. You may use either italics or underlining in your paper, but not both. Underline or italicize the titles of books. Put the titles of articles in quotation marks.

As for the writing, I might just set out a few guidelines for history papers. Avoid the “I” in history papers. Do not use contractions in formal papers; thus, you should never write “it’s” (the contraction of “it is”) in a college paper. Use the full name of persons on your first reference. Include, in parentheses, the date of primary sources the first time that you refer to them.

I have much more to say about the minutiae of formatting. I have lectured elsewhere on: “The Semicolon: Poster Child for Abused Punctuation Marks”; “Sticklers Unite!—A Hyphen is Not a Dash”; “Behind Every Good Paper is a Good Outline”; “How to Use the ‘I’ in History Without Getting Personal”; “It Would Be Much Easier To Write This Paper If I Knew What I Wanted To Say.” And much, much more.

³ Rampolla, 76.

