ESSAY ON A SET OF PRIMARY DOCUMENTS

FIRST, READ CAREFULLY THE DIRECTIONS ON BOTH SIDES OF THIS PAPER. You will lose points if you do not follow the directions. The essay is due on Monday, April 26.

1. Pick ONE SET OF DOCUMENTS (one set, not one chapter) from Chapters 16-31 in the documents book that you find especially interesting. Be aware that you will need to discuss every document in that set, including any charts and pictures. Once you choose the set, read or reread the chapter that includes the topic in your chosen set. If you pick a set covering a topic we have not yet studied, you are responsible for reading the relevant material in the textbook to learn about the historical context for the documents. DO NOT READ ANYTHING ELSE and especially do not seek information from any website.

2. Write an essay of 3-5 pages discussing HOW THE DOCUMENTS CAN HELP US UNDERSTAND THE PARTICULAR EVENTS AND/OR DEVELOPMENTS THAT LED TO THE DOCUMENTS BEING WRITTEN. In other words, WHAT DO THE DOCUMENTS TEACH US AND WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT WHAT THEY SAY AND SHOW US? Notice that the essay will involve a discussion of the set as a whole (including at least one reference to each individual document), not simply listing the main points in each document. Decide what your basic thesis (general point you are making) will be and introduce it in your introductory paragraph.

3. Write the essay so it could be understood by another student in the class who has not read your set of documents. Introduce the readers to the topic the documents cover (the question that all of them help answer), the historical circumstances in which they were created, the nature of each of the documents (whether they are letters, laws, etc.), and what you know about their authors (which will vary depending on the set and the document). Back any hypotheses or conclusions that you make with evidence from the documents and, if you wish, from the textbook. The more specific evidence you give from the documents (usually in your own words), the better.

4. The following questions may help you analyze the meaning and significance of the documents. You may consider any of them which seems relevant to your particular documents and you may develop your own questions to consider.
   a. What questions do the documents (individually and as a group) help answer and what questions to they raise for future research or consideration?
   b. Do the different documents conflict or differ with each other in any way? If so, what might explain the differences?
   c. What do you know about the author(s)? Can you assume anything about them from the documents?
   d. How might the purpose and/or the nature of the intended audience of any of the documents have affected what was written?
   e. What, if anything, can be assumed from each document's language, vocabulary, tone, structure, style, etc.? What assumptions does each author seem to have made?
   f. Is there any reason to question the accuracy of any of the information in any of the documents? If so, what and why?
Technical guidelines:
1. The paper should be 3-5 pages long and typed double-spaced unless you have special permission to write it by hand. I will not accept papers sent by email or on a computer disk. Use an average size font and one inch margins and do not skip a line between paragraphs. Include page numbers, but do not include any subheadings. Staple the paper, but do not use a folder. You may have a cover page if you wish, but you do not have to.
2. Put the chapter number, set number, and page numbers of the documents set at the top of the first page.
3. At some point in the essay, you need to refer to each document at least once. If you do not do so, you will lose some points.
4. Put all direct quotes in quotation marks, but avoid using a lot of direct quotes. Choose only ones with wording that gives evidence that you could not explain easily in your own words. DO NOT INCLUDE ANY DIRECT QUOTES FROM THE MAIN TEXTBOOK OR THE INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCUMENT SET. Specific information, whether a direct quote or in your own words, should be referenced by putting the relevant document numbers and/or page numbers in parentheses after the sentence or paragraph including the information or quote.
5. If I find any evidence that you have plagiarized (used someone else's words without quotation marks and a proper reference note and/or paraphrased someone else's ideas without crediting them in a proper note), whether from a published or an unpublished source (or a friend), you will receive a zero and will not have a chance to redo the paper. If you are uncertain about whether something is plagiarism, check with me. (If I think you may have plagiarized, you will have a chance to defend yourself.)
6. Make a list of the basic points you want to make; put them in the most logical order; and then use a revised version of that list as an outline for writing.
7. Be sure to include a general introduction and a conclusion and to have a clear thesis (your primary conclusion). Give examples as evidence for generalizations whenever possible, but you do not have to give every detail of every example, only information that helps make your point.
8. Use only the document set and the relevant information in the textbook. Going to the library or the Internet to find more material will make your task more complicated and I shall be grading your paper only on how effectively you interpreted the documents.
9. Your paper will always be better if you write more than one draft and if you start writing soon enough to ask for help if you discover you need it.
10. Come talk to me about any problems. You may also go to the Writing Center for guidance on how to make your ideas clear and your writing correct.