

HIS 104: Creative Paper Assignment – Footnotes and Bibliography

Introduction

Different disciplines often use different citation styles. In history, it is most common to use the humanities citation style put out by the *Chicago Manual of Style*, i.e., footnotes and bibliography. In terms of the distinction between footnotes and bibliography, footnotes are placed throughout the paper whenever you need to cite a source, whereas the bibliography is a separate page at the end of the paper where you list each source that you cited in the paper in alphabetical order. If you look at the [sample creative paper](#) posted on the [course website](#), you'll be able to see the distinction. (You'll find footnotes at the bottom of each page and a separate bibliography at the end.)

Following instructions laid out in the *Chicago Manual of Style*, different types of sources are formatted in different ways. Articles and books, for example, are distinct and cited somewhat differently from one another in both notes and bibliography. (And the same could be said for numerous other types of sources, e.g., a book with three authors, a book with a translator, an edited volume, a newspaper article, a work within a work, a thesis, a website, etc.) A good summary for these distinctions can be found in a basic style guide for notes and bibliography that is hosted online by the *Chicago Manual of Style*, which shows how to format any given type of source for both notes and bibliography. (To link to it, you can click [here](#).)

Examples of Footnotes and Bibliography for a Creative Paper

I've posted two samples on the [course website](#) to illustrate how footnotes and bibliography work in practice, including a [sample creative paper](#) (already referenced above) and a [sample bibliography](#) (that includes bibliographic references for the three sources that students have been given for the creative paper assignment).

In the [sample creative paper](#) (written for one of my other classes on modern Latin America) a student has created the letters of a fictional protagonist, basing what she is doing on an assortment of real primary sources that were published in an edited volume. Look at the footnotes, and you'll see how she annotates her citations to give validity to what she is doing while at the same time not encroaching or detracting from her fictional text. Also, please note the slight differences in style between the notes and the bibliography. (For example, the bibliography at the end of this paper is formatted with single-spacing and a hanging indent for each entry—and if there were multiple sources, there would be an extra space between entries, and they would be listed in alphabetical order as can be seen in the [sample bibliography](#). Additionally, if you compare the notes and bibliography, you'll see various other formatting differences (involving things like the order of first and last names, capitalization, commas, periods, etc.).

Discursive Notes

As the [sample creative paper](#) shows, it often makes sense—and in your particular assignment would be very useful—to provide commentary within a footnote to explain how a source was used. (This is particularly important in a creative assignment like this where the relationship between the source material and your creative/fictional text will not always be apparent to the reader.) This sort of note is sometimes called a "discursive note" and more generally contains information that does not belong in the text.

For example, if you were writing creatively about the Investiture Controversy and in your first footnote wanted to cite Pope Gregory VII's prayer in which he excommunicates Henry IV, and add some commentary to the note to explicitly show how you're connecting your creative piece with the source material—for example, highlighting Gregory's claim to all spiritual authority on earth—you might do something like this:

1. In the prayer in which he excommunicates Henry IV, Pope Gregory maintains that like St. Peter he alone has the power to bind and loose all matters on earth and in heaven. See Ernest F. Henderson, ed., *Select Historical Documents of the Middle Ages* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1905), 376-377. And Gregory makes similar arguments in his writings more generally. See, for example, Henderson, *Select Historical Documents*, 366-367.

Abbreviating Subsequent Footnotes

As can be seen in the example above, after a work is cited the first time, subsequent citations can be abbreviated. In your case, if you were to cite the Pope's prayer of excommunication (pp. 376-377) in your first footnote, and then in the next note cited the Pope Gregory's letter in which he describes the penance of King Henry at Canossa (pp. 385-387), your two footnotes might look something like this:

1. Ernest F. Henderson, ed., *Select Historical Documents of the Middle Ages* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1905), 376-377.
2. Henderson, *Select Historical Documents*, 385-387.

You should know that there is no hard and fast rule as to how you abbreviate a title for the shortened citation. You just use your judgment to make sure that it will be clear to the reader. (This is particularly the case when you cite more than one work from the same author.)

Other Examples

In terms of other examples, if you were writing creatively about the Black Plague—for instance, dramatizing how people frequently looked to blame others for the disease—a relevant footnote might look something like this:

1. In numerous parts of Germany during the mid-fourteenth century, Jews were blamed for the Black Plague under the assumption that there was a conspiracy in which Jews from across Europe had poisoned the drinking water. See Rosemary, Horrox, ed., *The Black Death* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), 208-219. The terrible persecutions of Jews during this era in which mobs burned Jews at the stake, frequently stealing their property, would eventually lead secular and religious Christian authorities to intervene on their behalf. See, for example, Horrox, *Black Death*, 219-222.

And alternatively, if you were writing about gender relations in the Middle Ages—for example, creatively drawing upon the writings of Abelard and Héloïse to show how medieval women were not always happy to be obedient to the men in their lives—a relevant footnote might look something like this:

1. In a letter to her husband Abelard, Héloïse recalled how she had followed his instructions to enter a convent and become a nun, even though this would make her miserable, explaining that she had been obedient out of her perfect love for him and her desire for his happiness. See Israel Gollancz, ed., *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1908), 29. For his part, Abelard begged his wife to remember her vows (as a bride of Christ) and to stop writing him letters—though she does not seem to have been so obedient in this regard. See Gollancz, *Letters*, 85.

Mechanics of Footnote Placement

In terms of inserting footnotes into your document, MS Word—and really any word processing program—will do all of the work for you. Please DO NOT try to physically insert each note at the bottom of each page on your own as you would with a typewriter. Rather, let your word processing program insert the note for you.

Here is an [online clip](#), showing how footnotes can be inserted in MS Word 2021/365. (With a bit of searching you should be able to find similar YouTube videos for other word processing programs.)

Conclusion

Ideally, you should not think of footnotes as a burden, but rather, as a way to highlight the extent of your research and the manner in which your creative ideas are in dialogue with the primary source material that you have been assigned.

Occasionally students ask me how many notes they should have in their creative papers. There's not a perfect answer to this question as there are so many different ways to approach the assignment. This being said, I'd encourage everyone to use lots of footnotes. Again, don't think of the citations as burdens, but rather, as a way to show off all of the work that you've put into your paper, connecting your creative ideas to the historical record and bringing the past to life in the process.

Please let me know if you have any questions. And I look forward to seeing what everyone does with the assignment!

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