

GUIDELINES
CLOSE READING PAPER: ENCYCLOPÉDIE
HISTORY 324
Prof. Sepinwall
Fall 2008

As noted on your syllabus, your close reading paper will involve choosing one entry (the definition of a particular word) or a group of short entries from either of the two translations of the *Encyclopédie* which are on reserve in the Library (either the Gendzier or Hoyt/Cassirer translations) OR from the from the on-line *Encyclopédie* translation project at <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/d/did/>. You will be preparing a close analysis of this entry, which will highlight **what we learn from it** about the Old Regime and/or the Enlightenment. In order to make this determination, you will be thinking about how your chosen source fits with Popkin's and Doyle's accounts of Old Regime Europe, along with my lectures and our other readings. Your paper will be built around a **thesis**, which reflects an argument you are making, based on your careful thinking about what you read. The due date of the paper is **Thurs., Sept. 25**, and the paper will count as 20% of your grade.

The selected entry that you choose to write about must be at least 2 pages long, or you can combine 2 or 3 shorter entries which you think have some thematic coherence. Your essay should be approx. 4-6 pages, 1000 - 1500 words, expressing some thesis about (1) **what the entry is trying to change**; (2) **what the entry tells us about life in pre-Enlightenment or Enlightenment Europe**; and/or (3) **how the entry fits in with other Enlightenment texts we have read**. Note that while you should be placing your entry in the **context** of other things we have read and discussed, your focus in the essay should be on your selected entry.

Stages:

1. Choose an entry: Think about the kinds of issues which have appeared in our discussions about the Old Regime and in sources like Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary* and *Candide*. Which particular topics (politics? religion? science? human relationships?) are you most interested in exploring? Look through the two editions of the *Encyclopédie* on reserve and the online website, and see what kinds of articles there are. Select one (or a group of shorter ones) which you think are particularly interesting or seem of particular significance in highlighting those issues.

2. Close reading and brainstorming: Read your chosen entry/entries carefully several times; after making your own photocopy/printout of it, underline and write margin notes in a way that allows you to engage with the source and ask questions of it. As you read, pay special attention to what you think the author of your entry was trying to change. Does your document (a) **confirm** what we have seen so far about the Old Regime or the Enlightenment; (b) **refute** it; (c) **add** completely different kinds of information that we haven't seen anywhere else; or (d) some other kind of relationship which occurs to you. As part of your brainstorming, you might find it helpful to jot down a list of themes which you find interesting in the document. Pay special attention to **interesting quotes**; you will want to be using evidence to support the claims you make in your paper.

3. Formulate a thesis: After you have brainstormed about the document, construct a **thesis statement** (argument) which expresses your views about the relationship between this document and other kinds of information we've covered on the Old Regime and Enlightenment.

This thesis will be used as part of your introductory paragraph to signal the plan of your paper to your readers. The thesis should help answer the basic question: **what do we learn from reading the entry? What does it teach us about eighteenth-century Europe and/or the Enlightenment?**

Sample theses:

“The article on ___ in the Encyclopedia is an excellent illustration of how the philosophes wanted to change ____.”

“The Encyclopédie’s article on the slave trade demonstrates that the philosophes were anxious to end slavery.”

“In examining the article on ___, we see how important epistemology was to the men of the Enlightenment.”

“The entry, ____, in the Encyclopédie reminds us how different the Old Regime was from our time.”

“The entry on _____ in the Encyclopédie bears striking parallels to Voltaire’s Philosophical Dictionary entry on ____.” [or sharply differs from...]

“Though the entry on cotton seems harmless, it actually contains a strong critique of ____ values in the Old Regime.”

****For more help on generating and presenting thesis statements** (or on any other aspect of paper writing), consult the appropriate section of the **Bedford Handbook for Writers**.

4. Generate appropriate evidence. Once you have decided on a thesis statement, your paper should be focused towards proving that statement. Choose details which confirm your thesis. All material you include in the paper should be relevant to your argument, and you should use direct quotes (with page or paragraph numbers) to support any assertions you make. While you must cite any ideas or text you are referring to in our books, make sure to explain any quotations **in your own words**. Also, do not overuse long quotations to the exclusion of your own analysis of quotes. See the Bedford Guide for guidelines on appropriate use of quotations.

Citation style: Please use **parenthetical references**, such as “____ (Popkin, 15)” or “____ (Sepinwall, Lecture, 09/11/08)” or “____ (“Love,” Gendzier translation, 330).” If you use the on-line versions, please use a footnote the first time and parenthetical references afterward, using a **paragraph number** instead of a page number, in the following form:

First reference (in note): ¹“Father,” Encyclopedia Collaborative Translation Project, trans. Emily Jane Cohen, at <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=did;cc=did;q1=father;rgn=main;view=text;idno=did2222.0000.333>, paragraph 3.

Second reference (in text): (“Father,” paragraph 5).

5. Organize your paper: Be sure that your paper is organized in the fashion best suited towards getting your argument across to the reader. Be sure to use **topic sentences** for each

paragraph, and to have each paragraph express a **different part** of your argument. Consult the Bedford Handbook if you need additional guidance on organization.

6. Revising: Don't expect that you will write a great paper on your first draft! Be sure to read over your paper and to revise as many times as you think is necessary.

7. Paper checklist: To remind yourself that you have done all of these things, please fill out the *Encyclopédie* **paper checklist**, and attach it to the front of your paper. If you cannot certify that you have done all of the things listed, I will not be able to accept your paper.

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES:

Papers will be evaluated on the following additional criteria:

- Creativity and thoughtfulness
- Clarity of the argument
- Spelling and grammar
- Appropriate use of language

NOTE: ****DO NOT USE ANY ADDITIONAL MATERIALS** other than assigned course readings or your lecture notes! This assignment is **not a research project** testing your ability to gather additional materials. Instead, you are being asked to focus on a single short text and to see what we can learn from it.

****PAPERS ARE DUE** at the BEGINNING OF CLASS, on **Thursday, Sept. 25**. In fairness to all students and so that all students work under the same time constraints, no extensions will be given. As noted on the syllabus, **plagiarism will not be tolerated** (see the resources listed on the syllabus and also <http://www.library.ucla.edu/bruinsuccess/> if you have any doubt about what plagiarism entails). You are also strongly encouraged to consult the helpful staff at the Writing Center, who are there to help you learn to write great papers.

****The following terrific websites are also highly recommended:**

1. <http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/bedhandbook7enew/Player/Pages/Frameset.aspx> (7th edition website)

--Wonderful online site for the Bedford Handbook -- free to use! Covers only a tiny portion of the topics covered in the print edition, but has excellent interactive exercises on grammar, word choice, appropriate theses and sentence structure, plus links to many other online writing resources. Check it out!

2. <http://www.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/>

--An excellent and thorough writing guide for History students, by Prof. Patrick Rael of Bowdoin College in Maine. Covers not only writing, but also critical reading and evaluating of sources.