US Studies – Signature Work Standards

September 2024

I.   References

All sources should be properly documented using one of these three reference styles: MLA, APA, or Chicago-style notes and bibliography. Both the Signature Work proposal and the final paper must consistently use one of these three citation formats. If you used digital assistance (including any AI and editing software beyond simple spellcheck and citation formatting) at any point in the writing and research process, you must acknowledge doing so in a brief "addendum" section which explains how you used the external assistance.

II.   Sources

Signature Work proposals must cite at least 10 sources while the final papers must cite and engage with at least 20 sources. Some tracks may require more sources than the basic 10-20 requirement, and some projects may require an annotated bibliography. Please consult with your SW mentor to clarify the expectations for sources.

III.   Final paper length

Final signature work projects should be approximately 10,000-12,000 words, not including the bibliography or list of works cited.

IV.   Structure

The structure of the final project will vary according to your own topic and approach. But it should include the following components: introduction, engagement with existing literature, discussion of methodology, analysis of main research findings, conclusion, and acknowledgements. Some tracks and mentors may require a distinct "literature review" section while others may require you to engage with existing literature throughout the final paper. Please check with your mentor to find an appropriate structure for your paper. With your mentor's approval, you may incorporate chronologically- or thematically-based sub-sections of the paper.

V.   Writing quality

Both the proposal and the final project must be written in clear and concise prose. Please be sure to thoroughly proofread your submissions to make sure that they are free of errors.