

Guidelines for Research Essays: Post-Secondary Category

Goal

Our goal is to celebrate the heritage and continued relevance of the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation. Students are asked to produce an original research essay which investigates a specific facet of this important historical event.

Submission Guidelines

We hope that you will submit your essay for some local celebrations around October 31 and consider setting up a display board that explains your research. It will be up to you to contact local organizers to offer your research. You might also be present at an event to answer questions. This deadline will be established locally, **anytime between June and October 20, 2017**.

A second submission deadline has been established for submission of research essays to Celebrate1517@gmail.com. This date is **December 15, 2017**.

Each entry should be accompanied by a filled-out submission form, for which you will find multiple links on our webpages. Please use the portable document format (**pdf**) to ensure consistency in formatting. The Celebrate 1517 Committee will code the submission to ensure complete anonymity when your essay is passed on the adjudication committee.

Permissions

By including your signature on our submission form, you are giving your permission for your submitted work to be included—should it be selected—in a commemorative book to be published, Lord willing, in 2018.

Structure

- The research essay should be approximately 3000 to 4000 words in length. These limits are not absolute boundaries, however, and quality of prose and content are of greater relevance than specific length.
- Essays must be formatted and referenced using the Chicago Style.

Content

- The essay will employ both primary and secondary sources, with an emphasis on the former.

- A list of suggested topics is included below, but students are free to generate their own topics.
- The essay should demonstrate an understanding of the relevant historical, political, and doctrinal issues which surround the topic.
- The essay should present a cogent argument and deal with relevant historiographical debate; that is, it should engage with the theories and interpretations of other scholars.
- The essay will not contain headings, since the writer will rely instead on good transitions.

Writing Guidelines

A well composed essay will demonstrate the following:

- An engaging introduction which introduces the reader to the topic being considered;
- A clearly articulated thesis that is supported throughout the essay by substantial arguments;
- An appropriate conclusion which summarizes the central thrust of the essay and persuasively advocates for the validity of its arguments;
- Smooth transitions between the various arguments and ideas expressed within the essay;
- Relevant primary source material, good argumentation, and masterful treatment of the topic;
- A critical and sympathetic engagement with other views, with a clear rebuttal where appropriate;
- An absence of grammatical errors and other infelicities of style;
- Clear and vigorous prose;
- Varied sentences and coherent, complete paragraphs;
- An appropriate scholarly tone;
- Careful attention to Chicago Style in all respects including title page, footnotes, and bibliography.

Topic Suggestions

Students need not choose one of these topics, but will hopefully find some intriguing suggestions in this list. Some of the topics may need to be narrowed down for the purposes of establishing a thesis that can be defended in the space of one essay.

1. To what extent can figures like Jan Hus, John Wycliffe, and Girolamo Savonarola be considered forerunners of the Protestant Reformation?
2. How technological advances such as the printing press and moveable type contributed to the Reformation.
3. A consideration of how Martin Luther's spiritual struggles lead him to re-discover the gift of the righteousness of Christ as revealed in Scripture.
4. How the translation of Scriptures into the vernacular languages such as German, English, French, and Italian contributed to the Reformation.
5. How God led certain leaders of the Reformation such as Luther, Zwingli, Farel, Calvin, and Tyndale to new biblical insights.
6. How God used a lesser-known reformer, such as François de Lambert, Philip Melanchthon, Johannes Oecolampadius, Miles Coverdale, John Hooper, Johannes à Lasco, Martin Bucer, Guido de Brès, Peter Martyr Vermigli, Jerome Zanchi, Zacharias Ursinus, and Antoine de Chandieu.
7. How God used the women of the Reformation, such as Katharina Zell, Argula von Grumbach, Renée of France / Renata of Ferrara, Jeanne d'Albret, Marguerite de Navarre, Wibrandis Rosenblatt, Lady Jane Grey, Elizabeth I, Marie-Christine de Lalaing, etc.
8. How the Reformation moved from a protest movement to a movement with its own new confessions of faith.
9. How the Reformation made a lasting impact on art, culture, education, music, science, commerce, politics, and/or colonialism.
10. How the reformation of worship differed among the various reformers.
11. How the reformation of the church was influenced by the rulers and magistrates in one (or several) place(s).

12. Consider why John Calvin became such a popular reformer in his own time, as well as within contemporary society.
13. How John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* changed and evolved in terms of its content and purpose from the time of its first publication in 1536 until the final edition of 1559.