Overview:
This main writing assignments in this course are a primary source book review and a
research essay, first of which forms that basis of the first. The idea is that you will begin
with a primary source, which you will review, and then base your research essay in part
or in whole on that primary source together with other secondary sources.

Primary Sources
A primary source is a document or work written in the past, in the period you are
researching: this can include histories (written in the past), chronicles, biographies,
scientific, philosophical and religious works, Scripture, poetry, novels and stories, etc.

Secondary Sources
Secondary sources are works written about the past: which is to say works of history.
This can include books, book chapters, articles, etc. (e.g.: your text books in this course).
Most of the secondary sources you use will be modern. For the purposes of an academic
or scholarly work (such as your essay), you should use academic or scholarly sources.
These are sources written by experts, published by reliable publishers, and which have a
scholarly apparatus. This refers to a system of endnotes or footnotes which indicated the
sources (both primary and secondary) which the author used to find their information.
Websites are not typically considered reliable secondary sources (with exceptions).
Encyclopedias and reference works can be very useful, reliable sources, and should be
consulted but should not be the basis of a research essay.

Book Review
Choose a work from the list appended to these instructions. The list contains primary
sources for the study of the Muslim world to approximately 1250 C.E.. Most of the titles
can be found at the CU Library, some can be purchased relatively inexpensively and
others can be obtain via ILL (Interlibrary Loan).

Choosing a source (by 31 January)
In principle, you should choose a source which relates to some aspect of Islamic history
you are interested in (e.g.: religious beliefs, ritual, war and conquest, law, gender,
interfaith relations, government, education, law, society, culture, etc…) If you’re not sure
what the various works are about, you can search for the author and title on-line to get an
idea. Reference tools like The Encyclopedia of Islam (online via CU) can give you more
precise information. Keep in mind, this source will also form the basis of your research
essay; so shorter/smaller is not necessarily easier/better.

If there is a source you would like to use which is not on the list, please consult
with the professor, or if you have trouble choosing. Only one student may work on each
source and these are assigned on a first-come/ first serve basis).

When you are ready to choose, send your choice via email to the professor
[subject line: RLST/ARAB 2320 Source Review: Choice]
The Source Review (due 14 February)
The aim is to provide an overview and summary of the source. You should discuss: the type of work (genre) it is, when and where it was written, and in what historical circumstances. You should also discuss who the author is (if it is known), when and where he/she wrote, and with what goal. Discuss who the intended audience was and how the book was seen at the time. Much of this information can be found in the introduction to the book, and can be supplemented by information from encyclopedias and secondary sources.

Then you should provide a summary of the work, and note what the dominant themes are. Finally, you should discuss what use it can be to a historian. In the best cases this is not necessarily what the author intended. For example, a book which is on court ceremony in the Abbasid caliphate may yield all sorts of information about things like: interfaith relations, gender relations, costume and clothing, food, trade, etc. It is important that you read the work to see what sorts of information can be derived from it. This will help you decided on your research essay topic.

Your source review should be 4–5 double-spaced pages in length. It should be submitted via email [subject line: RLST/ARAB 2320 Source Review] to your TA as a Word .doc. The file name should be formatted as follows: [YourLastName]Review.doc (e.g.: SmithReview.doc).

Research Essay
This is a 16–20 page research essay exploring a theme or topic which is featured in the primary source you studied.

Aim:
The point of this paper is not to present an opinion on, to editorialize, or to assess the value or the validity of Islamic traditions or Islam. This paper will trace the historical evolution of an Islamic tradition, belief, policy, tenet, or ritual, or some other aspect of Islamic culture, thought, and society and account for the changes it underwent in relation to its historical, social, cultural, theological and/or institutional contexts and/or how it is manifested or interpreted in different denominations or regional environments. You will show how this tradition has changed, or how its interpretation had varied, and propose why. The “why” will constitute the thesis of your essay. Essay cannot merely be descriptive (“what happened”) – you must attempt to account for “how things happened,” and “why things happened,” and discuss why this is important, interesting or relevant to the study of Islam, of Muslim societies and cultures, or of religion, society and culture in general.

Sources:
The bulk of your paper should be based on published scholarly or similar sources (scholarly books, journal articles, newspapers: “substantial sources”), occasional use of encyclopedias is acceptable (“supplementary sources”). Online sources, if they are dependable by scholarly standards, or if they are themselves primary sources, are acceptable (URLs to be cited in full; it is also recommended you save as a pdf any website you cite). You should read, use and cite no less than twelve “substantial sources,” and no more than a few “supplementary sources.”
Benchmarks
You will complete the essay in a series of steps:

1. **Propose a topic (14 February)**
   You should send your proposed topic (and name of your source) to the professor via email, subject line: “Research Essay Topic”. You will receive a confirmation via email. If you have not received a confirmation in 2 days, contact the professor.

2. **Bibliography (2 March)**
   Prepare a comprehensive bibliography relating to your primary source and the topic you have chosen. You should have a list of at least 20 titles of books and essays (excluding reference works, general histories, and web pages).
   You should send your bibliography (and name of your source and topic) as a Word.doc [e.g.: SmithBibliography.doc] to the professor and TA via email, subject line: “Research Essay Bibliography”.

3. **Proposal (9 March)**
   Prepare a brief statement (3-4 sentences) outlining your plans for your essay, including the source, topic, how you plan to address, and what you think you will find.
   You should send your proposal as a Word.doc [e.g.: SmithProposal.doc] to the professor and TA via email, subject line: “Research Essay Proposal”.

4. **Outline (16 March)**
   Prepare an outline for your essay. In 10-12 bullet points this should sketch out the structure of your essay, including the main topics you plan on addressing.
   You should send your outline as a Word.doc [e.g.: SmithOutline.doc] to the professor and TA via email, subject line: “Research Essay Outline”.

5. **First Rough Draft (4 April)**
   You should have a rough draft of at least 10 pages by this time.
   You should send your First Rough Draft as a Word.doc [e.g.: SmithFirstRough.doc] to the TA via email, subject line: “Research Essay First Rough”.

6. **Second Rough Draft (18 April)**
   Submit your completed rough draft with bibliography.
   You should send your Rough Draft as a Word.doc [e.g.: SmithRough.doc] to the TA via email, subject line: “Research Essay Rough”.

7. **Peer Review Report (25 April)**
   You will receive the rough drafts of two of your classmates. You are to write a 1-2 page doubles spaced report on each, including a constructive and collegial assessment of the draft, including strong points and weak points. Does it make sense? Is it convincing? Does the author prove his/her thesis convincingly?
   You should send your Peer Reviews as two Word.doc [formatted with your name, and authors name, e.g.: SmithJonesReview.doc] to the TA via email, subject line: “Peer Reviews”. These will constitute part of your essay grade.

8. **Final Draft (2 May)**
   Submit your final draft as a Word.doc via email to your TA (e.g. SmithFinal.doc). This should consist of a 14-16 page essay + bibliography.
Citations, Plagiarism, etc.
Citations are used to indicate where you have found information used in your essay. This information is provided in a standard format called “Chicago Style,” which outlines what information is to be included and in what form. For an overview of the Chicago citation style, see: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

In general, except when analyzing an excerpt of a primary source, you should avoid direct quotation (i.e.: quoting the exact words someone else has used). Whenever you use direct quotation you should cite the source (including page number) in a footnote according to Chicago Style.

If you paraphrase the words of another author, you should also cite the source.

You should cite the sources where you found the information you use in your essay, with the exception of basic assertions that are widely regarded as fact. The sources for interpretations that are not your own, however, should be cited, as should the sources of facts which may not be commonly known or accepted. For example, “In 627 the emperor Heraclius defeated the Persian army at the Battle of Ninevah (no citation needed). He was able to do so because the emperor Khosrau was betrayed by one of his noblemen (citation needed). Heraclius had struck at Ninevan because he knew Khosrau’s reinforcements would be unable to arrive on time (citation needed).”

If in doubt, cite the source. Failure to cite a source even if you paraphrase is considered plagiarism – this is a violation of the CU Honor Code and can result in a failing grade on the course as well as other sanctions.

In addition to the footnotes, attach a bibliography to the end of your essay.

Grading:
This project will be evaluated not only on the strength of the final submission, but also on each of the benchmarks. Failure to submit each part of the project in a timely manner will result in substantial penalties being applied to the final grade for each late benchmark. The project will be assessed on the strength and scope of the argument, thoroughness of research, and style and quality of prose.

Extensions:
Students are expected to meet all deadlines. Late penalties will be assigned for each benchmark, as applicable.

BENCHMARKS:
Failure to submit all of the benchmarks for this assignment as described above in a timely manner, may result in the assignment being counted as “not submitted,” and may result in a grade of F being issued for this course.
Source List


