

GE 13186, Fall 2010 – Second Paper Topics

Due date: Friday, October 12, 5 pm. If you wish, you may take an extension over spring break. Your paper would then be due on Friday, October 19, also at 5 pm. Papers will be judged by the same standards regardless of when they are submitted. Please send an electronic version of your essay (MS-Word compatible) to tboes@nd.edu.

Length: 4-5 pages, double spaced, standard fonts and margins. Please number your pages and include both your name and mine on the front page or cover sheet. Don't forget to find a descriptive title!

Your assignment for this paper is to show that you are capable of summarizing and responding to an academic argument. To do this, you will first have to find an argument about Marco Polo's *Travels* to which you wish to reply. For many of you, this will be the essay that you read as a class assignment, but if our assignment did not inspire you, you can also switch to any other *peer-reviewed, published* article or book chapter that you can find. The essays that other members of our class read are fair game, as are any sources you can find on your own in the library. Associate Librarian Cheri Smith will teach you strategies to do so during her library orientation session on Thursday, October 4.

Once you have found an essay that you like, you'll have to identify something about it with which you can argue. Keep in mind that an "academic argument" is not necessarily the same thing as a disagreement. We're not on cable news, and you are not a talking head! It is entirely possible to write a paper in which you agree with the source that you respond to. The point is to say something *new* and to thereby add to the debate. If you agree with the essay to which you are responding, you will have to find something within Marco Polo that the previous critic did not mention, and which might strengthen his or her claims. If you disagree, you should do so in a respectful and reasoned manner: you'll again need to find passages in Marco Polo that could be used to dispute existing claims. Needless to say, many papers will consist of a mix of agreements and disagreements with your original source.

Once you know to what you are responding, and once you know what *you* can contribute to the debate based on your own understanding of Marco Polo, it is time to draft your essay. Your opening paragraph might look something like this:

"A prevalent interpretation of Marco Polo's *The Travels* is that the text was intended as a kind of merchant's almanac for use by future Venetian traders hoping to exploit the Orient. One example of such a reading is provided by Professor Wienerschnitzel, who argues in his article "The Spoils of the East" that Marco Polo pays surprisingly little attention to the lives of ordinary men, but provides an extensive catalog of treasures to be found in Asia. Yet a closer examination of a specific passage, Polo's description of Salamander (asbestos) mines in modern-day Uzbekistan, reveals instead that..."

Approximately half of your paper should then be used to provide a strategic summary of the article to which you are responding, while the other half will contain your own argument. Your essay will be graded both on how well you summarize the article that you read and on how

convincing your own argument is. Be sure to consult the templates provided in *They Say, I Say* to help you structure your paper.

Unlike with the previous paper, you will be required to provide citations for all sources that you use this time around (including Marco Polo). We will be using the Chicago Manual of Style, which is the standard reference work in most academic matters.

For the *first time* that you cite any given source, use a footnote and then format your bibliographic information as follows:

For a book (Marco Polo's *The Travels*):

Marco Polo, *The Travels*, trans. Ronald Latham (New York: Penguin, 1958), [put page number here].

For a chapter in a book (Campbell, Kinoshita):

Kinoshita, Sharon, "Marco Polo's *Le Devisement dou monde* and the Tributary Ease," in *Marco Polo and the Encounter of East and West*, ed. Suzanne Conklin Akbari and Amilcare Iannucci (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), [put page number here].

For an article from a journal (Strickland, Zhou):

Zhou, Gang, "Small Talk: A New Reading of Marco Polo's *Il Milione*," *Modern Language Notes* 124.1 (January 2009): [put page number here].

All further references to the same source can occur parenthetically in the text, using the author's last name and the page number: (Strickland, 24). Note that "Marco Polo" is conventionally treated as a compound last name. Thus: (Marco Polo, 48) NOT (Polo, 48). Each source should be footnoted only once!

If you need help, you can come see me during my usual office hours on Monday or Tuesday of next week. I will also announce supplementary office hours. Finally, Cheri Smith in the library (csmith@nd.edu) can also be a good source on how to find Marco Polo related stuff and how to format a paper.