**PSC Writing Lab’s Guide to Writing Historically**

Many students may not be used to writing for History classes. This guide will give you a few brief steps to follow that will assist you.

**Step 1: Contextualize the Source**

You will need to be able to answer these questions about your source:

* Who is the author? Are they reliable? What are their biases?
* Who is the intended audience? Did this source reach that audience?
* Using these questions, we can ask: Why was this source written? What is its purpose?
* When and where was this source created? Did this place and time effect how the article was made or how it was received?
* And finally, once we have answered these questions, we can answer: What does this source say about the society it was created in? The answer to this question will often be the basis for your historical conclusions.

**Step 2: Make Historical Conclusions**

The term “historical conclusions” may be intimidating, but it should not be. These are not grand or large, they are simply claims about the people and systems of the time.

**Base your claims from the source!** When writing historical analysis, you should be drawing information from two places: the context of the source and the source itself. You should not be comparing to the present or creating an argument based on hundreds of years of history. Instead, focus on questions like:

* What does the language and intent of the source mean?
* What does this source say about the person writing it?
* What group of people agreed with the source, and why? What group disagreed and why?

These questions will assist you in digging deeper into the source and help you create your claims.

**Step 3: Engage with the Source**

Once you have created your claims, it is time to write your paper. **As you write, it is very important to use evidence directly from your source.** Quoting and paraphrasing will be the best way to do this, but also remember the W questions from earlier. Use the answers you gave to those questions to support your claims as well! The key to a healthy essay is a balanced mixture of direct evidence and historical context.