

Historical Tipping Points – Paper

Name: _____

Tipping Points, moments “of critical mass, the threshold, the boiling point”, as defined by Malcolm Gladwell, can be found in nearly every aspect of history and contemporary society. Later, for our RSA production, you will focus on more contemporary issues; however, in this paper, you will be asked to focus on a historical tipping point (in 20th century or earlier). You will have to submit a formal research paper and do a presentation in class to demonstrate your understanding of the tipping point and of Malcolm Gladwell’s work.

Components:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Proposal | Due: Sept. 22 nd |
| 2. Have minimum resources identified & documented | Due: Sept 27 th |
| 3. Outline | Due: Sept. 30 th |
| 4. Draft #1 | Due: Oct. 3 rd |
| 5. Draft #2 | Due: Oct. 5 th |
| 6. Presentations | Start: Oct 5 th (model) & continue Oct. 6 & 7. |
| 7. Final Paper | Due: Oct. 10 th |

Proposal

To begin, you will need to define and complete the assignment on a clear tipping point you identify in history. You will first need to “pitch” your idea in small groups in class on Thursday, Sept. 22nd. On Thursday when you arrive to class, your pitch must be written and clearly identify: 1. The time period you wish to study; 2. The tipping point you wish to investigate; 3. The broad category your tipping point falls under (i.e. war, economy, etc.); 4. Why you want to study this tipping point; 5. Any challenges you anticipate encountering. After receiving some feedback from your classmates, you will submit your proposal to me.

**** Remember that topics that are very obscure – not known / documented well – can be the most challenging, given that very little research already exists about them. Do some preliminary research and see if you can find anything on the topic.**

For example: Proposal

I am proposing to study the oil crisis of the 1970s. I want to know why the gas prices rose so drastically in the 1970s. I think this could be categorized as either a economic or environmental issue. I want to study this tipping point because I was interested in the discussion we had on peak oil, and I wonder what more I can learn about oil production and consumption based on this earlier oil crisis. I anticipate having a hard time understanding some of the economic and political situations at the time because I am not really familiar with events of the 1970s.

Resources

You must identify at **minimum** five reliable resources that help you answer your question. You should have the citation, understand their claim, assess the strength of their evidence, and identify any counter-arguments. All of this information should either be on individual note cards, per resource, or clearly typed into a document you can turn in & reference. I will check for completion on the due date.

Outline

Given that many students struggle with organization in their papers, it is going to be mandatory for this paper that you create an outline. The outline should indicate the key theme of each paragraph, including the introduction and conclusion. Before the 30th, we will look at ways of outlining. You are welcome to choose what style you would like to use, but it must be comprehensive and demonstrate care and effort.

Research Paper – 3-5 pages, double spaced.

Components:

1. Make sure you introduce your topic (try and make your own writing sticky by hooking the author), clearly state your research question, and identify your thesis.
2. Analyze your historical tipping point using the research you conducted and the three rules of epidemics presented by Gladwell: the law of the few, the stickiness factor, and the power of context. Assess how these laws apply to the tipping point you are studying. For example, if I were focusing on the oil crisis in the 1970s, I would be looking for how Gladwell's laws applied to this tipping point. Who were the key players? Were they connectors, mavens, or salespeople? How sticky was the topic? What made it sticky? What didn't? How did the context surrounding the topic influence it's tipping point?
3. Assess how helpful these few laws are in assessing this historical tipping point? What do they help you to understand? What evidence or topics don't fit into this model? Why?
4. Draw conclusions about the tipping point you have researched. What are you able to conclude from the evidence you collected and the application of Gladwell's laws? What remaining questions do you have (need for future research)?

Your writing will be assessed for:

1. Mechanics - Sentence and paragraph structure, grammar, word choice, punctuation, and spelling.
2. Introduction & Conclusion – Includes clear & well-constructed research question / thesis + hooks audience with “sticky” intro. Identifies and assesses conclusions, implications, and consequences. Identifies areas for future research.
3. Quality of Research – Supports opinions with evidence from outside (resources), including direct references to texts and works referenced page.
4. Organization / Flow – Thoughtful, logical and coherent argument.
5. Comprehensiveness – addresses all required components in a comprehensive fashion. It is clear that the writer understands the topic and Gladwell's work and has taken time to make bigger connections and draw convincing conclusions.

10 pts. per section – 50 pts. total

Presentation

Present your tipping point to the class using *prezi.com*. This is a new means of visually representing your ideas. Given that we are working on learning to communicate visually, this will help you do so. I'll give you a little tutorial shortly.

20 points for your presentation = **Total: 70 points**