Topic: The Klu Klux Klan

Details: Before I receive questions regarding the research paper, I wish to address potential questions in this brief announcement.  First you should have already picked your topic from the list provided at the bottom of this page.  Second, when you pick a topic make sure you narrow it down significantly.  For example instead of writing a paper about Andrew Jackson’s entire life, you should look at the particular contributions he made towards the development of the United States and explain their importance.  Third, make sure you include a clear introduction with a thesis statement.  The thesis statement gives your paper a specific direction and an argument.  History is much more that the description of a person or event but the importance of the topic.  Fourth, make sure to follow the instructions listed in the “Paper & Journals”” link and provide citations throughout your paper, especially quotations.   You may use any format you are familiar with, but they need to be accurate and provide page numbers.  Additionally, avoid using websites.  Instead use all the sources available to you through the CTC Online Library.  Lastly, and most importantly, make sure to put everything in your own words to avoid plagiarism.  I wish everyone the best of luck for their papers.  The more effort and analysis you provide in your paper the better the score.  Follow the advice in this message and your score will be better.  Best of luck and as always feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Dr. Grear

Assignment
Research Paper
Note: Before beginning this assignment, read through information contained in the Scholastic Honesty link in the course menu to the left.

The core assignment of this course is a documented research paper (850-1100 words in length (excluding title, bibliography, citations, etc.) = approx. 3-4 pages double spaced, 12-point font, Times New Roman).

The paper should support a thesis statement with information gained from research or investigation.
The paper will not be just a report presenting information, but will be a paper that carefully examines and presents your own historical interpretation of the topic you have chosen and your interpretation of the information you have gathered.
The paper may include consideration of problems and solutions, define key terms, or refute arguments against your thesis statement.
It will be important to choose a topic of interest to you.  See list below for some possible topics.  This topics should be used as a starting point.  Narrow your topic further to something manageable for a 3-4 page paper.

Approach this assignment with an open and skeptical mind, then form an opinion based on what you have discovered.
You must suspend belief while you are investigating and let the discoveries shape your opinion. (This is a thesis-finding approach.)
Once you have found your thesis, write the paper to support it.
You will use some of the following critical thinking skills in this process:

Choosing an appropriate topic, limiting the topic
Gathering information, summarizing sources
Analyzing and evaluating sources
Defining key terms
Synthesizing information, comparing and contrasting sources
Testing a thesis, making a historical argument, using refutation
Amassing support for a position
Documenting sources
Because this may be a longer paper than you have written before and a complex process is involved, it is recommended that you complete this paper using the following steps:

Choose a topic related to U.S. History up to 1877 (Chapters 1-15) that you would truly like to explore and that you are willing to spend some time on. Your chosen topic should be focused. Pose a question that you really want to answer. You may want to begin with more than one topic in mind.  See list below for some possible topics to research.
Do some preliminary reading on the topic(s). You may begin with the textbook, then further explore the information available. Refine your topic. Summarize your topic, your interest in the topic, the questions you want to answer, and a hypothesis you want to test.
Gather information from a variety of sources. Use a minimum of four sources for your paper, and at least one must be a primary source.
Examples of primary sources are ones that are used in our discussion forums 2 - 8.
They are sources that are contemporary to the times under investigation.
An example of a secondary source is our textbook, though the textbook also contains excerpts of primary sources, which you may use as a source in your paper.
DO NOT USE WEBSITES since they are unreliable.   DO NOT USE ENCYCLOPEDIAS since they are not academically rigorous.  There are many excellent sources in books and articles.  Many of these are available online at the CTC Library.
Outline the results of your research and the plan for your paper (you are not required to submit the outline).
Write the final draft and be sure to include a Works Cited List, and use the correct MLA documentation style.
Save your file under the following naming format: LastName, FirstName, Title of Paper.
Grade Rubric

INTRODUCTION:  Includes a clear thesis statement, an assertion or position. Topic is original and manageable in a short research paper.  /15

BODY:  Body of the essay focuses on this thesis and develops it fully, recognizing the complexity of issues and refuting arguments in opposition to the thesis. /20

USE OF SOURCES:  Uses sufficient and relevant evidence to support the thesis (and primary points), including facts, inferences, and judgments. Quotes, summarizes, and paraphrases accurately and effectively--appropriately introducing and explaining each quote. /25

UNDERSTANDING OF SOURCES:  Shows a clear understanding of the sources; has evaluated each source and used it appropriately. Uses a wide variety of sources reflecting significant research.  /10

FORMATTING:  Uses MLA format correctly; includes a Works Cited list; is free of errors.  /15

CRITICAL THINKING:  Introduces the topic in an interesting way; shows critical thinking and depth of understanding; uses appropriate tone; shows sophistication in language usage and sentence structure.  /15