

*Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Environmental Context of Human History*

Final Research Paper (100 points)

Thursday 15 November	Hand in a paragraph that states the paper's thesis (10 points of participation)
Thursday 29 November	Hand in 1-2 page outline (10 points of participation)
Tuesday 11 December	Carry out peer-review of first drafts (10 points of participation)
Monday 17 December	Hand in final version (100 points)

Assignment. For your final paper, write a five-page research essay on any topic inspired by the readings we have done in the course, or inspired by any other material in Diamond's two books. A sample of possible topics (but not possible theses) appear in Table 1. This list is **by no means** exhaustive!

Table 1. Some (of many) possible topic areas for the final papers in Guns, Germs, and Steel

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POSSIBLE TOPIC
Applying scientific methods to historical analysis
Evolutionary causes of aging
Causes of human racial differences
Causes of racism
Genetic and environmental controls of human behavior
Environmental explanations for recent human conquests
A repeatable pattern in human history that has a non-geographic basis

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Objectives. In *form*, this research essay should resemble the short essays you have already written for the tutorial. The content, however, will differ, as the expectations of scholarship are substantially greater for a research essay. Writing a successful one requires that you develop some level of genuine expertise about a topic, so that you can make an original, interesting contribution. Take a small *step* up in length and a small *leap* up in sophistication.

I recommend that you read *several* sources as you develop your ideas about a topic, even though you will almost certainly not use all of them in writing the paper. Read all that Diamond has to say. His books will probably be on your list of sources. You neither have to agree nor disagree with the books, but you need to take them seriously.

Schedule. You will complete this major work of the tutorial in three steps. First, you will prepare a single paragraph stating your paper's thesis. This will be due on the same day as the mock research paper. I will read those statements, comment on them, and return them to you. Two weeks later, you will hand in a 1-2 page outline of the paper. Your peers will review your outline, making suggestions to improve the final paper. While I encourage you to ask a classmate to review a draft of your complete paper, we will not take class time to do this. The completed paper will be due on Monday 17 December.