A key skill to any historian is the ability to conduct thorough research and craft an analytical and insightful paper on a given topic. In this project, you will be asked to do just that.

**Research Project Argumentation vs. Report Writing**

The emphasis for this project is to advance an analytical argument rather than a simple, descriptive report on the chosen topic. Your research paper should **NOT**...

- …be “about” a subject.
- …be a summary of everything you can find on the topic.
- …be a list of quotations.
- …support a pre-conceived point of view.
- …present the ideas of others without proper documentation.

Your research paper should include…

- …a clear, analytical thesis.
- …a clear, analytical focus.
- …a deliberate selection of sources that **directly** support your argument/thesis.
- …a commentary that weaves direct quotations, factual information, statistics and original, analytical writing to support your position.

**Analytical vs. Descriptive Writing (Credit: The University of Sydney)**

The simplest type of academic writing is **descriptive**, and its purpose is to provide facts or information. An example would be a summary of an article or a report of the results of an experiment.

However…[m]ost academic writing is **analytical**. In most academic writing, you are required to go at least one step further with analytical writing to persuade. Persuasive writing has all the features of analytical writing (i.e. information, plus re-organization of the information) **plus** the added feature of your own point of view. Your point of view may be, for example, an interpretation of the findings or an [original argument or position]. Most essays are persuasive, and there is a persuasive element in at least the discussion and conclusion of a research article.

In persuasive writing, each claim that you make needs to be supported by some evidence – e.g. by a reference to an authoritative published source, by empirical findings or by original reasoning – whatever kind of evidence is appropriate for your discipline and the specific text you are writing. The kinds of instructions for a persuasive assignment could be, e.g. argue, evaluate, discuss, take a position; as well as evaluative language such as, e.g. more convincing, problem, opportunity, succeed, should.