In January 1766, the merchants of London petitioned the British Parliament as it was debating whether to repeal the Stamp Act. What do the merchants say that they exported to the colonies and what do the colonies export to Britain? What benefits do the merchants claim that trade with the colonies brings to Britain? What has Parliament done to harm the colonial trade?

In order to answer these questions, use the excerpt of the merchants’ petition in the Greene reader (‘Colonies to Nation’) pages 66-67.

You should support your discussion of the document with quotes from it. They should be both relevant (that is, they should support the point you are making) and short (no block quotes and nothing longer than a sentence). Put the quoted text inside “double quote marks” and put the page number in brackets after “the quote” (67). You do not need footnotes or endnotes or a works cited page.

Your paper should be two typed, double-spaced pages. It should use twelve point font, have page numbers, and be stapled together! It does not need to have a separate title page (just put a title and your name at the top of the first page).

I have included a grading rubric, as well as a brief guide to grammatical mistakes I see repeatedly on student papers. The quality of your writing is as important. Please read the rubric and grammar guide below closely!

Your analysis is due at the start of class on February 4th.

Grading rubric. I have assigned a maximum score of 10 points for this paper. If it offers an accurate summary of the petition, and contains no serious errors of grammar, punctuation, syntax or diction, it gets 10/10.

Errors of structure, grammar, punctuation, syntax, or diction – 1/2 point off for each error (to a maximum of 4; please see below for the short-hand I used to mark these errors)

Quality of your discussion of the contents of the petition (6)___________

Writing (4)___________

Total ______ Letter grade _______
Letter grades:
10 – A+
9.5 – A
9 – A-
8.5 – B+
8 – B
7.5 – B-
7 – C+
6.5 – C
6 – C-
5.5 – D+
5 – D
4.5 – D-
4 – F

I will use the following shorthand in the margin of your papers.

FC – False claim. You have either made an error of fact, or have characterized a text or an argument in an incorrect or misleading way.

U – Unclear meaning. I do not understand what you are trying to say. This could be because you are not sure of the point you are making; or it could be because of faulty syntax, diction, or punctuation.

PR – Please proof read this part of the paper closely.

Rep – Repetitive. You have made this point already

TR – A poor (because illogical) or non-existent transition from one point to another (either between two sentences or two paragraphs).

NAS – This is not a grammatically complete sentence

FP – Faulty parallelism (two or more parts of a compound sentence do not have the same grammatical structure).

CS – Comma splice (you have joined two independent clauses with a comma instead of a semi-colon, or a conjunction)

WC – You have used the wrong word to convey your meaning (or have used a word that does not exist)

DM – Dangling modifier.

SV – No agreement between subject and verb
VT – Inconsistent verb tense (for example, the paper shifts from the present to the past
tense or vice versa)

PV – Passive voice.

Pref – The pronoun does not agree with the noun it stands in for.

Prep – The preposition is not idiomatically correct.

Poss – Incorrect use of the possessive apostrophe (or it is missing altogether). For
example, the possessive apostrophe appears in a plural noun

MP – missing or incorrect punctuation.

CQ – a colloquial word or phrase which is not appropriate in an academic paper (e.g.,
you were “blown away” by the Proclamation. It was a “ton of” fun to read).

Here are some common grammatical mistakes; please do not make any of them.

i) **Sentence Fragments**: a sentence has to consist of a subject and a verb; it must also
express a complete thought. The following are *not* grammatically complete sentences:

- “These areas being the family, state and community.”
- “Meaning that property density aided the breakdown of the political system.”

ii) **Faulty Parallelism**: Be sure you use a grammatically equal (i.e., parallel) structure to
express two or more matching ideas or items in a series. Parallel structure means that the
items are the same part of speech. This sentence lacks a parallel grammatical structure:

“To keep horses at home, the owner must commit a significant amount of time to daily
care and knowing how to identify signs of illness or injury in the horse.”

Here we have two verb phrases conjoined by *and*. Therefore, the items that need parallel
structure are as follows:

\[ \text{Must commit a significant amount of time to daily care} \]
\[ \text{and knowing how to identify signs of illness or injury in the horse} \]

Check to see if the items are the same part of speech and if they use the same form. In
this case, both items are verbs or verb phrases. However, they are not in the same form.
The first one is the uninflected form *must commit*; the other is the present participle form
*knowing*.

If the items are not the same part of speech and the same form, change the items so that
they are.
Revision: must commit a significant amount of time to daily care (and) must know how to identify signs of illness or injury in the horse

iii) Verb Tense: be consistent in your use of verb tenses. It is best to use the past tense consistently when writing about history.

- “Thomas Jefferson is an opponent of British policy” is incorrect. You should write that he was an opponent of British policy.
- However, you may use the present tense when discussing a modern author – for example, “Coombs argues that . . .”

iv) Dangling or Misplaced Modifiers: you need to indicate clearly the relationship between modifiers (for example a phrase or clause) and the words they modify. The following is an example of a dangling (and thus incorrect) modifier:

- “Having eaten our lunch, the train departed.”

v) Comma Splice: you cannot use a comma to join two independent clauses. You must use either a semi-colon, or a conjunction (and, but, etc.). You can also choose to use a period and make the clauses into two separate sentences (rather than one compound sentence). Example: “The Chesapeake was individualistic, New England was communal” is not correct. Use the following instead:

  - “The Chesapeake was individualistic; New England was communal.”
  - “The Chesapeake was individualistic, but New England was communal.”

vi) Passive Voice: avoid the passive form of verbs. It is more direct and less wordy to say: “British taxation caused the American Revolution” than “The American Revolution was caused by British taxation.” More importantly, the passive voice also allows the author to avoid taking responsibility for his or her claims by hiding the agent who did the action being described. For example: “It was decided to close the school.” Who decided?

vii) Diction: be careful that you are using the correct word to convey your meaning. You should always consult a dictionary when writing.

- “Where” is an adverb; “were” is a verb.
- “It’s” is not the same as “its.” It’s is a contraction of it is. Its is a possessive pronoun.
- “There” is an adverb; “their” is an adjective.
- “The patriarchal system designated women to the home” is incorrect. You cannot “designate” someone to a place.
- Avoid the use of “personal.” It is almost always meaningless: “my personal opinion is . . .” It’s your opinion so it’s obviously “personal”!
- Lead is present tense; led is past tense
- “foresightful” is not a word (as in Madison was highly foresightful)
viii) **Prepositions**: Make sure that you use the correct preposition when writing prepositional phrases. For example, “believers of God” is incorrect. It should be “believers in God.” I agree on his point should be I agree with his point. “Historians’ arguments of the use of mobs” should be about the use of mobs. For a list of idiomatic prepositional phrases, consult a guide to proper usage.

ix) **Colloquialism or Slang**: avoid using words or phrases such as “juicy,” “a ton of,” “mess up,” or “blown away,” in academic writing. As well, do not employ clichéd phrases such as “Winthrop’s idea of liberty really ‘moved the goalposts’.”

x) **Noun ‘Pile-Ups’**: Don’t use a noun to modify another noun or nouns (save in cases where the usage is widely accepted – e.g., television set). That’s what adjectives are for. In most cases, using nouns as adjectives is either unclear or inelegant. Here are two examples of this construction, both of which appeared in a prominent recent history of Jacksonian America – “slavery issues” and “slavery restriction provision.” “Slavery issues” is meaningless verbiage. You need to specify what issues you are referring to. And “slavery restriction provision” is both unclear and infelicitous. It would be better to use more words and say something like “the provision restricting slavery from new territories.” Please avoid writing something like this (from a student paper): “the Powhatan resident native population.”

xi) **Pronoun Referents**: Make sure that all of your pronouns have a clear referent. In this sentence it is unclear whether “them” refers to the British or the French:

- The British victory over the French did not make them a bigger threat to the colonies

xii) **Use of Commas**: Don’t put a comma between subject and verb – “In his new book, Jones, argues that the American economy is in decline” is incorrect. There is no need for a comma after Jones. The same rule applies when introducing a quote – colonial trade, “was intended to . . .” And never introduce a quote with a semi-colon – as in Locke stated; “quote.”

xiii) Don’t confuse **plurals** and **possessives**. The apostrophe is for the latter not the former. “The Smith’s house is on fire” is correct. But “the Smith’s decided to get a divorce” is incorrect.

xiv) Make sure all your phrases and clauses clearly convey your **exact meaning**. Here’s an example of what not to do from a student paper which is trying to describe the changes that the new Massachusetts charter put in place in 1691. In the student’s words, the new charter “imposed restrictions on issues.” What he/she meant to say was that the new charter placed restrictions on the freedom of the colonists in Massachusetts in a number of areas – the law, religion, politics. Here’s another example of such writing from a department of education document quoted in the New York Times: Federal scholarship money will only go to “students affected by impacts of poverty or family instability.” It
would be clearer “students affected by…” Or even better – “the money will go to poor students…”

xv) Don’t use “scare” quotes in your writing – e.g., “the colonists were ‘frightened’ of the Indians.”

xvi) Try not to use the same word (or phrase) more than once in the same sentence. For example: “because of Jamestown, the English gained a stronger foothold in America, and this stronger foothold allowed them to be stronger in Europe.”

To avoid these and other errors, read your paper aloud. Or have a friend read it over for you. Or both. As well, make sure you revise your paper at least once before handing it in.

Writing is hard. In order to do it well you need to work at it.

Always have a dictionary with you when you are writing (as well as a thesaurus). I would also suggest getting a guide to grammar and composition (there are many good ones available).

You should also read a lot of good writing, paying attention to how the authors use language. You need to develop an ear for what works and what doesn’t; what is correct and what is incorrect.

If you don’t make an effort to improve your prose, you will end up writing sentences like these (all from UCLA undergraduate papers):

- The old claim that history is of whites has been somewhat reproached.
- This section attempts to understanding the causes of the unimportance given to Native Americans.
- When Parliament enforced the Quartering Act and reduced the power of the Assemblies is what caused resentment in the colonies.