**Memorandum**

To: Professor Karen Thompson

From: Todd Carter

Date: May 13th, 2025

Subject: Project 1

I have completed the requested analysis of an example of my previous nonfiction writing. I chose a research essay from my History 101 class the previous semester titled “The Occurrence of Religion Under Oppression.” Following the specified guidelines, I explain my findings in the next sections.

**Be Concise**: To “Be Concise” means to be brief yet comprehensive.

**Unnecessary Repetition**: There were several examples of unnecessarily repeated words. In the first example shown here, I referred to “ancient India” in two sentences in a row rather than providing a more concise phrasing.

“In ancient India as far back as 1500 B.C.E., there was the organization of a system of oppression that intertwined religion and social values. This was a slow process that took centuries and was recorded in the very long history of ancient India through texts such as the *Rig Vedas* and the Laws of Manu.”

This would have been better without repeatedly indicating that this was “ancient India,” such as by writing, “This was a slow process in the region that took centuries and was recorded through texts such as…”

In the next example, I re-use the phrase “as a means of control” in a way that only restates the same idea.

“The *Rig Vedas* lays out the religious structure that was meant as a means of control through organization, forcing certain parts of the populace into specific groups from which they couldn’t escape in life.1 Utilizing religious values as a means of control over the population began with the idea of “varna,” which formed the roots for a class-based social structure that stratified the different levels of economic success.2”

This passage could have eliminated most of the beginning of the second sentence as it repeats what was said in the first sentence, such as by writing “This began with the idea of “varna,”…”

**Redundant Words and Phrases**: Redundant words and phrases were commonly applied throughout the essay. In the first example, I use the term “higher divine.”

“Throughout human history, there has been a frequency of organized groups to attribute aspects of the natural world to a higher divine order.”

This could have eliminated “higher” and carried the same information.

In the next example, I use “first arose,” “pure austerity,” and “total pacifism,” which are both redundant phrases.

“Jainism first arose and pushed back against the Brahmins of the caste system with the concept of asceticism, which focused on a life of pure austerity and spartan living and total pacifism, though these aspects hindered its spread during the relatively wealthy and peaceful times of ancient India.”

This passage could have eliminated “first,” “pure,” and “total.”

**Dead Phrases**: Several examples of dead phrases were found. In this example, I used the term “it can be argued.”

“Religion has been common for governance in many cultures otherwise, though it can be argued that this is directly related to the influence the religion has on the people being governed and their socioeconomic status.”

This phrase could be eliminated for the sake of conciseness.

In the next example, I used the term “it can further be said.”

“It can further be said that religions that preach goodwill often result in wider spread popularity with those caught under harsher systems, such as the rise of Christianity and Islam despite systemic oppression.”

This also carries a pompous tone and could be eliminated for conciseness.

**Unnecessary modifiers**: Several unnecessary modifiers were also found. In this example, I used the term “very long history.”

This was a slow process that took centuries and was recorded in the very long history of ancient India through texts such as the *Rig Vedas* and the Laws of Manu.

This passage could eliminate “very.”

In this next example, I used “entirely different.”

“Though in entirely different times and places, this messaging was not dissimilar to that of the Buddha, encouraging personal faith and development of the individual over the oppressive demands of the currently dominant religions.”

In this case, “entirely” was an unnecessary modifier that could have been eliminated.

**Be Precise**: To “Be Precise” means exact and accurate as based on the audience.

**Audience Levels of Technical Expertise**: My audience for this paper was the professor for the course and teaching assistants that may have participated in grading. I attempted to write for a high enough level of expertise that assumes the audience knows the places and terms I am using, such as “Vedic Age India” and “Mesoamerica.”

“In further contrast to the relatively peaceful religious revolutions seen in response to establishments like the jati system and the Romanic pantheon, the often brutal and harsh religions of Mesoamerica saw fewer documented attempts to move towards models more supportive of individual growth.”

I do not explain where Mesoamerica is or which cultures are specifically being referred to. This would be common knowledge within the context of the class and this essay.

**Consistent Terminology**:

**Level of Specifics and Detail**:

**Be Direct**: To “Be Direct” means to get to the point without embellishment and free from ambiguity.

**Active vs Lazy Verbs**:

**Active vs Passive Voice**:

**Topic Position**:

**Stress Position**:

**Noticeable Error(s)**: There were few errors in the finished essay. One such error was the failure to keep the correct numerical count in a passage, shown in the following example.

“This time saw the rise of several new religions, both of which rejected the caste system in its own way, which were Jainism and Buddhism, though eventually the rise of Hinduism re-embraced social stratification.”

In this case, “several” should refer to more than two religions, whereas “both” should refer to only two. This could be fixed by changing “both” to “each.”

**Conclusion**: