Important Dates:
Thu Sep 8: Assignment and library day
Tue Sep 20: Paper due (bring a printed, stapled copy to class)
Thu-Fri Sep 22-23: Individual conference days
Thu Sep 29: Revised paper due (bring a printed, stapled copy together with your original draft to class)

Goals: This paper will give you practice in writing a well-organized argument, supported by focused research, that takes a clear point of view on a historical topic that can be viewed in multiple ways. You will work on creating credibility by showing that you understand the historical facts behind an issue.

Assignment: You will write an argument that either confirms or refutes Alan Turing’s place in history in one of two selected contexts. (See below.) Your introduction will draw in the reader’s attention with a catchy beginning and will present a clear thesis statement delineating your position by the end of the paragraph. In the course of the paper, you will demonstrate that you understand the history of your selected topic and, as well, the reasons why others might disagree with you. You will, however, make a strong argument based on the readings we have done and your own research for your position on Turing’s legacy and place in history. Your paper should end with a conclusion that not only restates your thesis, but also gives your audience—which consists of me (your professor) and your first year classmates at Furman—a reason to remember your argument and to care about this issue.

Please note that you are required to document sources correctly, using MLA format, in order to receive a passing grade on this paper (and all others). We will discuss using MLA format in class, but you are encouraged to look at the OWL discussion of MLA documentation (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/) as soon as possible. Information obtained from sources, whether print or online, assigned in class or from your research, must be properly documented with bracketed, numerical documentation in the text and a citation on your works cited page; in addition, quotations must also be marked with quotation marks.

Possible topics: Please choose one of the following topics.

1. Andrew Hodges is emphatic in his assertion that Turing should get the credit for inventing the modern computer. (See http://www.turing.org.uk/bio/index.html, for example, and also http://www.turing.org.uk/turing/scrapbook/computer.html) However, more than a few historians who have looked into the history of technology assign Turing a small role or overlook him entirely. Where does the truth lie?
Research the history of computing, summarize it and explain exactly where Turing fits in, including your own conclusion as to what (if any) credit he should receive.

2. Similarly, historians of World War II do not always agree on the significance of the role that Turing played in that conflict. Research the role that codebreaking played in WWII in general, and at Bletchley Park in particular, including an analysis of its impact on the outcome. How significant was Turing’s role? Again, draw your own conclusion as to Turing’s rightful legacy and support it.

Notes:

1. Many people think that research means consulting whatever a Google search offers. Your paper should be supported by relevant research from authoritative sources. Simple web sources found using search engines are not always reliable. So, you should evaluate their authority before using and/or citing information from them. On the other hand, published journals, periodicals, magazines, and newspapers are usually edited for content and accuracy. These are typically more reliable. The type of sources that you consult will, of course, depend on the nature of your subject. But, the breadth and quality of those sources will be a factor in your overall grade.

2. Your paper should be around 5 - 6 pages in length (double-spaced with margins as prescribed on the class web site), discounting your bibliography and any footnotes used. This means that the main body of the paper is in the range of 1500 - 2000 words.

3. Be sure to use our online writing handbook liberally during this process. In particular, it has a useful chapter on “Establishing Arguments.” (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/588/1/, though it would be useful to read through the entire section entitled “Academic Writing”.)

4. Other resources may prove useful as well. Consider these sources regarding persuasive essays (http://essayinfo.com/essays/persuasive_essay.php) and research essays (http://essayinfo.com/essays/research_essay.php).

5. Three resources that may be useful as starting points for your research have been placed on 3-hour reserve for you at the library. They are:
   a. Codebreakers: The Inside Story of Bletchley Park, by F.H. Hinsley & Alan Stripp (for the WWII thesis)
   b. The Universal Computer: The Road from Liebniz to Turing, by Martin Davis (for the computer thesis)
   c. The Man Who Knew Too Much: Alan Turing and the Invention of the Computer, by David Leavitt (for both theses)

The third book is a biography that should be useful for the computer invention topic, as the subtitle suggests. However, it also thoroughly covers the Enigma codebreaking as well. I also suggest that you use this brief biography of Turing by Hodges as you begin your research -- http://www.turing.org.uk/bio/index.html. Also, Chapter 4 of the Henderson text is about breaking the Enigma and Chapter 5 covers the birth of the computer. Those are easy reads and another great place to start.

These are just suggestions of resources that might be useful in getting started with our research. You don't have to use them.