

Research Assignment

Milestone Due Dates (Reminder)

Interest Statement: *Wednesday, January 19*
Research Proposal: *Wednesday, February 8*
Précis of Selected Monograph: *Monday, February 27*
Completed Paper Draft: *Monday, March 20*
Final Paper: *Wednesday, April 19*

Format

You will write a paper of 8-10 pages, on a topic *of your choice* from the history of the United States since 1945. The paper will be based on both secondary sources and primary sources, and will include full documentation (in Chicago footnote style) of its sources. Follow the detailed instructions in Storey, *Writing History: A Guide for Students*, for developing a theme, organizing your research, writing your paper, and documenting your sources.

Sources

Your sources must include, at minimum:

- at least one book-length work of history (a secondary source, called a *monograph*) on your subject; **and**
- a reasonable number of *primary documents* on the subject.

I *must approve* your choice of sources. The exact type of primary source will be determined by your topic. In no case can you use YouTube videos as the main sources for your paper.

STRATEGIES for Choosing and Researching a Topic

Strategy 1: Choose a Bedford Book

The publisher Bedford/St. Martin's has an excellent "Series in History and Culture." Each book in the series combines a scholarly secondary-source essay with pre-selected primary sources. If there is a book on a topic that interests you, this is a quick way to do most of your research. Once you have selected the book, we can work together to develop a viable question for your paper to answer. I have posted a link to a list of these books:

<http://www.worldcat.org/profiles/gejarrett/lists/1415986>

Strategy 2: From Interest to Sources to Topic

First of all, think: What are you interested in? What do you know about the subject already? How can you learn more?

Next, search for secondary sources: What, if anything, does the textbook (Chafe) have to say about the subject? Is there a relevant entry in an encyclopedia or other reference book? The topical encyclopedias in the library (such as those on the 1960s or the Vietnam War) will be most helpful for identifying key issues and sources.

Try to determine: *What are the important book(s) on the subject*, if there are any? Does Chafe mention the subject in his bibliography? Does the encyclopedia entry have a bibliography? Is there a book-length bibliography on your subject available in the library? Which of these books are available in the library? Search by subject in the library catalog.

You will need to read at least *one complete monograph* related to the subject for your paper. I have posted a list of books: <http://www.worldcat.org/profiles/gejarrett/lists/533632>

Then, search for primary sources: What kind(s) of sources will be most helpful to your topic--Newspaper articles? Congressional hearings? Court decisions? Television shows and movies? Interview(s) with the people involved? Correspondence and personal papers? Musical recordings? Paintings or photographs?

What source(s) have other writers used to address this topic? (Look in the bibliographies and footnotes of the books you have found--it's all right to poach.)

Are there edited *collections of documents* related to your subject? (Anything in the college library with the phrase "sources" in the subject heading has documents in it, and many document collections have "A Documentary History" in the subtitle. These are goldmines of research, saving you many hours of tracking down reliable documents.)

Find your own sources using aids such as online indexes (such as the New York Times) and the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*. Many of the best papers use newspapers or the magazines in the *Reader's Guide*. Once you find a reference to an article in one of these indexes, go to the original publication (many are on microfilm) to read the particular article.

MILESTONES

Interest Statement due: *Wednesday, January 19*

See separate handout.

Research Proposal: *Wednesday, February 8*

Write a one- to three-paragraph description of your proposed research topic and theme. The purpose is to explain and justify your project, so that I can guide you to a successful outcome. Therefore, your proposal should include precise information about the following aspects of your subject: the time period, people, and events you will discuss; the specific aspect of the topic you will investigate; the main question you hope to answer; and the particular sources you expect to use to answer the question.

For the purpose of approving your proposal, include a bibliography of secondary sources that you have consulted to frame your topic and theme. In particular, it must indicate the monograph that you will use as your main source of interpretation and background on the topic. List this monograph first, followed by a short paragraph explaining why it is the source you've chosen. Then, list other secondary sources you have consulted while refining your topic. Use the Chicago format for bibliographies, as seen on <<http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/history.html>>, for example:

Douglas, Susan. *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media*. New York: Three Rivers, 1995.

Encyclopedia of the United States in the Twentieth Century. Ed. Stanley Kutler. New York: Scribner's, 1996.

"The Record On Curveball: Declassified Documents and Key Participants Show the Importance of Phony Intelligence in the Origins of the Iraq War." Ed. John Prados. <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB234/index.htm>>, accessed 12 February 2011.

Then, indicate primary sources you plan to use. Include a paragraph explaining why these are the best sources for your project. List the sources with detailed information, including specific name(s) of people you will interview for oral history; URLs of primary sources on the web; publication information for primary source books, magazines, or newspapers; or titles and publication information for films, television shows, or sound recordings, for example:

Villaraigosa, Antonio. Mayor, Los Angeles, and former student activist. Interview to be conducted on Mar 23, 2011.

"Shaking Hands with Saddam Hussein: The U.S. Tilts toward Iraq, 1980-1984." National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 82, Ed. Joyce Battle.

<<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB82/index.htm>>, accessed 12 February 2008.

"Martin Luther King 'I Have a Dream'"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PbUtl_0vAJk>, accessed 12 February 2008.

Vietnam, a History in Documents. Ed. Gareth Porter. New York: New American Library, 1981.

New York Times. New York: The New York Times Co., 1961-1963.

Eyes on the Prize. DVD. Directed by Henry Hampton et al. Alexandria, Va.: PBS Video, 2006.

Grateful Dead. *American Beauty*. Burbank, Ca.: Warner Bros. Records, 1970. Compact disc.