



Assigned: Wednesday, October 12

Due Date: Staggered (see below)

Grading: 225 to 275 points

Objectives:

- to develop and implement qualitative research methodology
- to improve critical analysis of information sources
- to engender expertise in a specific facet of 20th Century American history

DATE/RANGE	TOPIC	DUE DATE / PRESENTATION DATE (estimated)

In the past, you've enriched your studies with a series of large, creative research projects. Those projects were quantitative in nature -- you'd gather as much information as you could, and become an expert in some facet of American or world history.

This year, your big project is in **qualitative** research. You will be assigned a year or range of years, and you may pick any historically important topic in that time period. In gathering your data, you'll learn historical research methodology, and become an expert in distilling fact from fiction in the public record. You'll also learn more about a single topic of American history than anyone else your age.

There are three major components to this project. First, you will **collect and analyze data** on your topic. Next, you'll write a **comprehensive research paper**. Finally, you'll present an **expository project** on the topic.

Your paper is due Monday, December 12. Your **optional project** will be due when we reach that point of history in the class. If you get 1968, you'll present in May. If you get 1906-1910, you'll have to present in December.

Here's how it will work:

1. Identification of topic and formulation of research problem

Due Monday, October 17

/10

As you begin exploring topics of study, you must first frame your research around an essential question (or questions) called the **research problem**.

The research problem is the reason for undertaking the study. Your project will be guided by a defining question that your research serves to answer. You are to *evaluate* history, not merely explain it; once you identify the topic or focus of your research, you will explore its significance and interrelatedness to the historical continuum. Define this goal as a research problem in the box above, and use it to introduce your paper.

<p>Examples of effective research problems:</p> <p>How was baseball's meteoric rise in popularity in the 1920s a reflection of changes in urbanization, immigration, and industrialization?</p> <p>How did governmental benefits paid to returning WWII veterans (specifically the GI Bill) and the development of planned suburban communities help to define the 20th Century American middle class?</p> <p>Eisenhower's farewell address predicted the rise of the military-industrial complex. How well have we heeded Eisenhower's warning, and how has modern foreign policy been shaped as a result?</p>	<p>Examples of ineffective research problems:</p> <p>Was Nixon a good president?</p> <p>Why did America fight in the Vietnam War, and why did Canada stay out of it?</p> <p>What kinds of tanks and planes did we use in World War II?</p> <p>What's the deal with hippies?</p> <p>The Battle of Guadalcanal was awesome.</p> <p>Why is (insert politician here) so terrible?</p> <p>My grandfather fought in Korea.</p>
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2. Data collection

In this step, you will identify, locate, and collect information pertaining to your research topic. For this project, you will be required to gather several specific types of information sources.

- a. **Primary sources** are defined by their direct involvement with the event(s) investigated. Examples include media of the period (newspaper/video/film), diaries or journals, official records, photographs, physical relics, or an interview with a person who directly experienced the event. You will use and cite at least three primary sources.
- b. **Secondary sources** are derivative; they are created from primary sources or other secondary sources. They include everything from encyclopedias and textbooks to information found in a web search. You may use and cite as many secondary sources as you like. None are required, but they are essential to your research.
- c. A **monograph** is a single text written on a single subject. Monographs are usually books or scholarly essays focused on one research topic. You will use and cite at least one book-length monograph, and ideally one shorter monograph as well. Talk to me if you need help finding a book; both the BHS library and room 112 contain a wealth of resources.
- d. **Oral histories** are the stories people tell about the past. You will conduct at least one interview about your topic; your source will be anyone with specific knowledge pertaining to your research problem. Stories passed down to succeeding generations also qualify as oral histories. You will collect, evaluate, and cite at least one oral history in your project.

- Three primary sources (9 points)
- Monograph (3 points)
- Oral History (3 points)

3. Data analysis

As you collect your information, you will encounter questions of authenticity and accuracy. Primary sources in particular can be affected by bias and prejudice, economic conditions, and political climate.

You should first evaluate your research using these heuristic frameworks:

- **Corroboration:** comparing documents to each other to make sure they provide the same information
- **Sourcing:** identifying a document's author, date of creation, place of creation, and the historical context of the document's production

Also be aware of your own biases, like **oversimplification**, **ethnocentrism** (belief in the superiority of your own culture), **presentism** (the false notion that things have always been as they are now) and **confirmation bias** (the natural tendency to force data to fit a preconceived theory).

4. Research paper

You will write a research paper with proper MLA citations. I will not set a minimum or maximum page count, but you should write enough to completely address your research problem. The paper should display your expertise in the subject by making and supporting the argument raised by your problem. Don't just cite your sources. Use them. A rubric can be found at the end of this packet.

You will have plenty of guidance. We will conduct a research seminar in the library, where I will be available as questions arise. When you finish this paper, you will be able to conduct historical research at a collegiate level.

5. Expository project and presentation

Make something with your research and present it to the class. You will have up to an entire class period to share your expertise. You can make a creative, physical project as a conversation starter. Build a lecture around a slideshow or a Prezi. Write a play and cast your classmates in each role. I'm willing to field any questions, but the answer will almost always be "Yes". **This component is optional. It could also be excised due to schedule interruptions.**

RESEARCH PAPER RUBRIC

	4	3	2	1
CONTENT AND FOCUS /100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exceptionally clear, focused, interesting thesis Strong examples, rich and relevant details to address research problem Meaningful conclusion explaining the relevance of the topic Exhibition of topical expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear thesis with consistent focus throughout Specific supporting details are present Clear conclusion that justifies the topic's relevance Exhibition of a strong understanding of subject matter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A thesis is present, but focus of paper is inconsistent Generalized supporting details address the research problem Conclusion merely summarizes the research Exhibition of a relative understanding of subject matter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thesis missing, or lacking clarity and focus Inadequate or missing supporting details Irrelevant, extraneous commentary Lack of conclusion Little understanding of subject matter
ORGANIZATION /30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong introduction and conclusion Consistent and coherent logical progression Skillful and clear transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear introduction and conclusion Some consistency, evidence of some logical progression Clear transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction and conclusion are present, but unclear Some attempt at order and consistency Attempt to transition between paragraphs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction and conclusion missing or unidentifiable Lack of order and consistency Little or no attempt to establish effective transitions
STYLE /20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal language; avoidance of slang Articulate and colorful language Consistently strong and varied sentence structure Direct quotes support student's ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Majority of paper written in formal language Language appropriate to topic Words convey intended meaning Direct quotes support student's ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More informal language than formal Most language appropriate to topic Reader is burdened with distilling message and meaning Overreliance on direct quotes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal language dominates the paper Language is inappropriate to topic Meaning of paper is unclear Direct quotes improperly attributed or plagiarized
SOURCES AND FORMATTING /30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of at least the five required sources Sources are comprehensively evaluated All relevant sources are documented All parenthetical MLA documentation is correct Works cited page is compliant to MLA standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of 3-4 of the required sources Most sources are evaluated for bias and context Most relevant sources are documented Few errors in parenthetical notation Majority of works cited page is correct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of fewer than three required sources Sources are seldom evaluated Majority of parenthetical documentation is done incorrectly Few relevant sources are cited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little or no parenthetical documentation Sources are not evaluated Works cited page is missing or incomprehensible
CONVENTIONS /20	Superior editing	Careful editing with few errors in grammar, spelling, usage, and mechanics	Evidence of editing exists, despite extensive errors	So ridden with errors that the paper is difficult to read
TOTAL /200				

PRESENTATION RUBRIC

CRITERIA	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	MEH
Content (25 points): How well did you present your research? Did you effectively make your argument?	22-25 points	16-21 points	10-15 points	0-9 points
Q&A (15 points): How well were you able to answer questions from the audience and/or your instructor?	14-15 points	12-13 points	9-11 points	0-9 points
Presentability (10 points): Where on the awesome-crappy continuum would you find it?	10 points	8-9 points	6-7 points	0-5 points