History 111, Spring 2020

Dr. Leslie Madsen

**Research Project**

Please don’t feel anxious about this assignment. Dr. Madsen will explain each of its components in detail—in small, digestible pieces—across the semester.

# **Overview**

This assignment calls on you to:

* select an issue or topic from American history through 1877;
* locate primary source materials relevant to this topic;
* locate secondary sources about the topic;
* craft an interesting argument;
* write a thoughtful, well-argued, and carefully researched paper.

# **Project phases**

This project has three phases. You’ll turn in evidence of your work at the end of each phase.

## **Phase 1: Exploring the topic**

In this phase, you’ll read widely to accomplish three goals:

* Identify a topic you want to research.
* Find sources from the era to discover what people at the time were doing and thinking.
* Discover what arguments historians are making about this topic.

You must use primary sources for this paper—that is, you should be finding texts, images, and/or other artifacts from the era under consideration. You also need to refer to secondary sources to discover how historians have interpreted these primary sources and thought about your topic.

We’ll talk in class about how to choose and topic, as well as how to find primary and secondary sources.

Evidence of work for this phase: an **annotated bibliography**

An annotated bibliography resembles a traditional bibliography (list of sources), but following each entry, you add a paragraph describing the source (including the author’s argument or perspective if it’s a secondary source) and the relevance of the source to your paper. Cite sources using the format described in [*The Chicago Manual of Style*](https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html).

Your annotated bibliography should include at least 20 sources. At least five of them must be primary sources, and no fewer than seven of them must be peer-reviewed secondary sources. (We’ll talk in class about what all of this means.)

## **Phase 2: Crafting an argument and planning to support it.**

Based on your reading and analysis of the sources, you will craft an argument about your selected topic and express it in the form of a thesis statement.

You will then create either an outline or a (neat, digitally produced) mind map to explain how you plan to organize your paper and use evidence to support your thesis statement.

We’ll talk in class about how to write a good thesis statement, as well as how to support it with evidence in an organized paper.

Evidence of work: **Draft thesis statement + outline *or* mind map**

(Note that “draft” does not mean created quickly or without care; instead, “draft” indicates your thesis statement may change or evolve as you learn more about the topic.)

## **Phase 3: Writing the paper**

In the third phase of your research project, you will work from your outline or mind map to write your paper.

Evidence of work: **a research paper** that:

* clearly states your argument (thesis statement) about the topic
* interprets primary and secondary sources in support of that argument
* cites all sources using the format prescribed in *The Chicago Manual of Style*

The research paper should be between 2,000 and 2,500 words.

# **Project support**

You will receive lots of support as you work on this project:

* Instruction in class on historical research and writing
* Hands-on time during class to look for primary and secondary sources online
* Assistance from other students working on a similar theme (theme groups)
* Feedback from Dr. Madsen and/or Noah on work from each phase of your project
* One-on-one assistance during Dr. Madsen’s and Noah’s office hours

# **Deadlines**

Submit your work in your student folder in Google Drive by each of these dates:

* Annotated bibliography: **March 4 at noon**
* Draft thesis statement + outline *or* mind map: **March 18 at noon**
* Research paper: **April 22 at noon**

Submit all work as descriptively titled Google docs (e.g., “Thesis statement and outline”) in your student folder in Google Drive.

# **Grading**

You will evaluate and grade your own work by adding a paragraph at the end of each item you turn in. This paragraph should focus not on the *effort* you put in, but rather on *the results of that effort*—meaning what you achieved.

Dr. Madsen and Noah will also provide feedback on your work, and they reserve the right to raise or lower your grade if they feel you have evaluated your work unfairly.