HIST 133D 2020:
RESEARCH PROJECT OPTION HANDOUT

As noted on the syllabus, qualifying students may propose to do a "no-essay-exam" research paper (5-8 pages including annotated reference list) instead of the essay portion of the final exam. Those students must submit, by/on Feb. 20, a topic proposal. They should discuss their topic ideas with me in advance, after class or in office hours. Proposals must be approved.

§1. Proposal Format. The purpose of the proposal is to find a suitable and manageable topic, and to identify the resources necessary to pursue it.
   It should have three main elements:
   1. a descriptive title that indicates the main content and theme or question you are interested in.
   2. an abstract, namely a short description and explanation of your topic, including a list of questions that you hope your research will address.
   3. a reference list of books, articles and web sites that you plan to use, with full bibliographic information for each, including library availability (call number, article pdf), and for websites the URL and site information.

§2. Possible Topics. I am open to your ideas. Some approaches would be:
   o A detailed assessment of a scholarly monograph, or of a memoir, including published reviews of it;
   o A biography of a course-relevant person that goes beyond what is available about them on the web;
   o An in-depth examination of a film, including published reviews and suggested uses in teaching;
   o A detailed provenance and analysis of an important or widely-used source (a "source biography").

§3. Proposal assessment. I will return proposals as soon as I can (Feb. 27 or Mar. 3), with comments, and noting whether the project is approved.

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§4. Due date & project elements. Hard copies are due by the end of week 9 (Friday, Mar. 6, 4pm).
   Each project should include most of the following:
   a) a brief personal statement ("about the author"), and a short narrative about your research process;
   b) a short narrative introduction including thesis statement(s), and description of sources/evidence;
   c) the body with your argument based on evidence, and dealing with counterevidence and -arguments;
   d) tables, charts, illustrations, with captions and source attribution (URLs, books with page & source);
   e) annotated reference list of books, articles, films and websites.

§5. Grading. Research projects are worth the same as the essay portion of the exam, 20 points.
   When I grade, I look for five things. First, a thesis statement tells me the purpose of the project, what it is trying to elucidate, argue or explain. Second, I look for an argument supporting that thesis. Third, I look for concrete evidence—specific cases or examples—used to support the elements of the argument. Projects with any two of these three will receive a “C;” all three elements earn a “B.”
   Fourth, I look for counter-evidence or comparisons—whether you assess the material relative to other works. If the first three elements are also present, this brings a contribution into the “A” range.
   Finally, I look to see whether the texts are carefully written and proofread, and have clear organization and even stylistic grace. This can lift a project up to a “+” or, with typos and errors, drop it down to a “−.”
   This grade will be used as the grade for the essay portion of the final exam.

§6. Abandonment: upon return of the graded research projects, students may decide they want to try for a better grade on the final exam, and abandon the project. In some cases I may offer the option to submit a revised/corrected version for a better grade.

§7. Continuance: Selected excellent research projects may qualify, with additional steps, also to replace the ID portion of the exam. Examples of extra steps might be contributions to Wikipedia pages, a 5-10 minute presentation to the class during the final week, or another form of web publication (e.g. on the professor's website).

§8. Plagiarism—presenting someone else's work as your own, or deliberately failing to credit or attribute the work of others on whom you draw (including materials found on the web)—is a serious academic offense, punishable by dismissal from the university. I will report offenses to the UCSB judicial authorities for disciplinary action.