

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:

- A detailed assessment of a scholarly monograph, or of a memoir, including published reviews of it;
- A biography of a course-relevant person that goes beyond what is available about them on the web;
- An in-depth examination of a film, including published reviews and suggested uses in teaching;
- 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.

§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 *counterevidence* 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.