XI (Form V) History Research Assignment
Due Monday, May 28

Prepare a ten-minute presentation on any topic from the post-Second World War period in American history. I must approve your topic before you begin working on it. Organize your presentation around one primary source (a newspaper article, a speech, an image, a piece of music, etc.), supported by one additional primary source and at least five non-reference secondary sources, which you will also annotate. You should also be prepared to answer questions about your topic at the end of your presentation.

Your report should have a thesis that is based on your primary sources. Your thesis should focus on how the issue or event you are exploring was shaped by the primary sources. In analyzing your sources, be sure to provide answers to the classic “5 Ws” of journalism: who, where, what, when, and why. The idea is to put the primary source in its historical context, as you would an identification or a quotation, including its antecedents and its impact, how it reveals the thinking of its author or its audience, etc. The point is not to give overviews with illustrations, but rather to focus narrowly on the two sources. This is not a report but a piece of analysis -- though you need to include the historical background, you should not simply narrate a series of events, or summarize the sources but make a strong, convincing argument that also displays some awareness of counter-arguments.

This research project is 20% of your semester grade and replaces the semester exam. It is due Monday, May 28. In addition to your presentation, hand in a thesis statement and an annotated bibliography of the secondary sources you have used. If you use more than five secondary sources you are still only required to annotate five. List the primary sources and any reference sources you’ve consulted in your bibliography but you needn’t annotate them. Please do not underestimate the importance of the annotated bibliography -- your final grade for the project will be based on your oral report and substantially on the quality and depth of the bibliography.

Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography is a list of sources in which each entry is followed by an “annotation.” The annotation briefly describes the source, comments on its usefulness to you in your report, and explains (where relevant) its point of view. In other words, you are not to merely summarize the content of the source, but you should also evaluate it critically, and comment on why it was useful for your research.

Be sure your bibliography is in proper form. Consult Library Resources online.

For example, if you were researching the early years of the French Revolution in order to support a thesis that the Revolution was not excessively violent at the beginning, you might cite and annotate a book as follows:

[This is a citation of the book in correct bibliographic form.]

Lefebvre first shows how a series of political events made all the social classes in France combine under the leadership of the aristocracy to overthrow the absolutist government, and second, how the
aristocrats’ insistence on maintaining their privileges prompted the middle class to take over. [This sentence identifies the central thesis of the book.]. The book lacks citations and a bibliography, but the preface explains that Lefebvre was a major scholar of the Revolution who wrote many well-documented academic books and was considered an expert on the peasantry. This book was written for a general audience. [These sentences discuss the sources that he used]. Lefebvre was a patriot and a strong supporter of republican government; his great admiration for the Revolution of 1789 is clear. The preface also mentions that he was influenced by Marxism, which explains his emphasis on the role of social classes rather than individuals. [The previous sentences explain the author’s point of view.]. Lefebvre argues that the violence committed by the revolutionaries was mostly defensive, and he accepts it as necessary to assure the success of the Revolution. His book will therefore help to support my thesis. [These sentences explain how the book will be relevant to your argument].

**How to get started**

1) Make a short list of events or issues that you’re interested in.
2) Find out what primary and secondary sources are available on each of these topics. Select a topic based *both* on your interests *and* on practical considerations (Can you find interesting, diverse primary sources on this topic? Can you find the secondary sources that you need to put them in context?).
3) Collect primary sources. You may wish to collect more than you need and pare your collection down to the required two after you’ve researched the topic more fully and can judge which primary sources will help you make your points most effectively.
4) Use secondary works to get background information about your topic.
5) Read the primary sources critically, taking notes on: Who wrote this source, and for what purpose? What does this source say about the issue? What evidence does the author cite in support of this position? How does it respond to or reflect the other primary sources you’ve collected.

**Research Guidelines**

1) Write down the bibliographic information for every source you consult, even if you’re not sure whether you will actually use it. This saves time later on.
2) When taking notes, write down the page number on which you find each quotation or important piece of information. This will enable you to cite quotations and references as you go.
3) Exercise caution when using the Internet. Limit your research to scholarly databases, major library and museum websites, and websites sponsored by reputable universities. Personal websites are not reliable enough for an academic project!
4) Use at least five, but most likely more secondary sources (books or scholarly articles) to help you understand your topic. Encyclopedias do not count for this purpose, but you’re welcome to use them to help you get started. Your final paper must include a bibliography of these secondary sources as well as the primary sources. Again, aim for the most recent sources possible.