

You're America—summer assignment

This is the first installment of the multi-part, year-long research essay project. For the summer assignment your task is rather straight-forward. First, you will need to create a uniform baseline questionnaire that will be used to interview family members concerning the history of your family. Then, you will conduct interviews of family members. Ideally, the interviews will take place in person; however, some of you may need to resort to telephone, email, or snail-mail interviews. Last, you will create a short summary—one page minimum—of the essence of each interview. You will need to conduct and record a minimum of five interviews, and you will submit hard-copy summaries of these interviews at the start of class on the first day of school. A significant penalty will be applied to late work. In addition, your uniform questionnaire is due on that date. These interviews will serve as the baseline research for the oral history component of the You're America project.

The Uniform Questionnaire

Oral historians create a uniform questionnaire prior to conducting interviews. A uniform questionnaire is a set of questions that will be asked of people to be interviewed. It is essential that you are comprehensive in devising your uniform questionnaire. Because you are researching the history of your family—with special focus on the history of your family within the last one hundred years—it is essential that you include a wide-variety of topics. For example, place of birth, family structure, social class, education levels attained, family stories and lore, geographic and social mobility are just a small sample of the categories of inquiry. Your uniform questionnaire should contain no fewer than thirty questions and should encompass a wide range of topics. You will not necessarily ask all questions all interview subjects; often their responses to a particular question may address several other questions in your questionnaire.

The Interviews

This component of the project is best conducted over the summer because many of you will have the opportunity to visit with family members whom you will not likely see during the course of the school year. In addition, the interview process, if conducted properly, is rather time-consuming and requires follow-up interviews. This can be more easily accomplished in the summer when your time tends to be less structured and restricted in comparison to the school year. We recommend that you record your interviews as these may someday prove to be valuable family history. You are required to interview your parents as well as a minimum of three or four other family members. Not all of you will be able to conduct in-person interviews; therefore, you may need to employ alternative interview modes.

What is due at the start of class on the first day of school

Hard copies of both the uniform questionnaire and the interview summaries must be typed, double-spaced, employ twelve point academic type, as well as standard, approximately one-inch margins. Each interview summary must be no less than one typed page (a standard academic typed page contains approximately 250 words). On a separate sheet of paper, number each subject and include their full name, mailing address, email address, telephone number, and their relationship to you. For your summaries, in the upper left corner type the number that corresponds with the person listed on your interview subject page. The uniform questionnaire must also employ standard academic format as previously described. In summary, you will submit at least five interview summaries, a list of people that you interviewed, and the uniform questionnaire. Staple—no paper clips—all of this together with the subject list first, the summaries second, and uniform questionnaire third. Cover this with a title page that states your name, date, and class period centered on the page. Please—no folders or plastic covers.

If you have any questions, it is essential that you see Ms. Covin before you leave school this year. Also, Mr. Hersch will be on campus in Ms. Covin's room on Friday, May 22, from 1-3 P.M. and on Tuesday, May 26, from 1-3 P.M. to address any concerns that you may have.

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXTS FOR HUMANITIES III

You will want to try to procure these texts somehow for this course next year. Try to obtain the most current edition if at all possible.

A People's History of the United States: 1942-present by Howard Zinn

This is available in both hardback and paperback. In addition, it may also be available on-line at historyisaweapon.com

Elements of Style by Strunk and White

If possible, try to obtain a copy of the novels that we will study throughout the year. Your syllabus will detail more precisely when we will study each novel so that you may try to reserve a copy from your public library.

The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne (fall semester)

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain (fall semester)

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald (spring semester)

To Kill A Mockingbird by Harper Lee (spring semester)

A 2-3 inch three-ring binder is required for class. We recommend that you have at home a good college-level dictionary and a thesaurus for your writing.