

History 4069 M. Ladd-Taylor
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GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH PAPER:

Your winter-term research paper, a 10-12 page essay based on original research, can be on any subject related to poverty and welfare in United States history. Although the specific topic is open, your paper must be historical (that is, on a topic at least 10-20 years in the past) and involve an analysis of one or more primary sources. In addition, your topic must be approved in advance by your instructor, and you must turn in your research notes and rough drafts with your essay. Your paper topic and preliminary bibliography are due January 26. The paper itself (with your notes and rough drafts) is due March 16. Late papers without an extension will be penalized. Papers not accompanied by research notes and a rough draft will not be marked.

CHOOSING A TOPIC:

Several types of papers are appropriate for this assignment. One possibility is to analyze a set of primary sources, such as newspapers, to shed light on a specific theme or event. Just as Kenneth Kusmer used newspapers such as the New York Times to trace changing ideas about the homeless, so you could examine media representations of (for example) poor white “hillbillies,” “crack babies,” street gangs, or institutions for the mentally ill. You could also do a media analysis of an event or series of events – such as the 1963 Poor People’s March on Washington, eviction protests during the Great Depression, or the enactment – or defeat - of welfare-related legislation, such as Medicare (which passed in 1965) or President Harry Truman’s proposal for national health insurance (which was defeated in 1945). Depending on the subject, a media analysis could involve an in-depth examination of one media outlet (such as the New York Times) or a comparison of several newspapers or magazines with different audiences and political leanings. For example, you could compare the New York Times or Newsweek with the leftist journal The Nation, the conservative National Review, and/or various African American publications such as the Chicago Defender, Pittsburgh Courier, Muhammad Speaks, and/or the NAACP’s Crisis.

A second type of essay involves a close examination of an historical figure, social policy, text, or concept. You could examine the writings and/or analyze the press coverage of a leading legislator, philanthropist, reformer, or activist organization, such as Dorothea Dix, Upton Sinclair, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Dorothy Day, or the Welfare Rights Organization. You could analyze a work of popular culture that sheds light on poverty – such as Upton Sinclair’s novel The Jungle or John Steinbeck’s novel and/or the film Grapes of Wrath. Or you could examine a scholarly work, such as the sociology text Tally’s Corner, analyzing it as a primary source. Finally, you could investigate a concept, such as the culture of poverty (which began with Oscar Lewis’s 1966 essay in Scientific American). There are many possibilities!

COMPILING YOUR PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY

Regardless of your topic, your paper must use both primary and secondary sources. While a primary source analysis will form the central part of your essay, you must be

familiar with the relevant historical scholarship -- secondary sources – if you are to analyze your source(s) effectively. Please note that if a great deal has been written on your topic, your essay must discuss the historiography (different historical interpretations).

Your paper will be evaluated for the quality as well as the quantity of your sources. To find good secondary sources, chase the footnotes in *From Poor Law to Welfare State* and the course kit, and consult *America: History and Life*, the major bibliographic tool in U.S. history (available through York University Libraries e-resources). To find interesting primary sources, chase footnotes, visit the library stacks, search Yorkline, follow the links on the resources section of the History 4069 website, or consult a reference librarian. I strongly urge you to use secondary sources published in the last thirty years (after 1975) and primary sources produced before 1985. Depending on your topic and the types of sources you are working with, your bibliography should contain 7-10 books or the equivalent. (Count 3-4 articles as a book). It's a good idea to record the full bibliographic information in proper form when you first read a book or article. This will save you time later.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All papers must be original and use proper methods of citation. It is a violation of the York Senate Policy on Academic Honesty to submit work written by someone else or submitted in another course, fail to use quotation marks and citations when using or paraphrasing the printed or electronically-transmitted work of others, or collaborate on written assignments. Recent penalties have included failure in the course and suspension from the University. For information on York's policy on academic honesty, please see <http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/legislation/senate/acadhonesty.htm>.

Plagiarism is when you knowingly or unknowingly use another person's words or ideas in your own work without giving that person credit. While most students know that copying a passage word for word is wrong, and that you need a footnote for a direct quotation, you should also be aware that (1) a paraphrased passage that closely resembles the original is also plagiarism; and (2) you must provide a citation for all information or ideas derived from another source--even if you don't quote it directly.

The best way to avoid plagiarism is to budget your time so that you are not rushed when you are researching or writing the paper. Managing your time effectively will also help you ensure that your final paper is well-written and well-argued, and that your footnotes are in proper form.

STYLE:

Please follow the guidelines on the style sheet distributed earlier this year (and available on the course website). Use quotations wisely, quote mostly from primary--not secondary – sources, and follow the Chicago Manual of Style method of citation. As always, please check for spelling and grammatical errors and typos, and number the pages. Late papers without an extension will be penalized.

United States

History

M. Ladd-Taylor