

THE BIG IDEA: RESEARCH PROJECT (25% OF FINAL GRADE)

In this individual project you will tackle one “big idea” in American thought and trace it through at least FOUR different thinkers from different time periods. Your final project can take one of two forms: either a conventional research paper, or a more creatively structured format, such as a dialogue, drama, or imaginary roundtable interview. The schedule for this project, and the guidelines for assessment, are listed below.

As before, in your research you should prioritize scholarly peer-reviewed articles, printed reference works, and university-press books over other types of sources. Please do not use Wikipedia (or About.com or Ask.com or similar sites) as bibliographic entries. There’s no minimum or maximum number of sources, but keep in mind this should be the “capstone” effort of the entire semester and should demonstrate your very best work.

April 1	Have chosen your “big idea” 5 points	Write up the “big idea” and as many of the four thinkers as you know at this point. Submit this in written form (not a journal entry this time).
Week of April 7	Meet with Dr. Hangen during office hours	Schedule a time to meet IN PERSON with me during my office hours to discuss your idea and your plans for research.
April 15	Research Précis due 5 points	Restate your “big idea” as you’ve refined it through initial research, and provide a research log or explanation of your completed & planned research. Include a bibliography of your sources.
April 27	Final project due on this day 10 points	Completed paper, in polished form as hard copy printed paper, to be submitted in class. Please, no email submissions.
Apr 29- May 6	Oral Presentation at Mini Academic Conference 5 points	You will present your research to the class in some way on your assigned presentation day – obviously you can’t read the whole thing to us. You might read the introduction and conclusion and discuss major findings, or might prepare an oral presentation based on it, or might assign class members to perform part of the dialogue/drama. Your presentation could consider not only what you discovered in your research (the substance or content of your project), but also what you learned from it or how it represents a culmination/synthesis of your learning in this course all semester.

Guidelines for Assessment:

(Use this as a checklist to make sure you have all components in place)

Paper Mechanics

- ✓ Cover page with title
- ✓ 8-10 pages long, double-spaced, pages numbered
- ✓ Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free
- ✓ Develops argument using a logical, clear, consistent organizational format
- ✓ Cites sources accurately and responsibly using Chicago Style, including a complete bibliography

Paper Content

- ✓ Addresses a “big idea” in American thought or history
- ✓ Uses specific evidence from four different thinkers across a long span of American history
- ✓ Argument: Establishes a specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) with originality, taking into account the complexities of an issue. Acknowledges the limits of chosen position and synthesizes others’ points of view.
- ✓ Conventional paper structure: Demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline of history and the genre of a scholarly paper
- ✓ or Creative option: Demonstrates originality, historical thinking in choice and development of nontraditional project format

*See the attached LEAP rubrics for Written Communication and Critical Thinking for what exemplary college-level work should look like, and which serve as the gold standard for grading this project