

## **Familiarizing Students with Library Research: Contemporary Newspapers**

**Course:** The Early Cold War: The Truman Presidency, 1945-53

**Taught at** the U.S. Naval Academy, spring semesters

**Instructor:** Richard Hume Werking

**Meeting Pattern:** Two 75-minute sessions per week for 15 weeks

**Level, etc.:** Sophomore research seminar, one of the approximately eight sections offered annually of “Perspectives on History”, a required course for History majors, intended to help students develop skills in critical analysis, synthesis, and written and oral communication. Sections are offered on a wide variety of subjects. The principal requirement for all sections is the researching and writing of a research paper (typically 15-20 pages) using both primary and secondary sources. In addition, I give several additional assignments designed to introduce students to various aspects of “doing History”, as William Appleman Williams put it in his entertaining OAH *Newsletter* article of 1985.

**Enrollment:** 12-14 students

**Prerequisites:** Sophomore standing, for History majors only.

HH262C  
Dr. Werking

1 February 2010

### **Third Research Assignment: Contemporary Newspapers**

Your third research assignment requires you to use print-on-paper *The New York Times Index*, the microfilm version of *The New York Times*, and the electronic version that combines the newspaper and the index – *The New York Times Historical File*.

Drawing from our readings (past, present, or future), our discussions, previous research assignments, your own curiosity, or some combination, identify a topic from the 1945 – 1953 period. Using *The New York Times Index*, find a citation to an article on your topic. The *Index* volumes you will need are shelved on an index table in the section of the Library’s Reference area closest to Rickover (Reference Table 3). Notice that in many cases a reader can follow a topic’s development simply by skimming the contents of the *Index* itself, since there are often brief descriptions of the contents of the articles.

In the Microform Room locate the microfilm reel that contains the *New York Times* issue that you are seeking; the reels are arranged by date under title of the newspaper. Mount the reel on one of the reader-printers, read the article, and print it out. (Or print it out and then read it; your call.) Then use *The New York Times Historical File*, available on our Databases page, to find another article on the same subject. Print out that article as well.

In no more than two pages: 1) briefly describe the articles' coverage of the topic, and compare them; and also 2) describe what you see as advantages and disadvantages of the two methods of research – using the paper index in conjunction with the microfilm newspaper vs. the electronic combination of index and newspaper.

Provide a short bibliography, extending onto a third page if necessary, that gives: 1) the basic information about your articles (author, if identified, and title of each article, date of the newspaper, and page numbers); 2) a citation to *The New York Times Index* volume that you used, **including** the page number where you found the reference to the article, **and the subject heading you used.** (For Example: *The New York Times Index for . . . 1947*. New York: 1948. P. 2130. Subject heading: “Truman, (Pres) Harry S – Poland.”); **and** 3) a citation to *The New York Times Historical File*, including the keywords you used to search the electronic *New York Times Historical File* database. (For this one I was most successful using advanced search, with both “Truman” and “Poland” in Document text.)

Attach copies of the two articles to your report.

Your assignment is due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, February 9. Let me or the librarians at the Reference Desk know if you have questions or run into problems.