

Familiarizing Students with Library Research: Background Sources

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.

HH 262C
Dr. Werking

13 January 2010

First Research Assignment: Background Sources

As noted on the course syllabus, your first research assignment is due next Tuesday, January 19. Your assignment is to turn in, at the beginning of class on that day or before, a short report (no more than two pages, not counting bibliography) describing what you encountered in response to the directions below. The report must be word-processed.

Find in the Library’s Reference collection the specialized encyclopedias and dictionaries listed on the attached sheet. Open them and glance through them for a minute or two apiece. Consult at least three of them (the Truman encyclopedia, the new 5-volume *Encyclopedia of the Cold War* and at least one other) for a hypothetical topic having to do with the Cold War between 1941 and 1953. Then consult either Wikipedia, or another online source that is publicly available on the Web and that you like to use.

In your report, indicate what you found about your topic, comparing the treatments of it provided by the different sources. Comment on whether or not the entries have any cross references to other topics, references for further reading (either at the end of the entries or elsewhere in the work), and any other features that catch your attention. In a short bibliography (not part of the 2-page limit), cite the works that you consulted and be sure to provide the url for the online source. Compare, as well, the electronic and print-on-paper versions of the *Encyclopedia of the Cold War* (the 5-volume version). Which format, print or electronic, do you prefer to use, and why?

Finally, take five minutes or so to browse around the Ds and Es in the Reference collection, to see the variety and depth of coverage there. It is not necessary to include anything in your report from this part of the assignment, but do so if you wish.

If you find an additional volume that you think deserves to be added to this list, please let me know as part of your report. The same holds true for any freely available electronic source you turn up.

Also, let me know if you have questions about the assignment, preferably via email.

Some Background Sources on the Cold War

Chronology of the Cold War, 1917-1992. New York: 2006. D/840/B78/2006

The Cold War, 1945-1991. Detroit: 1992. 3 vols. Ref/D/839.5/C65

Cold War America, 1946 to 1990. New York: 2003. (Heavy use of statistics.)
Ref/E/741/G75/2003

Cold War Culture: Media and the Arts, 1945-1990. New York: 1998.
Ref/E/169.12/S39

The Columbia Guide to the Cold War. New York: 1998. Ref/E/744/K696

Encyclopedia of the Cold War: A Political, Social, and Military History.
Santa Barbara: 2008. 5 vols. Ref/D/840/E63/2008. (Also available online via
Library Catalog.)

Encyclopedia of the Cold War. New York: 2008. 2 vols. Ref/D/840/E625/2008

Encyclopedia of the McCarthy Era. New York: 1996. Ref/E/743.5/K57/1996

Encyclopedia of U.S. Foreign Relations. New York: 1997. 4 vols.
Ref/E/183.7/E53/1997

The Harry S. Truman Encyclopedia. Boston: 1989. Ref/E/814/H336

Purnell's History of the 20th Century. New York: 1971. (Heavily illustrated. Use vols. 8 & 9.) Ref/D/421/P87

(For future reference, be aware of the more general listing of background sources for all areas of History, available on Mrs. Barbara Manvel's Research Guide. See <http://www.usna.edu/library/History/Histback.html> .)