

HIS 354 Presentation Assignment: Cold War – The Space Race

Rationale

The purpose of the presentation assignment is to:

- *Vary assessment methods.* This presentation assignment offers an opportunity for alternative assessment, which allows students to demonstrate proficiency beyond essay-writing and multiple-choice testing.
- *Develop ability to analyze historiographical debates in depth.* This presentation assignment requires students to analyze a historiographical debate in depth, using a range of resources including textbooks, monographs, articles, and visual media.
- *Develop transferable skills.* The ability to plan and deliver a case orally, using supporting technology, are not only key skills in the context of history classes but also useful (if not essential) for many jobs.

Presentation Skills

Students should consider how they can maximize the impact of their presentation:

- *Know the task.* The question is clearly defined, so the presentation must address the salient issues.
- *Produce supporting documentation.* The presentation may be quickly forgotten unless the audience has something to take away that will remind them of the main points that have been covered. [A discussion exercise is required.]
- *Be confident.* Students should not feel intimidated by the experience of giving a paper; everyone else will have to take their turn, so students should not feel that peers will be unduly critical.
- *Be imaginative.* Students should not simply aim to write an essay and then read this out to the rest of the group. In order to make presentations more interesting students could:
 - (a) introduce handouts for the rest of the group to read (your discussion exercise should contain extracts from books and articles that indicate aspects of the historiographical debate);
 - (b) ask questions of your audience and invite them to ask you questions;
 - (c) use PowerPoint to show images as well as text;
 - (d) use a film or documentary clip.

Use your study skills guide section 4 “Using the Internet for academic purposes” and section 5 “Preparing and delivering a presentation”.

Assessment Criteria

The quality of presentations will be assessed in relation to five categories: (a) structure; (b) argument; (c) delivery; (d) visual resources; and (e) written resources. There are 40 points available in each category and a total of 200 points is therefore available for this presentation task, which is weighted at 20%.

Presentation Topic

Analyze US participation in the space race with the Soviet Union, with reference to the four major historiographical interpretations of the causes of the space race:

- (a) *The Final Frontier*. This perspective depicts space exploration as a continuation of the settlement of the American frontier. A prominent sub-category is the so-called "Huntsville School", advocates for the former Nazi rocket scientists and their acolytes who worked at Huntsville, Alabama.
- (b) *Technology*. This perspective focuses on the technology of space flight itself, sometimes to the exclusion of other elements.
- (c) *Political Competition*. This perspective examines the competition between the US and the USSR in space for nationalist and strategic reasons.
- (d) *Biography*. This perspective focuses on the human element of spaceflight. Much writing about the space age focuses on the vigorous young astronauts, depicted as technological heroes in both their own memoirs and in (usually) worshipful biographies.

Suggested Reading

Burrows, William E. (1998) *This New Ocean: The Story of the First Space Race* (New York: Random House)

Hall, Rex D., David J. Shayler and Bert Vis (2005) *Russia's Cosmonauts: Inside the Yuri Gagarin Training Center* (New York: Springer)

Heppenheimer, T. A. (1997) *Countdown: A History of Space Flight* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.)

Launius, Roger D. (1998) *Frontiers of Space Exploration* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press)

Launius, Roger D. (2000) "The Historical Dimension of Space Exploration: Reflections and Possibilities" in *Space Policy* 16 (Washington, DC: National Aeronautics and Space Administration)

McDougall, Walter A. (1985) *...The Heavens and the Earth: A Political History of the Space Age* (New York: Basic Books)

Riabchikov, Evgeny (1971) *Russians in Space* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc.)

Schefter, James (1999) *The Race: The Uncensored Story of How America Beat Russia to the Moon* (New York: Doubleday)

Schichtle, Cass (1983) *The National Space Program From the Fifties into the Eighties* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press)

Scott, David and Alexei Leonov (2004) *Two Sides of the Moon* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books)

Siddiqi, Asif A. (2000) *Challenge to Apollo: The Soviet Union and the Space Race, 1945-1974* (Washington, DC: National Aeronautics and Space Administration)

HIS 354 Presentation Assignment: Roberts and Westad (2013), Book VIII, Ch. 1, Q.6 (a)-(b)

Van Riper, A. Bowdoin (2004) *Rockets and Missiles: The Life Story of a Technology* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press)

Von Braun, Wernher and Frederick I. Ordway III (1985) *Space Travel: A History, 4th Edition* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers)

Students will probably need to conduct internet-based research for this assignment, for illustrations as well as bibliographic material. Please refer to the History Study Skills guide section 4, "Using the internet for academic purposes." If students find an electronic source that they wish to use and have any questions about the reliability of the material found online, they should consult their instructor.