

Dowling  
HIS 105  
Fall 2019  
Project 4  
Due: Various due dates

### ***Project 4, "The Unessay"***

#### ***Prompt:***

The history of the world is one of increasing globalization but also social fragmentation. How have science and/or medicine been used to separate and divide? Create a project for the general, interested public that introduces one example of this, explores why it happened, what its impacts were, and why it's relevant to us now. You will choose a broad topic below and then narrow it down to create your own research question.

#### ***Rationale:***

History has a PR problem. It's regularly misused and inaccurately conveyed in public life. As you've seen, people often get their (misinterpreted or flat-out incorrect) "history" from movies, questionable "documentaries" on TV, or even the news. People don't want to learn history through academic means; they want to be entertained. Our task then is to convey good history in an appealing way. This project challenges you to demonstrate all the skills that you've honed over the semester to appeal to that public. Bring something of yourself to the project. Be creative. Your limitations are imposed only by your goal: to convey information in the most compelling and effective way possible to your audience.

#### ***A note about genre:***

You may present your topic in any way you like. There are no formal requirements. It can be written as a traditional essay. Or, perhaps you'd favor a poem? Or, maybe you want to make a listicle or a rap or a video. I have had students do everything from outdoor "magazines" to tourism videos to vulgar comedy podcasts (yes, you may use slang and may even swear!) to board games to simulations. Any of those genres is fine, if the format you chose helps you present your topic to your audience *effectively*.

#### ***Nuts & Bolts***

Select one topic from the list below and formulate your specific research question (topic proposal)

At least *one* primary source from class

At least *one* primary source you researched from the databases available on the class' library website

At least *one* secondary source you researched from the databases available on the class' library website

As many credible primary or secondary sources as you wish from the databases available on the class' library website

Compelling, relevant, factual, evidence-based, interpretative, convincing

Demonstrates at least one long-term historical impact

Appropriate and effective genre

Uploaded to Canvas in an appropriate digital format or turned in physically to my office by the due date

A *minimum* 350-word creator's statement (see instructions below) with heading and word count

Creator's Statement uploaded as a .doc or .docx to Canvas

***Formulate your project from one of the topics below):***

Ancient Greco-Roman medicine and epidemics (600 BCE-500 CE)

Islamic interpretation of Greco-Roman science (700 CE – 1400 CE)

Jewish physicians in medieval & early modern Europe (1100 CE – 1750 CE)

Environment, Science, & the Industrial Revolution (1750-1900 CE)

War, science, and medicine (1850-1989 CE)

Modern medical experimentation (1850-1970 CE)

***How are the “Unessays” evaluated?***

Final Unessay (50% of the project grade) **due @ Noon** either on Canvas or in person, depending on the medium

Assessment breaks down into three elements: how compelling it is, how effective it is, and how well it makes use of historical sources (this is a history class, after all!).

An unessay is *compelling* when it shows some combination of the following:

- presents the topic in an interesting and engaging manner as the topic and approach allow
- appear as complete as its topic and approach allows (it doesn't leave the audience thinking that important points are being skipped over or ignored)
- demonstrates its accuracy (any questions, evidence, conclusions, or arguments you raise are honestly and accurately presented and evidence is cited or attributed)

In terms of presentation, an unessay is *effective* when it shows some combination of these attributes:

- seems readable/watchable/listenable to the audience (i.e. the production values are appropriately high and the audience is not distracted by avoidable lapses in presentation)
- uses a format and medium that suits its topic and approach
- leads the audience to trust the author and his or her arguments, examples, and conclusions because it presents multiple interpretations and/or counter-arguments

In terms of evidence use, an unessay makes excellent use of *historical evidence* when it demonstrates these attributes:

- it presents historical narrative based on historical evidence (text, art, object, etc.)
- acknowledges the limitations of said evidence
- presents an *interpretation* of the said evidence
- acknowledges the possibility of alternative and/or contradictory interpretations of evidence that may fundamentally change the narrative

There is no length requirement for the public history product because it is too difficult to specify. Its length will be determined by your goal and medium. The other assignments, however, have *strict* word limits. Please follow them.

**Creator's Statement (30% of the grade):**

Your project must be accompanied by a short, informal reflection piece (minimum 350 words) that explains why your presentation, whatever form it takes, is an effective communication of historical information to the public. It should also be reflective on the relevance and importance of public history in your topic and in general.

**To help keep you on task and make sure you're on track assignments are due in preparation for the final (20% of grade):**

1. Topic Proposal: a brief explanation of your topic, and why you think it will be a compelling topic (less than 250 words) **due**
2. Evidence Evaluation: a brief analysis of one historical source *you researched*, and how it will help you convey your topic to the public. Use the primary source worksheet on our library website to guide your assessment. (less than 250 words) **due**
3. Research Evaluation: a brief discussion of how you found your secondary source and why it's reputable. Use the secondary source worksheet on our library website to guide your assessment (less than 250 words) **due**
4. Genre Proposal: a brief explanation of your genre and presentation, and why you think it will be engaging (less than 250 words) **due**

**Keep in mind you are encouraged to use anything you have written and revised from these assignments in your final project.**