

HIST 2C: FAMILY HISTORY ESSAY ASSIGNMENT

Prospectus (due Nov. 10, 2009, 8am)

- §1. Purpose: to prepare for researching your essay and to get feedback from your TA.
- §2. **Elements of the prospectus**
- A. Who will you interview for this paper? When, where and how do you plan to interview them? (You do not need to keep to this scheduled time and place, but you must have a plan.)
 - 1. Give some brief biographical information about the person (how old they are, what kind of family they come from, their national origin, where they've lived, what they do for a living).
 - In order to answer this, you will need to talk to them briefly and set up an appropriate interview time. Thanksgiving break may present some good opportunities.
 - Ideally, this person will be someone in your family, but can also be a more distant relative. In some respects, the older the interview partner, the better, because they have experienced a longer range of history, but you can ask a parent about what they know about *their* parents' experiences, too, or just focus on a parent's (or other relative's) own life.
 - Let them know that the interview should be at least a half hour, perhaps up to two hours.
 - B. When you contact that person, you should ask them a few additional questions that will allow you to do some background research before you conduct the actual interview. These include:
 - i. What was the most significant move (change of residence) in your (your parents') life?
 - ii. What world-historical event (define for them if necessary) affected your life the most?
 - iii. What was the most important world-historical event that occurred during your lifetime?
 - C. Formulate 5-8 open-ended questions that you will ask in the interview.

In the actual interview you will ask some "why" questions about the events in B, above (why did they choose that event?), but you should also prepare some other questions about those events themselves (details of what happened and how the person experienced it).

"Open-ended" means it can't be answered yes or no, but requires an "essay" explanation.
 - D. This should all fit on a single page.

Family History Essay (due Dec. 1, 2009, 8am)

- §3. Prepare for the interview by doing some background research about the events the person selected.
- §4. **The interview itself**
- a. Take notes, even if you record and transcribe the interview. As an **appendix** to your essay, attach 1-2 pages (original or photocopy) of the notes you took. Note the time, place and situation at the top. These do NOT need to be typed.
 - b. Especially if you don't know the person well, introduce yourself and explain this assignment.
 - c. Get some basic background information as in §2A1, above.
 - d. Ask them to tell about their migration and/or world-historical experience(s), asking your pre-formulated questions when appropriate. If other questions occur to you, do ask them also, but try to let the person tell their story and pause naturally before you interrupt. Some people may need prompting, others may need to be gently steered back to the topic (unless what they are telling about is more important than the prompts). Try to get answers to those "why" questions in §2B ii and iii, above. Not everyone may be able to tell you explicitly; you may need to interpret. If the events ii and iii are different, ask them why. Try to let them talk, don't suggest.
- §5. Write your essay, which should be 1200-1400 words (5 pages) in length.
You will be graded partly on the quality of your questions and write-up, but especially on how you explain, interpret and assess the story you were told, relating it to the course content and drawing meaning and insights about the "uses and abuses of history for life," as Nietzsche put it.