

## DETAILED BIBLIOGRAPHY: Due October 16

### ASSIGNMENT

This bibliography is more than just a list of books and articles you are building on. The purposes of this background reading and the first stage of your research are to refine your question and zero in on your topic. You need to figure out what historical problem you are trying to solve and how your sources will allow you to do that.

Think of this detailed bibliography as a game plan. You need to list what your sources are and how you are going to use them. This bibliography consists of two main parts: the primary sources and the secondary readings.

### PRIMARY SOURCES

The primary sources are the documents from which you are going to write your paper and make your argument. By and large, they have to be documents produced from the time period you are writing about. There are some exceptions such as oral histories written after the fact. But mostly the primary sources are historical documents. That includes things like newspaper, magazine, and journal articles; advertisements, commercials, and posters; movies, novels, and television shows; court records, government reports, and political speeches. Those are just examples.

The key is to figure out how to look at a body of source material. You can do that at the library, local archives, or on-line archives. Hayden and Dewey have many primary sources. And many more are available electronically. Some on-line materials you need to access through Barton's Vera on-line catalogue. For many useful on-line sources go to Vera and select History databases. A couple of very useful things to know about are Proquest and the Readers' guide to periodical literature. You can search these databases by very specific entries (people, places, events, etc.) Proquest is an on-line index of old newspapers like the New York Times, The Washington Post, and the Wall Street Journal. The Readers Retrospective is a searchable index to old magazine articles. These are fantastic databases because you can research almost any topic this way provided you know what you are looking for and are imaginative in your searches. Many of the other electronic databases are also very helpful like Lexis-Nexus. The America: History and Life is a database of bibliographic entries on all aspects of American history. Another very helpful database is JSTOR, which contains humanities and social science articles and is also searchable.

There are many more sources on-line. You can use google to find out about on-line collections of primary sources. And you can also look at the sites that are on the MIT Server.

A good place to start is with the History Matters website, which has lots of links to specific websites on specific subjects. I have also listed some additional websites where you can look at old advertisements. The sites on the MIT server are just an example of the many things that you can gain access to on-line from museum and library collections. The Library of Congress, for example, has a ton of primary documents available on-line.

So there is no shortage of material for you to look at. The trick is to focus in on a specific topic that you can become the expert on. You have only fifteen pages so you cannot write about the entire history of movies; instead, you have to identify a specific story that you are excited to tell and that will in turn tell us about a particular aspect of consumer culture. To tell your story, you will have to be able to research it.

#### SECONDARY SOURCES

The secondary sources will help provide background on your subject, either on the specific topic or the time period. These sources (the type and the number) will range depending on your topic. More contemporary projects will rely more heavily on recent newspaper and magazine articles. And for others, even those from an earlier period, there are more articles written than books (check JSTOR). You need to do enough background reading so that you can talk with some knowledge and precision about your topic. Secondary materials can also help you fill in some of the gaps in your research. But you should plan on piecing together your story mainly from primary materials.

\*\*\*\*One final note. If the Library does not have something you need (primary or secondary materials), you can ask that they get these items from another library through Inter-Library Loan. Also, some of the things you need might be in off-site storage. In either case, you will need to plan ahead so that you can have the materials when you need them.