

## Project Description and Directions

Choose a contemporary foreign policy choice, domestic policy choice, individual, group, or event that you will explore using applied history methods. I'll provide you with some options, but if you'd prefer to create your own, feel free to do so. Sign up for office hours, and we can discuss your ideas. You will be given specific time targets to reach during the semester, and you will need to submit an annotated bibliography of sources. After choosing **Option 1** or **Option 2** from below and deciding on your topic, write a unified paper (10 pages max) that addresses all 6 questions and prompts that will be turned in at the end of the semester.

The first option is more for students who gravitate towards diplomatic, political, and intellectual history.

### **Option 1**

- 1) Choose a contemporary U.S. domestic or foreign policy question.
- 2) What is the historical context/backstory?
- 3) What options did past decision makers have when faced with similar decisions? Evaluate a minimum of 3 examples.
- 4) How did past decision makers rationalize their decision? Why did they choose their attempted solution?
- 5) What lessons can be learned from their past decisions and applied to your contemporary U.S. domestic or foreign policy question?
- 6) After completing your research, reflect on whether you think this was a worthwhile intellectual exercise with beneficial current applicability?

Possible Topics for Option 1:

Should the U.S. enter the Paris Agreement?

Should the U.S. negotiate unilaterally with North Korea?

Should the U.S. build a southern border wall?

Should the U.S. re-enter the Iran Nuclear Deal?

Should the U.S. raise tariffs on China?

Should the U.S. maintain a military presence in Afghanistan?

### **Option 2**

- 1) Find a contemporary example of an event, group, or individual that interests you.
- 2) Construct a larger category that they may fit within. You may need more than one category. (examples: social movements, U.S. evangelical politicians, U.S. socialist politicians, natural disaster government responses)
- 3) Brainstorm historical examples that fit within the categories you created.
- 4) Examine similarities and differences between your contemporary and historical examples.
- 5) What conclusions or lessons can be drawn for today?
- 6) After completing your research, reflect on whether you think this was a worthwhile intellectual exercise with beneficial current applicability?

Possible Topics for Option 2

Me Too Movement

Black Lives Matter

Mike Pence  
Bernie Sanders  
Hurricane Maria

### Readings and Questions

Over a four week span at the start of the semester, students will be assigned a series of readings dealing with some of the broader philosophical questions broached by the applied history project.

Students will provide a one page written response that summarizes the main ideas of the readings and answers assigned questions. Answers are discussed in small groups then reported out to the class.

#### Reading 1

- A) "Why the US Needs a Council of Historians" by Niall Ferguson and Graham Allison in The Atlantic, September 2016
- B) "Why Historians Would Make Bad Policy Advisors" by Neville Morley in Aeon, November 2016

Question: What are the potential strengths and weaknesses of a governmental council of historians?

#### Reading 2:

- A) Excerpts from *The Use and Abuse of History* by Friedrich Nietzsche

Question: How does Nietzsche explain the subjectivity of history?

#### Reading 3:

- A) Foundation by Isaac Asimov  
Part I "The Psychohistorians" Chapter 3 to 7

Questions: How does Asimov define psychohistory? Do you see any logical inconsistencies in his approach? How does psychohistory relate to the other readings? How does it deviate? What does Asimov's ideas say about free will?

### Lecture

- A) "Philosophies of History Introduction"  
Lecture and discuss basic philosophies of history: Hegel, Marx, and Foucault.

Questions: How have previous thinkers explained the significance of temporality? What similarities and differences do you see? Whose concept of history do you find most appealing and why?