

Research Projects

Oh where, oh where, is the American Dream? Oh where, oh where, has it gone?

There are more aspects to the American Dream than we can hope to cover in one semester. Rather than the two of us choosing all the topics we will consider, we want to give you an opportunity to contribute to the course according to your own areas of interest. For this final assignment, you will work on a research project comprised of an 8-12 page paper and a 25-minute class presentation given during the last week of class. It will be your job to educate the class about an inequality related to the American dream. We encourage you to choose a topic that relates somehow to the issues raised in “Tragedy of the Commons.” It may help to think about ways in which you feel “the commons” is being misused, or is distributed inequitably. The final drafts of your papers will be compiled in a compendium at the end of the semester. Your paper and your presentation should do the following:

- Identify an inequality (as case where the American dream has not been evenly distributed) or shortcoming in the realization of the American Dream.
- Provide scholarly evidence that this inequality or shortcoming does indeed exist and to what extent.
- Find and provide theoretical explanations for how and why this inequality or shortcoming was generated—multiple competing theories are preferable.
- Argue in favor of one of these positions as *the* explanation for the inequality or shortcoming.
- If this inequality is a problem (that is, it is not justified), provide suggestions on how to overcome it. If it is not a problem, provide an explanation as to why.

Because this is such a large project, you will work on it in stages throughout the semester. To help get you ready for the final paper and presentation, we have scheduled deadlines for the following legs of your journey. (See detailed explanations below.)

- Initial topic proposal due: **Friday, March 3rd**
- Revised topic proposal (*1st meeting*): **By Monday, March 20th**
- Annotated bibliography due: **Wednesday, April 5th**
- Progress report & outline of presentation
(*2nd meeting*): **By Wednesday, April 26th**
- 14 copies of one or two articles: **Distributed to class one week prior to presentation**
- Presentation plan (*3rd meeting*): **Within one week of your presentation**
- Presentation: **Last 1 – 2 weeks of class**
- Final draft of paper due: **Monday, May 22nd**

Initial topic proposal

A memo of approximately half a page (typed, single-spaced), informing us of the inequality you would like to research, and why you are interested. The more specific you can be about your topic, what you already know about it, and what you hope to learn, the more helpful our feedback can be.

Revised topic proposal

A revised proposal that responds to our questions and feedback. We will discuss this proposal during our **first meeting**.

Annotated bibliography

A bibliography is a listing of the sources used in the writing of a particular paper, assignment, book, etc. This list is often longer than a Works Cited list, which includes only those works you actually cite directly in your paper. An annotated bibliography is a listing of sources along with a short “blurb” about each source, either a very brief summary of the source, or an explanation of how you think the source will, or will not, be useful to you. The annotated bibliography you turn in on [Wednesday, April 5](#) will be a work in progress, containing all of the sources you have gathered up to that point. Your bibliographies must contain a **minimum** of eight sources, four of which must be annotated. You do not need to have read all of these sources completely by this date, but you should be familiar with them, and should have a good sense of what they have to offer you. Choose and evaluate your sources carefully – not all books, articles, etc. are equally reliable.

Progress report & presentation outline

You will bring a written progress report and an outline of your presentation to your **second meeting**. The progress report should be a memo of approximately half a page, letting us know how your work is progressing. Let us know if you are having trouble finding necessary materials, focusing your research, etc. (But let one of us know earlier if you are having trouble earlier.) You will also bring with you a first draft of an outline for your presentation (what you will cover and in which order).

14 copies of article

At least one week before your presentation date, you should choose one or two articles which you feel will provide your classmates and the two of us with a good introduction to your topic. The more your audience knows about your topic before you present it, the more meaningful your presentation is likely to be.

Presentation plan

Some time during the week before your presentation, you will have one **last meeting**, in which you will go over a more detailed presentation plan with one of us.

Presentation

Presentations should be designed to take approximately one class period and will take place during the last two weeks of class. Be sure to allow some time for questions and discussions.

Final draft of paper

The final draft of your project paper (one for each of us), which should go into greater detail about your topic, and the issues involved in it, than your presentation does, will be due on [Monday, May 22](#). This will give you a chance to make some last-minute changes to the paper itself based on class response to your presentation. You may use information and research from previous classes, but the paper you turn in (along with your presentation) should be original work. Be sure to include a memo of transmittal and a Works Cited list (MLA format) with your paper.

In addition, email a copy to Jeremy (ballj@smccd.net). Please save the paper as an rtf (rich text format) document and send this file as an attachment. If you have a PowerPoint presentation or use any electronic resources, please get him a copy of those as well. After the last papers come in, on [Monday, May 22](#), we will compile them all into a bound set, which we will distribute to the class on [Wednesday, May 24](#).

Stage	Deadline	Date completed	Instructor's signature
Initial topic proposal due	Friday, March 3		
Revised topic proposal (<i>1st meeting</i>):	By Monday, March 20		
Annotated bibliography due:	Wednesday, April 5		
Progress report & outline of presentation (<i>2nd meeting</i>):	By Wednesday, April 26, 2006		
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