

Instructor:

Class: English 10600

Due Date:

Purdue Profile Assignment (This assignment can simply be a profile assignment, too.)

For this assignment, you will choose a topic related to Purdue University to profile and research primary source materials from the Purdue Archives and Special Collections (ASC) on your specified topic. Examples of topics: professors, Purdue presidents, departments, buildings, clubs, student life, sports, fraternities, famous or influential alumni, residence halls, Purdue choirs, Purdue bands, train wreck, tank scrap, etc. If you want to choose a professor, alumna or alumnus, or a Purdue president, please choose someone before 1970. Looking at the timelines and information on the ASC website is a wonderful way for you to find a topic, as well. If you are going to focus on a broader topic, I strongly suggest that you narrow it down to a specific time period in order to avoid becoming overwhelmed. Once you choose a topic, you must first search Archon and e-Archives to make sure there is enough information on your topic to conduct reasonable research in the ASC. Do not forget to search the Oral Histories! There should be at least three archival sources on your topic, and you may certainly use secondary sources as well. If you have difficulty locating materials in the ASC on your topic, please come see me, and we will search Archon and e-Archives together. You may also contact a staff member in the ASC at spcoll@purdue.edu; however, I prefer you contact them AFTER you have chosen your topic. You may ask the staff if they have more information on your topic once you have completed your initial research. Do not go to the ASC empty-handed and expect the archivists to do your work for you.

Things to consider while researching:

What is particularly interesting about this topic? Is there anything surprising that you were not expecting to find? Is there anything specific that makes your topic an influential or integral part of Purdue history or history? Is there a purpose to viewing these original documents as opposed to seeing them online? Did you experience any challenges? What were your experiences in researching your topic and looking at the original documents?

Once you have gathered all of the information on your topic, I want you to compile your findings into a coherent 2-3 page paper; you should not simply list your findings. The point is not to write a biography or a history of your topic. This is more of an investigative assignment, so you do have some freedom with what you choose to write. Remember to use the questions above to help guide you. Your papers should be in MLA format with 12 point Times New Roman font. You should also have a works cited page; if you are not certain how to cite primary sources from the ASC, go to the OWL website or come see me. This assignment will require you to visit the reading room in the Archives and Special Collections; you will need to register at the front desk.

Remember that food, drinks, gum, and pens are not permitted and to wash your hands before handling the materials. Their hours are Monday-Friday, 10am-4:30pm; therefore, you will want to give yourself plenty of time before the assignment is due to conduct your research. Please note that because you are dealing with rare and delicate materials, you may **NOT** start researching your topic in the reading room 48 hours before your assignment is due, as I do not want any of you rushing carelessly through these materials. Remember to treat these materials as you would like to be treated if you were that old. ☺

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have regarding this assignment.

What students and TAs need to know before completing this assignment:

The TA will need to be well versed in searching Archon and eArchives. This can be achieved best by having the TAs come in for an instruction session with an ASC staff member or have a staff member visit a mentor group and lead an instruction session. Teaching the students how to search, access, and utilize materials in Archon, e-Archives, and the online catalog can then be achieved by the TA spending a computer lab day walking students through searching Archon, e-Archives, the online catalog, and the ASC website. The most ideal situation would be for the TA to spend a class going over detailed searching techniques for Archon, e-Archives, and the online catalog, where the students can follow along at their own computer. This will allow the students to navigate through the ASC website, Archon, and e-Archives themselves and realize that it is not as intimidating as it may appear; it will also help them better understand how to request materials upon their arrival to the reading room. Once this has been achieved, it is then appropriate to schedule an instruction session with an archivist, so that your students can actually view materials from the archives that will be pertinent to their assignment.

Remember: When requesting an instruction session, it is most important to notify the archivist that you are having your students do an archives assignment and to send a copy of the assignment to the archivist. This will allow us to gear the instruction session towards your assignment and better prepare the staff for when your students visit for their research. You can email spcoll@purdue.edu or call 765-494-2839 to request an instruction session, and you can request a specific instructor.