U.S. History Research Project: Seminal Sources, Summary of Scholarship, and Annotated Bibliography

Katharine Brush Library
Any questions on topic selection, background research, or the research journal?
Goals of the Class

• Locating seminal sources and authors
• Finding and using book reviews
• Traits of a summary of scholarship
• NoodleTools
Seminal Work: Definition

- “A seminal work is a work from which other works grow. The term usually refers to an intellectual or artistic achievement whose ideas and techniques have been adopted or responded to in later works by other people, either in the same field or in the general culture.”
- “(of a work, event, or person) strongly influencing later developments.”

Definition from *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary*
Develop Working Bibliography of Seminal Sources

- Check bibliographies which accompany the articles in reference resources (Encyclopedias and Bibliographies)

- Examples
  - General Encyclopedia
  - Subject Specific Encyclopedia
  - Bibliographies
    - Norton, *The American Historical Association's Guide to Historical Literature*
    - Parish, *Reader's Guide to American History*
Compare the Bibliographies

- Adams. *Doctors in Blue: The Medical History of the Union Army in the Civil War.*
- Attie. *Patriotic Toil Northern Women and the American Civil War.*
- Fredrickson. *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union.*
Compare Bibliographies: II

- Greenbie. *Lincoln's Daughters of Mercy*.
Traits of Scholarly Journal Issue

- **Articles**
  - 4 or 5 articles per issue
  - Original content (mini book or book chapter)
  - 25-40 pages in length

- **Book Reviews**
  - 50 per issue
  - 1-2 pages in length
  - Discuss argument
  - Content overview
  - Overall historiography of topic
Summary of Scholarship and Annotated Bibliography
Annotations and Bibliography

• The bibliography should be on the pages immediately following the summary of scholarship
• Citations must be provided for books, articles, and book reviews
• Annotations should be 4 to 6 sentences in length
  – 2 to 3 sentences describing content
  – 2 to 3 sentences critical assessment
• The book reviews will drive the annotations (more reviews better critical assessment)
Annotation Format

- Books in alphabetical order
- Reviews in alphabetical order under each book
- Double space between sources and annotations
- Citations and annotations single spaced
Annotation Example


Arthur Schlesinger brilliantly analyzes Robert Kennedy, a political leader and his long time friend, in the book Robert Kennedy and His Times. Throughout the book, Schlesinger presents both the dark and joyous sides of Kennedy’s personality, although he openly admits to his bias for Kennedy. The book explores Kennedy’s career—from his early years as a single minded Senate counsel in the 1950s, through his term as Attorney General, and finally into the last years of his life when he was not overshadowed by the influences of his late father and assassinated brother, where he found his most rewarding role to be savior of the American poor and oppressed.
Summary of Scholarship

• The reviews drive the summary of scholarship
• A good introductory paragraph that sets out the variety of historical arguments about your figure
• Do not make it a book report (this book argues this, this book argues, etc.)
• Must have a central theme and how resources are related/different
Many historians have studied the World War II American Home Front. Although it is a multi-faceted topic, recently historians seem to be focusing their research on two particular questions. Respected scholars such as D’Ann Campbell, Karen Anderson, Roger Daniels, Eric Foner, and Neil Wynn have studied the war’s effects on minorities. Scholars seem to agree that on the Home Front, the war affected the lives and roles of women, African-Americans, and Japanese Americans in different ways. Other historians have focused on a separate question. The works of Michael Mark and Gerd Horton both discussed the methods by which the U.S. government mobilized Americans on the Home Front to help in the war effort.
Summary Example: Introduction

The New Deal during Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s first term from 1933-1937 has interested many historians. Passed by FDR in reaction to the economic crash of the Great Depression and the diminished American confidence, the New Deal was a series of laws, which heightened governmental, regulatory activity within the economy and our society. As a result, the New Deal is often referred to as one of the most liberal deals in United States history, and it a source of great interest to many historians for its novelty, as it was first extremely liberal movement in US History. Renowned historians such as Paul Conkin, Barry Cushman, Basil Rauch, Kenneth Davis, and William Leuchtenberg would argue that three essential subjects to consider when analyzing the New Deal would be personal FDR’s influence upon the New Deal, the supreme courts influence upon the success and failure of New Deal policy, and any major shifts in political policy and philosophy of the US caused by the New Deal. Overall, historians explore the ideas of the New Deal’s breakage with the past.