Final Project Assignment

The purpose of the final project is to allow you to explore in greater depth some aspect of science in the modern world. Projects may be prepared individually or in groups of two or three. (Two or three students can combine their efforts by considering a larger topic than any one of them could take on alone, or by investigating a topic from a number of different perspectives. Regardless of the division of labor in the presentation, each annotated bibliography must be written independently, rely on distinct references, and stand on its own merits). **All projects must be approved no later than April 9.** I strongly encourage you to clear your projects before that date. Your project may take any of a number of forms, provided that
- It concerns some aspect of science since 1900.
- You consult credible sources beyond those assigned on the syllabus.
- You apply critical analysis to those sources.

You might consider one of the following approaches, but I’m more than happy to discuss creative alternatives:

**Research Update:**
A research update is a review of recent coverage of some field or issue. You might investigate some hot new area of research that is being pursued by scientists somewhere, or the political, ethical, or cultural impact of a recent development in science.
- Your update must go beyond mere reporting of recent events and apply some critical analysis to what you have looked at.
- Though you might want to consult popular sources, you must consult scholarly sources as well.

**A Review Essay:**
A review essay is essentially a comparative review of two or more books on a similar subject. A critical book review has two essential parts:
- A discussion of the themes the book addresses, the perspective the author examines, the intended audience, and the argument that is advanced.
- An analysis of how successful the argument is, how well the author conveys information and ideas, and an assessment of the book’s strengths and weaknesses.
Your opinions on these matters need not be definitive, but they must reflect a critical engagement with the books.

**Essays on Critical Issues:**
You may write an essay examining any of the issues that we have raised this semester, or issues that have not come up, including (but certainly not limited to):
- Trends in science funding (Legionnaires disease vs. AIDS, Environmental Science vs. Medical Research, etc.)
- Demographic trends in science (women in science, minorities in science, etc.)
- Science literacy (Public understanding of science, public attitudes towards science, science education, etc.)
- Issues in science research based on any humanistic or scientific perspective on science.
- Trends in science journalism (What is *The New York Times* editorial slant when it is covering space research?, e.g.).
**Critical Guide to Web Sources:**
A guide to web sources can be thought of as an annotated “webliography.” In most cases, it will make sense to prepare the annotated bibliography as a web document:

- At the top of your page, you should provide a narrative description of the topic you are investigating. This description should address the historical background and the conceptual basis of the topic.
- You should examine and assess several web pages that are relevant to the topic. For each site, you should provide the title, author, URL, and date of creation, as well as a critical assessment of that site. (See my “Guide to Using the Web Wisely,” at http://faculty.fullerton.edu/cmcconnell/WebGuide.html for advice).
- You should then provide a summary of your estimation of the utility of these sources collectively.
- For a sample webliography, see “Science and Technology Resources on the Internet,” at http://www.library.ucsb.edu/istl/99-winter/internet.html

**Presentation Tips**

**Basic Oral Communication:**
Remember to make eye contact, speak slowly and conversationally (that is, do not read from a prepared script), and project as though you’re speaking to the person farthest away from you.

**The Purpose of Your Presentation:**
1.) This is an opportunity to teach your classmates about something you’ve learned.
2.) This is an opportunity to refine your public presentation skills.
3.) This is an opportunity to seek feedback and advice for writing your essay.

I’ll be grading you based on 1 & 2, but you should leave time for 3 as well.
- If you feel that your essay is nearly complete, you might spend more time talking (no more than 8 minutes).
- If you feel that you need a lot of feedback and advice, you might spend less time talking (no less than 6 minutes).

**Advice on Structuring Your Presentation:**
Good oral presentations have a clear beginning, middle, and end. The beginning should introduce the topic, perhaps relate it to other themes we have talked about this semester, and provide appropriate context for the middle. In the middle, you should strive to teach us something about your topic. We should be able to clearly see evidence that you have consulted outside material, and we should have a clear notion of what you think about that material. The end should serve both to close the presentation and invite questions or comments.

**The Annotated Bibliography**

While your presentation should focus on presenting your topic as a coherent body of information, the bibliography that you submit should present each of your sources and discuss the sorts of things that are covered by them, whatever biases you see in them, and a sense of whether you found them particularly helpful or disappointing. Each source should be cited properly. The bibliography should be typed, double-spaced, in a reasonable font, with one-inch margins.
The Final Essay

The exact form of your final essay will be dictated by the approach you take. In general, you should expect to produce between 5 and 7 pages of clear prose (typed, double-spaced, in a reasonable font, with one-inch margins). Strive for a natural voice—not too stiff and scholastic, but not too colloquial or conversational.

You may turn in your essay any time after you give your presentation as long as I receive it no later than 5 p.m. on May 28 (Wednesday). If you cannot hand the paper to me in person, deliver it to the Liberal Studies Office, EC-622. Please do not slide papers under my office door.

Assessment

The entire final project counts for 30 percent of your final grade. The distribution of points available will be as follows:

- 5 points for the Final Project Approval Form (must be complete and submitted on time).
- 10 points for the Oral Presentation.
- 5 points for the Annotated Bibliography (must be complete and submitted on time).
- 10 points for the Final Essay.
304 Final Project Approval:

**Required** by April 9:

Name: _________________________________

Topic: _________________________________

Approach: ______________________________

Attach a preliminary bibliography (and a photocopy of one source*).

**Optional:**

Who are you working with? ____________________________

How will you divide the topic? __________________________

Preferred Dates for Presentation**:

5/5  5/7  5/9  5/12  5/14  5/16  5/19  5/21

____  ____  ____  ____  ____  ____  ____  ____

* The source must either be:

• A featured story in one of the publications (newspapers excluded) listed under “Sources for Science News” on the course web site.

• Presented to me before April 2.

** Please rank these 8 dates from 1 (most preferable) to 8 (least preferable). If you know in advance that you cannot come to class on one of these dates, mark it with an X and provide a short reason for your absence in the space below: