Losers: Power and History in the Age of Revolution

History 400 Junior Seminar, Spring Term, 2015

Thursdays, 1:30-4:20 p.m., 137 Dickinson Hall

Alec Dun
137 Dickinson Hall
jamesdun@princeton.edu

For office hour appointments, use https://wass.princeton.edu/pages/login.page.php ("James Dun’s Calendar").

Office hours are Thursdays, 10-12PM and by appointment
# Table of Contents

SYLLABUS OVERVIEW ......................................................................................................................... 2
REQUIREMENTS & EVALUATIONS ........................................................................................................ 3
MATERIALS ............................................................................................................................................... 4
WEEKLY SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS ............................................................................................... 5
Department of History Grading Practices: Thesis, Papers, and Exams .................................................. 10
ASSIGNMENTS ........................................................................................................................................ 11
  Essay: Theses, Documents, and Arguments – Defining and Redefining Your Project ....................... 11
WIRITING THE HISTORY JUNIOR PAPER ............................................................................................. 13
  Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 13
  What is a JP? ....................................................................................................................................... 13
  Managing the JP Project ...................................................................................................................... 15
  Stages of the JP Project ....................................................................................................................... 16
  Organization and Structure (the introduction) ..................................................................................... 21
  Tips for Draft Readers ......................................................................................................................... 21
  Research Skills and Tools .................................................................................................................... 23
APPENDICES .......................................................................................................................................... 30
  A. Putting a Research Project into Your Schedule ........................................................................... 30
  B. Editing an Introduction ................................................................................................................... 32
  C. Sample Citations .............................................................................................................................. 36
  D. “Woodrow Wilson and the Princeton Preceptorial” ....................................................................... 46
  E. Supplementary Readings .................................................................................................................. 49
SYLLABUS OVERVIEW

This seminar has two goals. The first is for students to gain an understanding of some of the ways that historians have confronted the problem of relative power and the materials of history. In most eras, the “stuff” of history—the material that has endured, remained extant, and been saved—has been generated by elites and therefore reflects that group’s interests, agendas, biases, and blindspots. This seminar is devoted to exploring ways to recover the stories of peoples on the wrong side of this problem. We will engage in history “from below.”

Our setting for this first endeavor will be the Atlantic world (meaning the Americas, Caribbean, West Africa, and Western Europe) over the “age of revolutions” that remade that world between the 1760s and 1820s. The American, French, Haitian, and Latin American Revolutions altered this landscape in important ways, but they also allowed some hierarchies to hold fast while others were shaken. By looking at the experiences of “marginal” groups such as sailors, African and Afro-creole slaves, women, Amerindians, and the poor, we will attempt to gauge what kinds of change were meaningful, and for whom.

The diverse array of primary and secondary sources that we will contend with in doing this work will concurrently help advance the seminar’s second—and equally important—goal: To provide a venue for students to develop methodological skills that will aid them in preparing their Junior Paper. To this end, we will often emphasize the practice of history as we discuss the course topic. “Practice,” here, includes both intellectual and practical components. We will talk about ways to analyze arguments, interpret documents and texts, and use evidence. We will also learn ways to maximize Firestone’s vast resources. Given the needs of the Junior Paper, considerable time will be spent learning ways to discover and develop viable topics, to locate relevant primary and secondary materials, and to organize, conceptualize, write, and re-write an effective research paper.
REQUIREMENTS & EVALUATIONS

Students will receive two grades for the course, one evaluating the assignments completed as part of the seminar and one for the final Junior Paper.

The Seminar

This is a seminar. Weekly preparation and in-class participation are vital components of the learning that will be taking place. In addition to the assigned reading, students will perform short, focused research assignments for each of the first five weeks of the course. These assignments build on the topic at hand, and are designed to give students practice with the different tools, methods, and sources that historians use. The written portion of these assignments (typically 1-2 pages in length) will be due the morning before the seminar meets each week.

During the week after break, students will present primary source materials from their research. A short essay treating those sources will be due the day after the presentation. (This writing usually serves as a jump start for the JP itself.)

Students are also expected to prepare materials and engage in workshops having to do with the research and writing processes. These moments include:

- **Junior Paper Prospectus & Working Bibliography**
  Due **Wednesday, March 25**; workshop during the following class.

- **Rough Draft Comments**
  A draft of the JP is due **April 20** (but will not be graded). Pairs of students will comment on each other’s drafts in a short reaction paper due the date of the draft-writer’s presentation (below).

- **Presentation & Draft Workshop**
  Over the final two weeks of the course, students will present their project’s thesis and argument. Led by their commentator, the class will collectively engage with each project.

The seminar’s components are weighted as follows:

- in-class participation (including workshops): 30%
- weekly research assignments: 10% each
- document presentation: 5%
- document essay: 15%

Junior Paper

The final Junior Paper is due on **Tuesday, May 5 at 3 PM**, in the undergraduate history office (to **Ms. Etta Recke**). The JP will be judged on the merits of its argument, evidence, and presentation, as outlined in the History Department’s grading rubric (attached).
MATERIALS

The following books are available for purchase:


NB. Reading assignments in texts other than these (marked ‘*’) can be accessed in Firestone and/or online. Finding them is part of the training provided by the course.
1. February 5 – Problem(s)


“Writing the History Junior Paper,” (part of this syllabus)

For next time:
- Meet with me to begin thinking about potential JP topics and to go over your semester schedule
- Locate and perform a close read of a document in the writings of another prominent figure in order to pursue one of our queries from class. [c. 500-750 words, due Feb. 12, 9am]

2. February 12 – The Period.1: The American Revolution from above, below, and against the grain

Klooster, “Empires at War” and “Civil War in the British Empire: The American Revolution,” 1-44, with notes at 175-189.


Pybus, Forward (Ira Berlin), Prologue, “Liberty or Death,” “Crossing over to Freedom’s Shore,” “Marching to Catastrophe,” “Fleeing the Founding Fathers,” and “Starving on the Streets of London,” ix-87, with notes at 221-239.

For next time:
- Set up meetings with me, and potentially Elizabeth Bennett, to narrow JP topics.
• Generate a thesis about servants or slaves that ran away during our period and support it with evidence (use proper citations). [c.750-1000 words]

3. February 19 – The Period.2: The French Revolution as an Atlantic event

NB. Part of this class will take place in the microfilm room of Firestone.


For next time:

• Meet with me to further narrow topics (focus on body of evidence that you will use).

• Find evidence of a celebration or meeting in which a group of people came together. What took place? Who was in the crowd? What brought them together? What does it mean? How might we use it as further evidence? [c. 500 words]

4. February 26 – The Period.3: The Haitian Revolution as radical history

NB. Part of this class will take place at the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections in Firestone Library.


Trouillot, “The Three Faces of Sans Souci” and “An Unthinkable History,” 31-107, with notes at 162-176.

For next time:
• Meet with me with ideas and examples for a working bibliography.
• Locate a secondary source that is germane to your developing research topic. Explain its relevance, provide its argument, and discuss its methodological approach. [c. 750 words]

5. March 5 – “Lower Sorts”: structures of control

NB. Part of this class will take place in the offices of the Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Green Hall.

Pybus, “Bound for Australia’s Fatal Shore,” “Relief for London’s Black Poor,” and “Recalcitrant Convicts in New South Wales,” 89-137, with notes at 239-244.


For next time:
• Meet with me with sample pieces of evidence that you think your project will use.
• Describe a prosaic event (or a facet of daily life) in a particular time and place. If possible, examine it from more than one perspective. [c. 500 words]


NB. Part of this class will take place at the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections in Firestone Library.


**NB. Prospectus and working bibliography due Wednesday, March 25.**

**SPRING BREAK (MARCH 14-22)**

7. March 26 – Race, Ideology, and Revolution


Pybus “The Province of Freedom in Sierra Leone,” “Promises Unfulfilled in Sierra Leone,” “In Bondage to This Tyrannous Crew,” and Epilogue, 139-157, 169-205, with notes at 244-252.

*For next time:*
  * Revise prospectus.
  * Document presentation due next class. (Essay due day following)*

8. April 2 – Project Management I: prospectus & document workshops

Document Workshop: read pre-circulated materials.

9. April 9 (no class, individual meetings this week)

*For next time:*
  * Post draft introduction and rough outline.*
10. April 16 – Project Management II: structuring arguments, introductions

Introduction Workshop: read pre-circulated materials.

\textit{NB. JP Draft due Monday, April 20.}

\textit{NB. Over the next two weeks of class, students will present their research. Partners will prepare reaction papers and comments on their partner’s drafts, due the date of their partner’s presentation.}

11. April 23 – Project Management III: editing

Presentations and Draft Workshop: read pre-circulated JP drafts.

12. April 30 – Project Management III (continued)

Presentations and Draft Workshop: read pre-circulated JP drafts.
Department of History Grading Practices: Thesis, Papers, and Exams

An A or A- thesis, paper, or exam is one that is good enough to be read aloud in a class. It is clearly written and well-organized. It demonstrates that the writer has conducted a close and critical reading of texts, grappled with the issues raised in the course, synthesized the readings, discussions, and lectures, and formulated a perceptive, compelling, independent argument. The argument shows intellectual originality and creativity, is sensitive to historical context, is supported by a well-chosen variety of specific examples, and, in the case of a research paper, is built on a critical reading of primary material.

A B+ or B thesis, paper, or exam demonstrates many aspects of A-level work but falls short of it in either the organization and clarity of its writing, the formulation and presentation of its argument, or the quality of research. Some papers or exams in this category are solid works containing flashes of insight into many of the issues raised in the course. Others give evidence of independent thought, but the argument is not presented clearly or convincingly.

A B- thesis, paper, or exam demonstrates a command of course or research material and understanding of historical context but provides a less than thorough defense of the writer's independent argument because of weaknesses in writing, argument, organization, or use of evidence.

A C+, C, or C- thesis, paper, or exam offers little more than a mere summary of ideas and information covered in the course, is insensitive to historical context, does not respond to the assignment adequately, suffers from frequent factual errors, unclear writing, poor organization, or inadequate primary research, or presents some combination of these problems.

Whereas the grading standards for written work between A and C- are concerned with the presentation of argument and evidence, a paper or exam that belongs to the D or F categories demonstrates inadequate command of course material.

A D thesis, paper, or exam demonstrates serious deficiencies or severe flaws in the student's command of course or research material.

An F thesis, paper, or exam demonstrates no competence in the course or research materials. It indicates a student's neglect or lack of effort in the course.

Precepts and Seminar

A student who receives an A for participation in discussion in precepts or seminars typically comes to every class with questions about the readings in mind. An 'A' discussant engages others about ideas, respects the opinions of others, and consistently elevates the level of discussion.

A student who receives a B for participation in discussion in precepts or seminars typically does not always come to class with questions about the readings in mind. A 'B' discussant waits passively for others to raise interesting issues. Some discussants in this category, while courteous and articulate, do not adequately listen to other participants or relate their comments to the direction of the conversation.

A student who receives a C for discussion in precepts or seminars attends regularly but typically is an infrequent or unwilling participant in discussion.

A student who fails to attend precepts or seminars regularly and adequately prepared for discussion risks the grade of D or F.
ASSIGNMENTS

One Hundred Pounds Reward.

RAN AWAY from the subscriber, living in Reading, Bucks County, on the night of the fifteenth of November last, a Negro man named JACK, about twenty-four years of age, five feet nine inches high, has a remarkable swagger in his walk, very complaisant, plays on the violin, speaks the French and English languages well, and can read and write. Had on and took with him, a silver hilted small sword, scarlet coat with a white cape, a green dito with a red cape, white jacket and breeches, new shoes and buckles. He ran away from his master in Maryland last summer, was taken up in Philadelphia, and put in the Work-house. Whoever will take up and secure said servant so that his master may have him again, shall receive the above reward and reasonable charges, paid by MARK BIRD.

Essay: Theses, Documents, and Arguments – Defining and Redefining Your Project

In this assignment you are to employ materials that you have found useful to your own burgeoning research project.

Select a series of documents from your research. In making your choice, think about their relationship to your wider project, their capacity to illustrate your research question, and the point you hope to make from them. (Think, too, about how you will present them in class, which is also part of this assignment.)

Part One

Write an essay that, after briefly introducing and contextualizing your project, provides a close reading of one of your documents (our primary document bookmark questions will be handy here). Be sure to demonstrate your capacity to take the author/creator’s production outside of their specific intents. Feel free to speculate and be suggestive. In short, wring your document out for every possible drop of use you might have for it.

Next, select one particular issue that the documents raise that will be important to your wider project and develop their implications for that issue. Here, you should draw on and explain the relevant historiographic debates you have encountered as you have read secondary materials from our coursework and as you have developed your project.

The final essay should be no more than 4 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font, and have standard margins. It will be due on the day after the class in which you present your findings (see below).
Part Two

The second portion of the assignment is to present your findings in class. Here, you will present on the series of documents that you have selected. (Note, this needn’t, and shouldn’t, be all of the sources you are using. Pick an array that lets us see your thinking and how you intend to use evidence.)

This presentation is an opportunity to benefit from the collective brain-power of the group. You should plan to speak for approximately five minutes or so. In your remarks, you should introduce and situate your documents, both in the context of your project and in their larger historical context. You then should run through your interpretation and conclusions, being sure to demonstrate your capacity to perform a close reading of the documents at hand as sources of evidence. This may well take the form of an expansion of your essay. It may also, however, be far more tentative and suggestive. Since the goal of this assignment is to spark a discussion about your project with the group, asking open-ended questions is encouraged. So too is conceiving of means by which to engage the rest of the class. At a minimum, you should bring in copies of some of the relevant documents (and perhaps other materials) for people to look at and respond to.

You will be evaluated on the content and polish of your presentation and its capacity to engender discussion. In addition to receiving a written response from me (in the form of my comments on your essay) each presenter will be given the notes taken by class members during the presentation. Those notes will suggest how successful you were in getting your points across, as well as ideas for alternative or further use of your document with regard to your larger project.
WRITING THE HISTORY JUNIOR PAPER

Introduction

Welcome to the History Department! We hope (and believe) that joining us will be something you’ll look back on as one of your best decisions at Princeton. Regardless, choosing us as your intellectual home will have an immense impact on your academic life over the next two years.

The writings in this pamphlet are designed to help you navigate the first phase of your career as a History major, the fall JP. Before getting into that, however, you should know more generally about the task you are about to undertake. You are about to begin to produce history. Some people find this to be a strange concept; they think of history as something one learns, and conceive of the process as a somewhat passive endeavor. Whether reading a book, listening to a lecture, or watching a film, the idea is one in which information moves from one place (the book’s pages, professor’s head, or movie’s celluloid) to another (the reader/auditor/audience). This intellectual sensibility makes learning history a process where students are receptors and receptacles—endpoints of information, to be evaluated by exams or papers through which the quantity and accuracy of the data moved can be measured.

Historians think this is a load of hooey.

As someone who has taken a number of courses in the Department, you’re no doubt already aware of the fact. History at Princeton, and elsewhere (to include many of your high schools) is an active pursuit. Yes, you internalize information concerning other periods and places, but doing so has less to do with the act of acquisition than it does with what you do with that information. What you “know” has as much to do with you—who you are, what you’re interested in, and why you’re interested in it in the first place—as it does with the nuts and bolts of a particular story. What you understand as “fact” has to do with your assumptions about what the relevant “story” at hand is. The “evidence” that exists for you to look at in order to determine those “facts” has to do with previous generations’ answer to the same question. The innate subjectivity of the entire endeavor is what drives the history car, moving those who do it around (not across) a terrain of historiography.

At this point in conversations about this aspect of history—as we explain its active nature to ourselves and each other—aphorisms about history involving multiple “interpretations” and being “an argument without end” often float around. Beginning with the fall Junior Paper, you’ve jumped into the history car and the rubber hits the road. The aphorisms—like all such sayings—have real truths within them; it is your great fortune to get to live them out, first during this term, and then over the next year and a half. The habits of mind that doing so generates—skepticism, being a critical thinker, clarity of expression, playfulness with ideas, and many more—we hope will last you a lifetime. Start your engines and bon voyage.

What is a JP?

That’s a good and important question, so we’ll answer it in some depth. Here are three answers, each emphasizing a different aspect and introducing some relevant vocabulary along the way.

Conceptually speaking, a JP is a research paper. It addresses a historical problem by drawing conclusions from primary sources. That problem is in part defined by what previous historians have written about the same or a related problem (secondary sources). As such, the paper interacts with the collected literature around the problem it addresses—in aggregate is known as historiography.
In terms of process, a JP is the result of a research project. The final paper demonstrates a student’s capacity to pose a question, articulate an answer, and prove/argue that answer after conducting a course of research. In the fall, students are introduced to the tools, practices, and methods that they will employ independently during the spring (and then again, over the senior year, in completing the thesis).

Physically speaking, a JP is a piece of writing that should be approximately 25-35 pages, that uses citations, and that follows the norms of historical writing. This page length is somewhat broad, but it is not arbitrary. It would be very difficult to successfully accomplish the demands suggested by the two aspects above in fewer than 25 pages; similarly, JPs that stray near 40 pages often do so because they are rambling and unfocused and therefore don’t successfully meet those demands either.

Here are some more answers, albeit posed in the negative.

A JP is not:

a. A historiographic essay. Essays that do not use primary sources, or which do not use them sufficiently, are not acceptable.

b. Unrelated to the broad theme that unifies the H400 seminar.

c. A brand-new, ground-breaking, field-changing, never-done-before project (necessarily). While this would be great, to require a completely original project is not realistic. That said, a JP is unique, and may even be original. Here’s where the history car will hopefully begin to seem less like a jalopy and more like a luxury SUV. Even when looking at issues and materials that others have seen before, the questions and perspective you will bring to your topic will be yours alone.

Grading

Of course, the Department must measure your success in meeting these demands through the medium of a grade. As you know, each concentrator receives two grades after the fall term, one evaluating their performance in the seminar and the other evaluating the JP. While each seminar leader determines her/his course grade differently, the JP (and all written work submitted to the Department) is judged by the following rubric (adapted from the Department’s website at http://www.princeton.edu/history/undergraduate/grading_practices/):

An A or A minus Junior Paper is one that is good enough to be read aloud before the Department. It is clearly written and well-organized. It demonstrates that the writer has conducted a close and critical reading of the relevant texts, grappled with the issues raised in the course, synthesized the readings, discussions, and lectures, and formulated a perceptive, compelling, independent argument. The argument shows intellectual originality and creativity, is sensitive to historical context, is supported by a well-chosen variety of specific examples, and is built on a critical reading of primary material.

A B plus or B Junior Paper demonstrates many aspects of A-level work but falls short of it in either the organization or clarity of its writing, the formulation and presentation of its argument, or the quality of research. Some papers in this category are solid works containing flashes of insight. Others give evidence of independent thought, but the argument is not presented clearly or convincingly.

A B minus Junior Paper demonstrates a command of course and research material and understanding of historical context, but provides a less than thorough defense of the writer’s argument because of weaknesses in writing, argument, organization, or use of evidence.
A **C plus, C**, or **C minus** Junior Paper offers little more than a summary of ideas and information having to do with the topic, is insensitive to historical context, suffers from frequent factual or compositional errors, is written in an unclear manner, or is poorly organized (or some combination of these problems). It often demonstrates an inadequate amount of primary research.

Whereas the grading standards for written work between **A** and **C minus** are concerned with the presentation of argument and evidence, a Junior Paper that belongs to the **D** or **F** categories demonstrates inadequate command of course material.

A **D** Junior Paper demonstrates serious deficiencies or severe flaws in the student’s command of course or research material.

A Junior Paper receiving an **F** demonstrates no competence in the course or research materials. It indicates a student’s neglect of the research process as taught in the Junior Seminar.

**Managing the JP Project**

Writing a JP is a big job and will make up a significant portion of the academic work you do this semester (and, then again in the spring as well). That said, thousands of students have done this same work before you; 99% of you can and will get it done. The question is, how do you want to the process to go? What do you want to take away from it? This section is designed to get you to confront the demands that a research project such as the JP presents so that you can make informed decisions about how to go about meeting them.

Take a moment to review the section “What is a JP?” above. As you can tell, the History Department considers the Junior Paper to be only the endpoint of a term-long process. Without making it all seem too ominous and threatening, the essay itself represents the tip of an iceberg of thinking, reading, and writing. The nature of the project makes it difficult to successfully complete the work in a short and concentrated amount of time. Given the busy lives that Princeton students lead, however, this is the path that some JP writers take, especially during the fall term, when winter break seems to offer a chance to catch up.

Here’s the case for taking a steady, regular approach instead.

Keeping in the theme of ice, imagine the JP as a delicious snow cone that you hand to the Department to taste and delight in at the end of the term. Perhaps you want to imagine the snow cone being eaten by all of the faculty members in the Department, or maybe that your adviser really really enjoys frozen treats, in either case, you need to produce a sizeable snow cone. The Department expects a proper paper holder, so as not to get its collective hands sticky (would ruin everyone’s computers), a creative and unique flavoring and, of course, lots of ice shavings. Bringing all of these things together will take a certain amount of time.

Now, a snow cone can lack some of these things and still be eaten by the Department. Your holder can be thin or ragged. Your flavoring can be insipid or sour. The shavings, however, are the **sine qua non**; without them there is no snow in the cone. Let’s imagine that Firestone is a great big freezer, full of chilled vessels from which you can chip out chunks of ice. Doing so takes a while, however, and not all of the ice you get will be easy to shave. Some will seem better for a different dessert, or turn out to be something other than frozen water. Furthermore, some of the ice will come out in clunky slabs that you’ll need to examine closely to find the fissures that you want to whack at to make them more manageable. Doing all of this takes time.
It isn’t insurmountable in the least, however. You’ve got an ice pick and will learn where to go in the freezer. You can see that regular swinging of your pick will let you bring good chunks of ice out, which you can then sift through and shave, eventually filling your cone and creating your flavor. You can even see that, at certain times, you can leave the freezer for a while. You may need to do more intensive whacking and spend some long nights in the cold later, but you can recoup some lost time. And, of course, you might luck out. You might go into the freezer, turn a forgotten corner and stumble over a lovely pile of neatly stacked ice cubes, ready for the shaving. This, however, is a distant possibility. If you reduce your time in the freezer too much, in 99 cases out of 100, you will simply have less ice to shave, and therefore a smaller snow cone. No amount of flavoring can change the fact (indeed, it might melt what ice you do have). No matter how sturdy and artful your holder is, there won’t be quite enough of the treat to taste and fully critique.

As you’ve no doubt gleaned, the shavings are your evidence, shaved off of the primary and secondary source ice-slabs that you dislodge during your research. The flavoring is the argument you make using that evidence, and your holder is the composition—the structure, organization, and presentation—of that argument. Past experience shows that steady chipping is the best course.

But how to plan time to do a task that your only just learning to do? Fair point. This is the reason the Department guides you through the process the first time in the Junior Seminars. As you learn the stages of a research project, take some time to reflect on how (and how well) you yourself take to each component. What do you enjoy doing? What do you need to force yourself to keep at? What do you find easy? What took more time than you thought it would? What did you later wish you’d spent more, or less, time on? Thinking about these things will let you improve and refine your research and writing process for your second semester JP, and ultimately your senior thesis. Ultimately, as with historical thinking in general, that process is specific to you. Learning how you do work will help you learn how to do it better.

To act on this advice, see Appendix A, below.

**Stages of the JP Project**

There are probably as many different ways to conduct a research project as there are historians. Still, there are certain general steps that most take as they do their work. This section will chart a few of those basic steps, offering advice along the way.

**A. Finding a Topic: problems, questions, and problematic questions**

Finding a topic is the hardest task of all of the work that goes into a research project and there is no secret way to accomplish it. The only certain advice is negative: don’t ignore the difficulty and assume something will come up. Be proactive and relentless. Spend time and energy early on in the term thinking, talking, and writing about it. Keep a place where you jot down possible ideas and issues that occur to you. Take your ideas to your adviser and to the history librarian. The work you do at this end of the project will pay big dividends at the end.

**TIP:** It is a great idea to keep a journal of your various JP activities. Get in the habit of noting down the date and activity you are doing every time you sit down to work on the project; keep track of sources you’d like to track down, notes about primary sources, and, especially, ideas about your argument that occur to you as you do your research. Returning to this record as you begin to draft your final essay can help you tie together your ideas from across the term.
A research topic is essentially a historical question—a query that can be addressed through an analysis of some aspects of the past. Ultimately, the answer to your question will be your thesis—that central statement of your JP’s argument. Just as you can’t know at the beginning of your project what your final answer will be, so too is it true that you won’t know your final question—your actual topic—until near the end of the process. Finding a topic, therefore, takes place in stages. At the start, you are simply looking for something that interests you—an issue, event, episode, or phenomenon that strikes you as being worthy of investigation, study, and analysis. Let’s call the query you’re thinking about at this end of the process the problem that you’re developing.

Where to turn for problems with promise? Here are some possible sources of inspiration:

a. **Books!** Keep an eye out for questions the historians you read are asking, as well as the materials they are using to answer them. Similarly, think back to readings from previous history (and possibly sociology, economics, anthropology) courses that you especially liked or found provocative. How might the issues they raised apply to the general topic of your seminar? To your burgeoning topical interests?

b. **Historiography.** Think about the debates that historians have engaged in over the years. How might bringing some new body of evidence allow you to intervene? There are some pitfalls here, however. Simply re-proving one side or a debate or another will probably not produce a finely argued thesis. Showing how one scholar’s ideas translate (or don’t) to a different locale or time period might be OK, but be ready to fully test those ideas (especially if they are old) using the range of approaches your seminar covers over the term. Also, historiography-generated topics run the risk of producing research that knows what it wants to find before it finds it and essays that prove what they set out to prove regardless of alternative or inconvenient bits of evidence. Be ready to be flexible as you delve into the sources and continually test your ideas as you read. Finally, the very first question you should ask yourself about a topic that you’re developing using secondary sources’ arguments is, “what primary sources that I can find here in Princeton can I use to get at this question?” Don’t formulate a wonderful topic about slave culture in Martinique unless you’re sure you can get at the sources you’ll need to explore it.

c. **Primary Source Collections.** That last caveat suggests another approach altogether to the start of your project: locate a body of sources and see what they can tell you. With your seminar topic in mind (and using the footnotes and bibliographies of your readings), think about what materials Firestone (or other University libraries) have and what can they get. While a JP can’t simply be a description of an archive, it can be an essay in which you place portions of that evidence in historical context and generate a thesis along the way.

d. **Helpers;** primarily, but not only, your adviser. Visit your adviser early and often to get advice about ideas, books, and articles. Have conversations with other people in the seminar. Even if you only have a (or a few) fuzzy ideas about a topic, try to work it into discussions in class. Talk to grad students (your adviser and other faculty can almost certainly point you towards some that work in the fields that your seminar deals with). Once you’ve got some ideas, be sure to schedule a meeting with the History Librarian, Dr. Elizabeth Bennett, who you’ll be meeting early on in the term. She can help you navigate Firestone, and may be able to give advice on your topic itself, but actually developing your project is not her job (it is your adviser’s).

Once you’ve settled on a problem—once you’ve decided upon the terrain that you want your project to traverse—your next task is to refine that broad question into something more narrow—to find the particular portion of that terrain you want to explore. There are good and less-good directions to take in
navigating this next step. Any number of questions could stem from the basic problem, for example, that chattel slavery played a role in the American Civil War. Consider the following:

What role did slavery play in the lead-up to the War?

vs.

Did slavery cause the Civil War? or

How did slavery spark the War?

Why didn’t white Southerners understand that slavery would fatally compromise their bid for independence?

vs.

To what extent did slavery undermine the Confederate war effort?

Did Union soldiers fight to end slavery or to preserve the union?

vs.

How did the Union soldiers conceive of their case?

How did slaves and people of color join the Union armies?

vs.

How did slaves’ and people of color’s efforts to join the Union armies reflect an evolving understanding of the nature of the Civil War conflict?

What prevented the South from understanding slavery’s evil?

vs.

How did Southern intellectuals argue that slavery was a positive good?

Questions can be problematic for any number of reasons. They may be conceptually flawed because they set up false dichotomies, involve assumptions that are rooted in modern sensibilities, or merely inquire after facts, rather than making an inquiry about them. Practical problems arise as well, especially during a single-term-long project like the JP. Questions that are too large or for which local sources don’t exist can be excellent in theory, but will not lead to a successful JP.

Problematic questions, however, are still worth asking. Noting the issues that arise around particular inquiries can be part of the refining process. Keep lists of questions, with notes about their problems and potential, as you read around your topic. The question of Union soldiers’ ideas about slavery may be too large for a JP, but “what did whites in rural Maine think about slavery in the years leading up to the Civil War?” may well not be. Look to take the broad knowledge you accrue as you do your reading and apply it as context. Look to discern issues or episodes that have meaning or bear analysis across time. Look to find ways to argue that something is representative, evocative, or illuminative of a wider dynamic or change. In short, look to use the knowledge you are gathering as you read through your primary and secondary sources as fruit for historical analysis.
Finally, you may well have the queasy experience of realizing, well into the project, that books and articles have already been written that address your topic. Don’t despair. In fact, be of good cheer. Finding that someone has worked on your topic before is not a death-knell. Read what the others have said and think about how what you are interested in supports, complicates, deepens, or renders it problematic. Take heart in the fact that history is never “done” (if it were, the faculty would soon be out of a job).

B. Crafting the Draft Prospectus and Working Bibliography

What is a prospectus? A prospectus is an introduction to your project and a written description of your plan to accomplish it. In an ideal world, the information in your prospectus would be congruent with an abstract of your project, albeit one differing in verb tense: whereas the abstract is a pithy summary of your argument, the prospectus is a projection of the path you’ll take to articulate it. Of course, the ideal rarely happens. Plans change and projects mutate as research goes on. Oftentimes we don’t truly know our argument until we’ve finished a draft of the whole. These changes are part of the process and should be expected. The point of a draft prospectus is to get you started on that process.

What goes in a prospectus? Given the above, a prospectus’s components should include a brief layout of the information a reader will need to understand the question you are asking, the approach you are taking, and the relevance of your findings. Again, in an ideal world, this means that the prospectus would approximate a kernel-like picture of your research paper’s introduction, ready to be “popped”/expanded into a lengthier treatment later on.

TIP: To increase your chances, it is a really good idea to periodically/regularly return to your prospectus during the research process in order to recast and restate the project as it develops. Beyond the benefits of getting started writing earlier, this approach also tends to produce more focused and efficient research and secondary reading.

A prospectus should have the following parts:

1. A statement of the project’s thesis. No matter how tentative you feel about it, the prospectus should begin with a direct statement of your project’s thesis. That statement might be a one-line summary of your argument (i.e., “This paper argues that…”). In the draft stage, however, that degree of finality is difficult to formulate. More likely your statement will seek to explain the problem that your paper will address (i.e., Jeopardy!-style, the “thesis question,” to which your thesis will be an answer). This will involve a degree of getting the reader up to speed. Provide a basic schema of the events, issues, and ideas that will be central to your story. Supply basic information about your topic’s time and place that your readers will need to know to understand your question. Furthermore, to evoke that question for the reader, the prospectus should also include

2. a brief overview of the secondary sources your project will engage with. Eventually, when you have a more solid handle on your argument, this will include the ways in which your approach interacts with other related histories—how it reflects, refracts, negates, or reinforces those treatments of the topic that have come before. Right now, however, you simply want to be able to show that there is a literature that touches on the topic and that your paper will interact with prior approaches. These secondary works will be listed in your working bibliography. In the prospectus itself you want to focus on demonstrating which ones you will draw on, and for what. Historiographic arguments, if they come up at all, can be brief and generally stated. (Though, you will want to think about how you may expand upon them in later writings; Indeed, you can even postulate those moves tentatively at this stage if it is helpful.) With your question situated and your ideas postulated, the next part of proposing a plan is to make sure it is feasible. For that you need to include
3. a discussion of the primary sources you will draw on to address and answer your question. This, too, is more than a list of “stuff I’ll look at.” It should include the kinds of information you hope to find in each and the kinds of conclusions you hope to draw. This is sometimes the place where you set your project off, historiographically. Again, at this phase, however, it is sufficient to simply show that materials that can help you address the problem you’ve posed are extant and locally-obtainable —explain that if necessary. Finally, you need to justify the planned project a bit. To establish that, you need to provide some of your

4. tentative conclusions. What would we know, or better understand, if we had the answer to the question you’ve posed? More brusquely, who cares? Why does your project matter? For now, this is highly conjectural and may simply involve tying your project into some of the larger questions we’ve been discussing in class. Eventually, when you have a better sense of the existing literature and of your argument, you’ll flesh this out further. Feel free to be aggressive here, however. Imagine the possibilities of your project at their most full-blown. Sometimes freeing yourself of the realities of actually having to complete the task you’ve set lets you see a better, perhaps even more precise, way to pose your question, solve your problem, and formulate your argument.

What goes in the working bibliography? This is a list of the materials you discuss in general terms in the prospectus. At a minimum, it should be divided into “Primary Sources” and “Secondary Sources.” Thinking about further subdivisions may be helpful (i.e., “sources on slavery in general,” or “Barbadian politics”) as can be 1-2 line abstracts of the approaches taken in some of the works (or even the particular part of the work you will are interested in). They should be formatted properly, and added to as you go along in your research. (Taking care of this will avoid dreaded last-minute bibliography-creating stress.)

C. Doing Research
Predictably, the best source for information about how to find primary and secondary sources is Dr. Elizabeth Bennett, the History Librarian. All JP-writers should schedule meetings with her early in the semester and should spend considerable time going over the various resources she highlights on the Library’s webpages.

D. Writing and Revision
Though it comes last in this overview, writing is not something you should think of as the final step of the process. Rather, you should write all the time. Don’t let a session of JP work go by without putting pen to paper or fingers to keyboard in some form or another. Writing is thinking. Even if you are simply listing questions, hashing out vague ideas, or forecasting possible outlines, take the time to bring the creative part of your brain to bear on the problem your project is confronting. Doing so not only ensures that you are actively engaging with your topic, it also often allows you to refine your question and thereby increase your efficiency as you continue to research. Ultimately, only a fraction of what you write will become part of your final draft. The thinking that draft represents, however, is a direct product of the writing you do along the way.

Historians are writers. Perhaps more than some other disciplines, our product is incomplete without readers. Historians’ books and articles (and JPs) are arguments. Their success is measured by their capacity to convince. Going further, historians must be writers. We are humans; we study humankind. Given the innate subjectivity of the endeavor of looking into the past, the expression of an historical argument reflects the historian’s need to communicate. Just as s/he has attempted to commune with aspects of the past, now s/he must explain that effort to the present. Without that expression, the act is meaningless.

Writing is important. It is also hard. This is probably because it is essential, not merely in the same sense as the first sentence in this paragraph, but also in the sense of the word that evokes the fundamental act of
communication that writing represents. Ideas and images move between human brains by a(n increasing) variety of means. Many, even most, allow for multiple channels. Two people speaking, for example, will gesture, give certain looks, and vary their tone in order to convey their points. They register comprehension in real time and alter their tactics accordingly. Other modes of communication, to greater or lesser extents, have the same features. Writing, on the other hand, is pure. To paraphrase Christopher Wren (who was comparing architecture to music), writing is frozen thought. Using symbols on a page, it attempts to bridge the space between brains. Done right, it is powerful, beautiful, elegant, and uplifting.

Strive for that. Chose the best possible words, especially verbs (challenge yourself to avoid using all forms of “to be,” for example). Don’t rest until your idea is inescapably clear. Read your prose aloud and be a savage critic. If you can’t find clarity (which is also usually elegance and power) that probably means that you aren’t clear in what you want to say. Use your writing, therefore, to gauge the merit of your ideas. If you can’t convince yourself, you won’t be able to convince your reader. For this reason, editing is a vital and continuous process. Thaw your thought and reshape it so its lines are sharper.

Organization and Structure (the introduction)

Just as the words and sentences that you choose are important, so too is the overall shape of the thesis vital. There are only a few hard-and-fast rules here. Some successful JPs use sub-headings, for example, others do not. All, however, have killer introductions.

The introduction should present your thesis. As such, it should introduce the reader to the problem your paper confronts, drawing him/her along by explaining its historical relevance and how your approach fits in with existing historiography on the topic. If appropriate, you may indicate what sources your interpretation will be based on, especially if that is significant to how your argument relates to (or is different than) other historians’. Ideally, you will have returned to your prospectus while doing your research and secondary reading, making the introduction something like an expanded version of the statement you made in that writing.

Of course, JP writers—and historians in general—usually can’t know what their final thesis will be until well into the writing process. Instead, maintain a draft version of your introduction (perhaps your prospectus), recognizing the places in which it is tentative. Keep a continuous look out for evocative episodes or examples that you might use to draw your reader in. Recognize that your final introduction will most likely be the last portion of the final version of your JP that you write, once you’re completely sure of the parameters of your question and the thesis you have developed in answer to it.

There are a number of services provided by the Writing Center which JP-writers have found useful. For a full listing, and to set up appointments, see http://web.princeton.edu/sites/writing/.

Tips for Draft Readers

Having another student read and critique your work is an invaluable step in the writing process. Ultimately, a reader’s response tells you how well you have communicated your ideas. Embrace this opportunity (and expect to provide the same service to others.)

In reading another student’s work, look to be able to comment on the following:

- **thesis**
  Is it clearly stated? (What is it? Can you underline the sentence(s) that convey it most directly?)
  Does the author make a case for its importance/relevance? Is it situated within other literature on
the topic?

• introduction
Given the thesis, how does the author guide the reader into her/his topic? Is this method effective (what might be more so)? Is the question that the thesis is an answer to clear? Can you tell from the opening how the rest of the essay will be put together? How will the author go about proving or arguing his/her thesis?

• structure
How is the argument put together across the essay? Are there headings or subheadings? (Are they effective? Of roughly the same page-length? Can you suggest other, or modified, headings?)

How (and how well) does each section “work”? Is it clear what the author is trying to accomplish? What function does each paragraph perform? (Can you “re-outline” the paper, providing a succinct précis of each paragraph? Can you underline the “point sentence” of each?)

What transitions does the author use to move the reader between sections? (How might they be made more effective?)

• evidence
What sources does the author use to prove her/his position? How well does s/he balance information taken directly from those sources with his/her analysis of them? Are there enough quotations? Too many? Is the author’s voice clear? Lost? Is the reader given sufficient context so as to understand the evidence clearly?

• audience
What information, if any, would be useful in order to make the author’s point more clear or impactful? What could they explain more or better?

• language
How clear is the author’s prose? Where are sentences too long? What are the key words s/he uses? How are they developed? Are the essay’s key ideas sufficiently lucid.
Research Skills and Tools

Analyzing Primary Documents

In many ways, the essential act of the historian is reading, analyzing, and interpreting documentary evidence from the past. There are no great secrets to this effort and, indeed, a good part of the skill of extracting information, ideas, and, ultimately, evidence for an argument, from sources comes simply from being immersed in them. Still, it is helpful to develop certain habits when interacting with texts.

A good first step is to think about the creation/generation/composition of the document. Questions to ask might include

- a. who created it? were they elites? non-elites? were they representative? atypical? how do they stand in relation to the rest of society around them?
- b. when did they create/make/write/compose the document? what else took place around this period? does the date of this document suggest that it represents or reflects a moment of change or shift?
- c. what was the “argument” being made in the document? why was it made at that particular time? what was its intent or goal? was it an attempt to persuade? to convince? were the creators neutral or did they have a bias?
- d. given what you know from the above, how does the document go about relaying its content?

Next, think about the reception of the document.

- a. who was the document’s audience? was it public or private? was it created knowing who would read/see it, or not?
- b. was the document a reaction or response to other documents/arguments/ideas?
- c. how was the document received? does it represent a widely-held perspective? was it influential?

Finally, given the above, how might you use the document?

- a. is it evidence of something? what does it prove happened?
- b. what does it prove that the author would not have been aware of? what benefits, in other words, do we gain from our removed perspective from it?
- c. along the same lines, what presumptions and assumptions of our own do we have to cast aside to understand the document? how are the ideas and concepts of the document’s creator or its audience different than ours?
- d. how can we relate this document to others?
Dear Cousin

Since I have ariv'd home I am informed that a Negroe woman who I had employ'd to keep house for a family I have at a plantation at my marsh where I keep my stock under the direction of a clever sober young man, had taken miss and gone off. I had kept her much out of Charity She had run from Virginia after being Liberated with her husband they seized him and convy'd him off to the south - and was after her - she was a weak woman tho a Notable Manager when she was so minded, but got so full of Methodism that the family could not manage with her - On thinking over the subject and sister Eyre being here I make enquiry about Rachael Love Freedom, she gives me a good account of her except her having been liable to have bastards perhaps a little [streight?] will make her more carefull I thought proper to perpose for her to make tryall in this way for me if she thinks well of it the shallop that this comes by returns directly to my place where she is wanted, and if she does not like to continue there the Oyster boats comes to this place from Chingoteagne, where she may return if its her choice but if she behaves well here, she will meet with no place down there so suitable for her I am perswaded there will be rarely more than 3 in family besides her and her Child to cook and wash for and mend, the other business may be spining &c. what she can, she will surely have abundantly better wages than she has there I pityed her when I left her at Mothers but could not see what I could do for her then, thou'l therefore be pleased to prepose the matter to her and if she can get off and is willing I should want her to come on the return of the shallop as I have order'd my manager to [line?] [out?] only for the time till the shallp returns to know if Rachael will come, I shall be glad thu would use thy influence to get her only on tryal, I shant want her to stay if she does not like.

Mother is gone on to Baltimore lefter sister Eyre here, I should have follow'd on after my arival I believe had I thought my self able but have been rather poorly this 2 day, I feel a little like the return of my disorder. we got to monthly meetg at Duck Creek 7th day came home in the evening - and found all tolerable well except our poor little Saml has the every other day Ague looks very pale tho his fitts are not bad. I feel in a very weak situation as to my bodily health, which is productive at times of reflection that my days may not be many more, but as to this I must leave and desire to be resigned and Oh that the work of my day what may be assigned me may be compleated. I feel my self so little and have found that some of my friends have thought I was like [aspireing?] I have been affraid to open little prospects that have at times arisen and particularly on the score of the blacks Attention to that business does appear needful with Congress. I had a clear account when in the City of several vessels fitting out in the harbour at Norfolk for the Coast of Affrica for slaves, to take to the West Indies Islands, which has been continued all along from there, when I was at New York I saw a young man just from that place who told me there was one then he was on board a few days before, I fear stoping to take the work in any part out of the channel the most high may design to carry it in, yet if we can do any thing to save our Country it ought not to be omitted, but I believe it will be made manifest that his ever lasting Arm of Power is that by which this work must be carry'd forward, and which I am apt to think the South states and the West Indies must feel the effects off, perhaps its begun in Hispaniola, I dreampt, the other night that some one was speaking to me about the Negroes being so bad as to break out as they had in the West Indies and were very restless in this Country, I
believe I thought it was a Presbyterian, I reply'd that some people professed a belief that the allmighty fore ordained whatever came to pass, if so it might be that a kind of itching might be suffer'd to run through the blood of their veins so as that they would not be easy but had a craveing for Liberty a little like the Americans had four years back - I told my dream to our Governor and some others next Morning I believe, who lodged at same house, some [same?] reply'd that such a dream from Mifflin might be concluded to be with his Eyes open - I have a heavy load continued on this account application since I have return'd - I have thought some about our Convention as they will be like in forming a constitution to effect our Religious principles whether some care toward them would not be necessary, I thought some consideration with the Meeting for Sufferings might not be improper, but I felt so poor and good for nothing in town I was really afraid to mention the subject - suppose thou was to confer with some and let me know — And something respecting Negroes I have thought of also at least what maybe in futer born - Robert Holliday and Joseph Tatnal are voted into the convention will they Act I can't tell, they did not I believe say sufficient against it before the Election I know those stations will not do for Quakers - I was solicited, told them I could not serve I believe it meets the 23th instant - My love to you all and please to let me hear from thee when thou can, and be assured that nothing is in the way but the prospect of inability or incapacity - Our friend Solomon Gaskill and Companion was at Duck Creek Monthly Meeting - today at Little Creek and are to be at home to night, he appear'd lively and to my satisfaction - farewell for the present - my Love to enquiring friends, can thou find where any of the Maple Shugar is to be had - Affectionately think

[WM]

PS my wife says it was not the Governors remark nor his company - respecting my dream - I now recollect it was [since?] - WM

[marginal note on 1st side:]

there is another [trial?] like to take place to settle the black at [Sierre Leone?] & the blacks that were sent to novascotia are to be sent there to forward the settlement on a new plan
**Particularly Helpful Databases**

Princeton maintains one of the most powerful research libraries in the world. Not only is Firestone constantly buying new books and materials, it is also purchasing rights to the ever-increasing array of research databases put online by various institutions around the globe. As an undergraduate (but not afterwards!) you have access to all of these resources. Here are a number of the most helpful to JP-writers:

1. **Firestone’s Main Catalog**
   
   NB. Printed bibliographies can save you a lot of searching time, if there is one on your topic.
   
   • To find them, try subject searches like “spain bibliography” or “africa history bibliography.”
     (The important thing is to use “bibliography” as a Subject word, not a Keyword.)
   
   • You’ll find a number of useful bibliographies on broad topics in the history study room.

2. **Worldcat (OCLC)**
   
   For primary and secondary sources. You can use the same subject headings as you use when searching the Main Catalog.

3. **Historical Abstracts**

4. **America History & Life**
   
   These databases are the premier bibliographic databases for history. They cover the literature only from 1954 onwards. If you think there was significant scholarly work on your topic before 1954, you will need to use printed bibliographies to find those articles.

5. **NewsBank**
   
   A collection of sites providing access to a variety of North American printed materials from the late-17th to the 20th century. This includes newspapers, broadsides, books, and pamphlets. The various sites are searchable.

6. **Library of Congress**
   
   A treasure trove. Includes some searchable records of the debates in Congress.

7. **The London Gazette online**
   
   Searchable database of an important British newspaper, beginning in 1665.

   
   Over 1000 images of slavery, slaves, and slave labor.

9. **Accessible Archives**
   
   Another good collection of searchable American newspapers.

10. **American Slave Narratives: An Online Anthology**
   
   Samples of the Works Progress Administration’s interviews with people born as slaves in the United States.

11. **The American Founding Era**
   
   A gateway site into digital collections of various prominent American leaders.

12. **Eighteenth Century Collections Online**
   
   British books and pamphlets.
13. *Making of the Modern World Digital Archive*
Books from the 15th to mid-19th century. Primarily oriented around economic and business issues, but many other topics crop up.

14. *Investigate the footnotes and bibliographies in everything you read.*
Old-fashioned footnote chasing is still an excellent research strategy.

**Reading Secondary Sources**
This section offers suggestions about how to maximize your efficiency in extracting the information you need from the large number of secondary sources you will necessarily look at as you develop your research project.

Notice the verbs in the sentence above: “extracting” “look at.” You will certainly read some of the secondary sources that you gather from cover to cover, but you must become increasingly mercenary as you move your project along. Time is of the essence. Once you have become familiar with the basics of your topic (the names, dates, and events that it “sits” in) your quarry in reading changes from *information* to *arguments*. Books and articles are arguments, just as your JP will be. Don’t leave a book until you are confident that you can reduce its stance and ideas to five or six sentences. On the other hand, once you’ve reached that point, unless the work is an essential text in the field, leave the book immediately and move on.

A caveat: books and articles, especially those that treat aspects of your project directly, are also means by which to locate the primary sources previous historians have turned to in order to address their questions. Be ready to scan the footnotes or endnotes to see what they used. In addition to helping you find important collections for review, paying this sort of attention can be useful in shaping your own argument (eg. “X formulated her thesis by looking at private correspondence, but I see something different by including newspapers and magazines from the period”).

What follows are some ideas about how to discern and capture a book or article’s argument. Try them out; modify them as you deem necessary. Above all, *have a plan* when you sit down to read. Resist the temptation to make it a passive endeavor and instead actively engage with the piece at hand. Reading, like writing, is thinking. You need to work hard at it to ensure that your JP will reflect the current scholarship and historiography around your topic.

**TIP:** There are a number of useful bibliographic applications that can help you collect and control data such as this. Zotero is free and is especially useful for research done over the web. Refworks is free for Princeton students. Endnote is available for purchase to Princeton students at a reduced rate.

Pay particular attention to introductions and conclusions. Read those sections first and carefully. Then, spend some time writing down your best guesses as to what the book is about, taking special note of the key words and ideas that the author establishes, develops, and uses to make his or her case. Next, turn to the Table of Contents and take note of the chapter titles. Assuming they are at least somewhat evocative of their content, jot down more ideas about the argument based on them. Think here about the fact that the author’s chapter structure is designed (hopefully) to move the reader through her/his argument. Given what you have decided the argument is to this point, which is the key chapter? You may want to read it closely, especially if the work is close to your topic. Finally, turn to the other chapters and read their introductions and conclusions, perhaps skimming through the middle portions thereafter. Again, it is vital that you take the time to write, in your own words, your ideas about the book’s argument at this stage. By the end, you should have a refined statement as to the book’s contribution. Do this with the key texts in
your field, and you will be ready to write and talk about the historiography surrounding your topic with confidence.

Book reviews can also be useful supplements to this process. Learn to recognize the best scholarly journals in your field. Be sure to maintain a dose of skepticism until you’ve read the book yourself, but by all means take advantage of the experts’ opinions as well. Standing on the shoulders of giants is how history writing works.

**Citing Sources: Formats, Style, and Guidance**

**Zeitgeist**

**Secondary Sources**

As a general rule, it is **almost never a good idea** to directly quote another historian. Here’s why. The job of a JP writer is to formulate her/his own ideas, arguments, and interpretations in the form of a *thesis*. Creating that thesis involves bringing together—*synthesizing*—a number of ideas, issues, and events that previous authors have produced. *Synthesis does not mean putting authors’ arguments in a row; that would be arrangement. Synthesis involves using those arguments—bringing them together in service of your own ideas. This understanding makes direct quotations of secondary materials a bad idea for three reasons:

a. it can muddle and muddy the writer’s synthesis and/or allow them to subvert the intellectual effort required to do that synthesis by replacing another historian’s argument for their own;

b. it can streamline the writer’s ideas inappropriately into a replication of another historian’s argument, which often is in response to a slightly different question than the one you are posing; and

c. on a practical level, it hurts your case by drowning out your voice in favor of those of other historians. This is your JP. Own it.

An exception: sometimes a secondary author provides a pithy, artful, exciting phrase in which s/he evokes the core of his/her argument; quoting this, briefly, can be a very effective way to present the way one is using that argument. Doing so can be useful in setting your argument within the existing historiography on your subject.

So, if direct quotes are not a good idea, what to do? Paraphrase. This, after all, is the essence of synthesis. You are digesting the argument, distilling it into useable form, and presenting it (or the part of it) that is germane to your point. The act of paraphrasing is often intellectually helpful, in fact, since doing it forces you to decide what you think is important about a book/article/writing. An important thing to remember, however, is that **paraphrased material must be properly cited**. This makes sense, given the above. You cite the materials, and the specific parts of them, that you have judged important enough to make part of your response to the issue at hand. Footnotes in effect constitute little maps of your thesis; they are signposts of your thesis. This is why **historians love them so**.

**Primary Sources**

Primary sources can and should be reproduced directly in your text. In the same spirit as the above, however, they should never substitute for a writer’s own thoughts. Rather, they should serve as evidence, supporting materials for his/her ideas. To this end, **only the portion of the text that truly supports your point** should be quoted. Lengthy block quotes are almost never a good idea and should very much
be the exception, rather than the rule. Similarly, “chains” of numerous shorter quotes with few of the
writer’s own words interspersed tend to substitute evidence for analysis. The author’s voice should be
paramount and should not be muted or obfuscated by the evidence. Be sure you are presenting an
argument, not simply supplying transition words. A good rule of thumb is to avoid letting quoted
material end a paragraph.

**Formatting**

Elizabeth Bennett has created links to several helpful sites that discuss and demonstrate the proper way to
format your citations.

A word of advice about proper formatting: treat it like proper grammar. Mistakes in formatting don’t
make your argument wrong or flawed, but they are likely to make it less convincing. Not only can errors
or omissions make the way you’re using your sources opaque, they also can hamper your capacity to
communicate your ideas. Finally, these sorts of mistakes, like those in grammar, usage, or spelling, send
a clear signal that you haven’t spent time editing your work. For many of the History faculty, these sorts
of problems are reflected in the grade your work receives.

**TIP:** To avoid a last-minute scramble to find information for your citations (and bibliography) use proper formatting at every stage of your writing, even your very roughest drafts. All of this can be made easier, too, by using bibliographic programs or a writing journal (see tips above).
APPENDICES

A. Putting a Research Project into Your Schedule

This assignment is designed to help you recognize the demands of the JP and to figure out how to best meet them given the nature of your schedule. As we suggested above, you can’t always be at work in the ice mines. Knowing when you’ll have time and what you should be focusing on will hopefully help you avoid being anxious when you’re not able to work on your research project, and help you concentrate on the project when you do have time.

Get a calendar and mark off the weeks between the start of class and the date the JP is due. It may look like a lot of time. Your task is to see how much of that time you can realistically devote to your JP, and then to discern what specific JP tasks you need to focus on when.

First, note the various breaks over the term, including what you know about your travel schedule, if any. Block off days as necessary.

Next, block off the approximate portions of each day and week that will be taken up with “hard” obligations, such as classes, mandatory meetings and practices, rehearsals, volunteering, etc.

When that is done, chart out everything you can about the demands that will be made on your time over the term. Include all assignments from this and your other classes as well as the time to be taken up with any extracurricular activities you will be doing. What will midterms week be like? When do you have papers or problem sets due? When will you have practices, games, performances, tournaments, travel, parties, and the like? Be realistic, in effect, asking yourself, “when will it be nearly impossible to spend much time on my research project?”

Now, spend some time evaluating your available time. For the days and weeks when you have regular time available, when will you be best able to work? Again, be realistic. If the only time that you will reliably have to do work on your JP is between 4 and 8AM each morning, you will need to step back and reevaluate some of your other commitments. Similarly, scheduling regular all-nighters or never eating lunch—or, indeed, never having any time away from work—are recipes for disasters of a variety of shapes, sizes, and grades.

With this sense of your schedule in hand, let’s consider the timing of the basic tasks involved in completing a JP. The specifics steps involved in each task will be treated in greater depth later on. Here, we’re just thinking about how long each might take and when to aim to have them done by.

1. Finding a Topic. This will involve some thinking on your part, meetings with your seminar leader and the History Librarian, some quick reading through relevant literature, assessing the availability of relevant primary sources, and then some more thinking. Ultimately, you’ll be producing a tentative prospectus statement and a working bibliography.

2. Performing Research. This involves locating and accessing primary and secondary sources that seem germane to your topic, reviewing and reading them (rejecting some as you learn they aren’t relevant, getting new ones as you learn about them and further refine your ideas), taking notes, and doing whatever thematic or synthetic writing that you can. During this stage many students revise their prospectus several times as their thinking becomes clearer. Many also create an annotated bibliography.

3. Crafting a Thesis. Here, you are stepping back from your research to do some hard thinking about what you have learned, what it is you think you would like to argue, and how to use your
primary sources as evidence in that argument. Besides this thinking, and the various bits of further research that it may require, this involves charting out your essay, drafting and introduction and outline, and creating a first draft.

4. *Revising and Editing*. This is the vital last step, in which you evaluate (alone and/or in a group; hopefully also with your adviser) how well your evidence supports your argument, how clearly you have presented your ideas, and what steps you can take to remedy any deficiencies that you discern.

Given these needs, when do you feel you should aim to have the various portions completed? How can you best organize and plan your term so as to have sufficient time? When, in other words, are the periods of sunshine in which you are going to make JP hay? (This is nicer than the iceberg idea, or even the snow cone.)
B. Editing an Introduction

Suggest changes to make the following paragraphs more forceful and clear. Be ready to justify your suggestions.

Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of this writing as an introduction.

Sweet Sacrifice:
The Female Society for Birmingham’s Use of Sugar Boycott, 1825-1830

Introduction

By the end of the eighteenth-century, Britain had become a mass market for sugar. In the preceding century and a half, as sugar became increasingly accessible to lower classes, its consumption soared by 2,500 percent. This national sweet tooth on one side of the Atlantic was satiated by backbreaking work on the other. Grown on West Indian plantations, sugar was a particularly demanding crop to produce. After a nine to fifteen month-long growing season, slaves would work extremely long hours during the harvest, cutting all of the heavy sugarcane within a few days and processing it in dangerous refineries on-site. Sugar thus presented a tale of transatlantic exploitation — it was produced by the laborious toil of West Indian slaves to be enjoyed as a luxurious treat by British consumers.

Appalled by the British public’s direct support of such cruelty, abolitionists fighting to end the Atlantic slave trade in the 1790s encouraged Britons to sever this relationship to affect the future of the trade. “The wealth derived from the horrid traffic has created an influence that secures its continuance,” wrote William Fox, a leading abolitionist campaigner, in 1791, “unless the people at large shall refuse to receive the produce of robbery and murder.” By abstaining from the use of slave-grown sugar, anti-slavery activists argued, British consumers had the power to cause the demise of the slave trade, which they saw as the first step towards ending slavery itself. Putting this idea into action, they advocated the boycott of slave-grown sugar.

Women took a lead role in organizing these sugar boycotts throughout the 1790s. For instance, James Gillray’s 1792 cartoon, “ANTI-SACCHARITES, -or- JOHN BULL and his Family leaving off the use of SUGAR” depicted Queen Charlotte as the instigator of the boycott in the royal household. Though Gillray questioned whether the Queen was really motivated by feelings of humanity for West Indian slaves, boycotting slave-grown sugar became a means of personal anti-slavery protest for women across the country. Many gave up the use of sugar in their own homes and encouraged their friends to do so.

4 William Fox, An Address to the People of Great Britain on the Propriety of Abstaining from West India Sugar and Rum: The Fourteenth Edition, with Additions (Birmingham: E. R. Edwards, 1830), 3, http://dxs.library.cornell.edu/m/mayantslavery. This pamphlet was immensely popular at the time, and was supposedly as widely read as the first edition of Thomas Paine’s Rights of Man, which sold fifty thousand copies that same year (Sussman, Consuming Anxieties, 114). This popularity speaks to just how widespread the boycott of sugar was during the 1790s.
6 Please see Figure 1.
the same, some even going house to house to canvass for support. Though the extent of the female success in the sugar boycotts of the 1790s is difficult to gauge because it occurred within individual households, a contemporary estimate approximated that 300,000 men and women pledged to give up sugar. In abstaining from West Indian sugar consumption, women thus found a way to be involved in the anti-slavery movement until the abolition of the slave trade in 1807.

By the early 1820s, some British abolitionists began to openly question whether the end of the slave trade had truly diminished the evils of colonial slavery. Leaders like William Wilberforce, James Stephen, and Zachary Macaulay argued that years without the trade had shown little change in living conditions for slaves in the West Indies, where mortality was high, the separation of families common, and the effectiveness of missionary work low. Building on this sense of failure, when news of emancipation efforts by Simón Bolívar and other leaders of Spanish American independence movements reached Britain, British anti-slavery activists felt their own commitment being tested and responded with action. In 1823, a group of leading abolitionists founded the Society for Mitigating and Gradually Abolishing the State of Slavery throughout the British Dominions, popularly known as the Anti-Slavery Society, to advocate the gradual emancipation of West Indian slaves.

While not openly gender-biased, the Anti-Slavery Society tacitly excluded female participants. Left to find a method for women to contribute to the abolitionist cause, Lucy Townsend, the wife of an Anglican clergyman, thought of creating an independent women’s anti-slavery society. She reached out to Mary Lloyd, a Quaker whom she had met through a local branch of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the two women together made plans for the formation of a new female group. On April 8, 1825, “a very large and respectable Meeting of Ladies” came together in Townsend’s West Bromwich home to form the Ladies’ Society for the Relief of Negro Slaves, which was later renamed the Female Society for Birmingham.

The resolutions written at the Female Society for Birmingham’s first meeting were filled with references to the gendered nature of the society’s creation. The founders asserted their own womanhood, not only by including “Ladies” in the name of their new organization, but by specifically referring to members as “Ladies” throughout their founding resolutions. They also planned to “use every proper exertion in aid especially of [their] Sisters, the Female Negro Slaves” until “every Negro Mother, living under British Laws, shall press a free-born Infant to her bosom.” At the time, the earliest members of the Female Society for Birmingham did not elaborate on how exactly they would focus their efforts on

---

7 Midgley, Women Against Slavery, 37.
8 Ibid., 38. This number comes from the records of Thomas Clarkson, an abolitionist who toured England and Wales in 1791-92. It appears to be supported by historian Carol Faulkner, who said that “hundreds of thousands of ordinary citizens boycotted sugar” in the British anti-slavery movement of the 1790s. However, Faulkner takes this number from another secondary source, which might have also been based on Clarkson’s estimate (Carol Faulkner, “The Root of the Evil: Free Produce and Radical Antislavery, 1820-1860,” Journal of the Early Republic 27, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 379, http://web.ebscohost.com).
9 Blackburn, Overthrow, 421, and Midgley, Women Against Slavery, 43.
10 Midgley, Women Against Slavery, 43-46.
11 Ladies’ Society, for the Relief of Negro Slaves, At a very large and respectable Meeting of Ladies, held in West Bromwich on the 8th of April, 1825, the following Resolutions were read and approved:— (Wednesbury: Booth, 1825), 1, http://galenet.galegroup.com and Midgley, Women Against Slavery, 43. By its first Annual Report, the group began calling itself the Female Society for Birmingham, West Bromwich, Wednesbury, Walsall, and their respective neighbourhoods, for the Relief of British Negro Slaves (See The Female Society for Birmingham, West Bromwich, Wednesbury, Walsall, And Their respective Neighbourhoods, For the Relief of British Negro Slaves, The First Report of the Female Society for Birmingham, West Bromwich, Wednesbury, Walsall, And Their respective Neighbourhoods, For the Relief of British Negro Slaves (Birmingham: Office of Richard Pearl, 1826), 6, http://galenet.galegroup.com). For consistency and efficiency, from this point onwards I will adopt the convention used by Clare Midgley in Women Against Slavery and refer to the group as the Female Society for Birmingham (See Midgley, Women Against Slavery, 44).
12 Ladies’ Society for the Relief of Negro Slaves, At a…Meeting of Ladies…on the 8th of April, 1, 2.
13 Ibid.
female slaves. Nevertheless, by drawing particular attention to the cruelty that female slaves faced as mothers, these women revealed that they found differences between the sexes to be relevant even in the population they served.\textsuperscript{14} From its founding, the Female Society for Birmingham thus marked itself off as being a particularly female organization. As a gender-focused response to gender-based exclusion, it would articulate an independent female abolitionist position separate from, even when similar to, that of the male Anti-Slavery Society.\textsuperscript{15}

The founding resolutions of the Female Society for Birmingham also set out an organizational structure that would allow the society to expand its influence geographically. At the center of the society were its Secretaries—in April 1825, only Townsend and Lloyd—who ran the organization’s internal affairs. Meanwhile, a group of District Treasurers were responsible for outreach efforts within different geographic regions.\textsuperscript{16} They conducted work at the local level in these areas, collecting any donations that members had solicited while also disseminating informational material “for promoting the objects of this Society.”\textsuperscript{17} Expanding in number from ten at the time of the society’s founding to forty-nine by 1830, these District Treasurers were vital in spreading the work of the society across the country and to other contacts around the world.\textsuperscript{18} Reinforcing this spread of information through District Treasurers, when the society revised its resolutions at another meeting in December of 1825, it added that “one of the chief objects of this Society” was “to strive to promote the formation of Ladies’ Associations…in every part of his Majesty’s Dominions in which their influence may extend.”\textsuperscript{19} By 1833, over twenty different women’s anti-slavery organizations had been created with the Female Society for Birmingham’s aid.\textsuperscript{20} Founded with a plan for a large-scale organizational setup, Female Society for Birmingham soon became the hub of a national network of female anti-slavery groups, thus serving as the center of British women’s abolitionist activity during the 1820s and 1830s.\textsuperscript{21} As time would show, by setting itself up as the first national-level female anti-slavery organization from its earliest days, the Female Society for Birmingham staked out a role that would allow it to influence gender relations within the abolitionist movement.\textsuperscript{22}

At its December of 1825 meeting, the Female Society for Birmingham also revised its founding resolutions to include the boycott of West Indian sugar as one of its main goals. Devoting an entire resolution to the discussion of sugar boycott, as well as incorporating an addendum commenting on its effectiveness, the society accorded it a sense of centrality. Because these resolutions effectively served as the society’s statement of purpose, being reprinted at the end of each of its subsequent Annual Reports, sugar boycott was marked off as a pivotal component of the society’s work thereafter and will thus serve as the focus of this paper.\textsuperscript{23}

In particular, this paper will trace the development of the Female Society for Birmingham’s views about sugar boycott as espoused in its founding resolutions, Annual Reports, and other writings between 1825 and 1830 to show that as the society’s vision for the abolitionist movement changed, it remarkeded

\textsuperscript{14} Midgley, \textit{Women Against Slavery}, 96.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 45, 46. The main point here is that the Female Society for Birmingham wanted to establish its independence from the male Anti-Slavery Society; it did not however, show any indication of attempting to specifically espouse views that were \textit{counter} to those of the men.
\textsuperscript{16} Ladies’ Society for the Relief of Negro Slaves, \textit{At a...Meeting of Ladies...on the 8\textsuperscript{th} of April}, 1, 3.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 2.
\textsuperscript{18} Midgley, \textit{Women Against Slavery}, 46. As Midgley noted, the District Treasurers were “spread throughout England, with contacts also in Tenby and Monmouth in Wales, in Dublin, and even as far afield as France, the Cape of Good Hope, Sierra Leone, and Calcutta.”
\textsuperscript{19} Ladies’ Society, for the Relief of Negro Slaves, \textit{At a Meeting of LADIES...held in Walsall, on the Eighth of December, 1825.—} (Birmingham: Richard Pearl, 1825), 1, \url{http://galenet.galegroup.com}.
\textsuperscript{20} Midgley, \textit{Women Against Slavery}, 47.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 46.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 47.
\textsuperscript{23} Ladies’ Society, for the Relief of Negro Slaves, \textit{At a Meeting of LADIES...on the Eighth of December, 1825}, 1; to see the repetition of the same resolutions, see Female Society for Birmingham, \textit{The First Report}, 14-17, for instance.
sugar boycott in ways that matched its goals.\(^{24}\) It will begin by looking at how in 1824, a future member of the Female Society for Birmingham named Elizabeth Heyrick challenged accepted abolitionist beliefs by advocating immediate abolition. Heyrick argued that immediatism maintained the moral core of the abolitionist movement, and that sugar boycott was the optimal method by which to fight for it. When the Female Society for Birmingham was created in the following year, it did not accept Heyrick’s view, instead advocating the gradual emancipation of slaves. As a result, it depicted sugar boycott as an ameliorative tactic that would better the conditions under which slaves lived. By 1827, however, the Female Society for Birmingham began to change its mind about the future of abolition and, as a result, the way it described sugar boycott. Showing signs of frustration at Parliament’s lack of progress, it encouraged women to take a leadership role in the abolitionist movement by emphasizing their societal position as standard-bearers of morality. To this end, it remarked sugar boycott as a particularly female activity that had the potential to undermine the entire slave system. By making sugar boycott appear to be a strong tactic meant for women, the Female Society for Birmingham discussed it in ways that would help it achieve its newest goal of female moral empowerment. This new representation set the stage for the Female Society for Birmingham to take charge of the abolitionist movement and lead it towards immediatism, which it did starting in 1830.

Historian Charlotte Sussman has argued that abolitionist women emphasized the area in which they had strength—their supposed moral purity—in order to forge a political voice for themselves; historian Clare Midgley has similarly pointed out that these women, the Female Society for Birmingham included, emphasized their own morality to gain control in leading the abolitionist movement towards immediatism.\(^{25}\) This paper attempts to reinforce and build on this argument. By focusing on how the Female Society for Birmingham feminized and strengthened the idea of sugar boycott, it will show how the society leveraged other traditionally female characteristics, particularly domesticity, in addition to female morality to support its claims to female leadership of the movement. While this action reinforced traditional nineteenth-century ideas about “separate spheres” for the sexes, it allowed these women to challenge the idea of female subordination.

\(^{24}\) The fourth Annual Report of the Female Society for Birmingham was unfortunately not available, but because the trends of the second and third seem to lead logically to the society’s views in the fifth, I do not believe this missing document poses a problem to the arguments laid out in this paper.

C. Sample Citations

Examine the following article, paying particular attention to the format and purpose of the citations used.

Notes on the notes:

Note 1: This is an informational note, designed to clarify material for the reader that, if it were included in the text, would cloud and clutter the point.

Note 2: This is a basic citation of a work quoted (a primary source in this case). Note that the footnote itself comes at the end of the paragraph of text, making it “cover” several pages worth of quoted material from the source.

Note 3: This is a note that presents the sources of a variety of conclusions presented in the text. It does so serially, meaning that the sources as listed in the note line up with the points in the paragraph above. Where appropriate, there are guides written right in the note, such as “for x, see y.” The point is to be clear to your reader about what you drew on for what.

Note 4: This is a similar note to #3, but with a historiographic tinge to it. It provides the source of an idea used in the text (with an oblique criticism thereof) and a suggestion for further related reading.

Note 5: This is an explicitly historiographic note. The author’s use of the material comes in the text. The sources and interpretations of other works that came before are in the note.

Note 6: This note directs the reader to secondary works that inform, develop, and confirm aspects of the point in the text.
“What avenues of commerce, will you, Americans, not explore!”: Commercial Philadelphia’s Vantage onto the Early Haitian Revolution

James Alexander Dun

In 1860, seeking to demonstrate Philadelphia’s rise to commercial prowess in the late eighteenth century, Abraham Ritter told a story about that city and Saint Domingue. Writing in “the downhill of life,” he recalled a tale from his youth about the voyage of the schooner Fly to “St. Domingo” in the early 1790s.¹ The French colony had been “a fruitful source of life to the commercial interests of Philadelphia,” Ritter explained, but had become “embargoed by the savage hatred of the blacks against the whites” after the slave uprisings there. Nevertheless, the Fly’s owner, Abraham Piesch, risked a cargo. The schooner’s captain, Wallace, “scented by the rich odor of the garden” before him, found a white official on the island’s beaches. The “decrepit survivor of his race,” this man had been spared death, yet the insurgents had “marred and mutilated . . . his fingers and toes, and nose too, to prevent his escape and secure his services to whatever commercial interest might turn up.”

¹ The island that Christopher Columbus called La Española, and that the original Taino inhabitants seemed to have named Ayiti, was sometimes referred to by contemporary Americans as Hispaniola. More often, however, they used the names “St. Domingo” or “Santo Domingo,” conflating the French and Spanish colonial entities. In many cases, no doubt, this naming reflected a vague understanding of the area or confusion over the shifting border between the two. Given the nature of American interests on the island, this designation nearly always evoked the French colony of Saint Domingue, situated on its western third.

*William and Mary Quarterly,* 3d Series, Volume LXII, Number 3, July 2005
Wallace negotiated, and a sale was made. The apples, onions, lard, and other foodstuffs the *Fly* bore were traded for coffee, which was "poured like sand into the hold" to the extent that the crew had to wade through it to reach their bunks. The vessel's return garnered great profits for Piesch and Wallace; for Ritter, it supplied a sturdy testament to the vibrant spirit of Philadelphia's mercantile community.2

Ritter learned this story from his father, Jacob, who had served as the *Fly*’s supercargo. Either in the hearing or the recounting, it was factually flawed. Jacob Ritter did not travel to Saint Domingue in the early 1790s. He entered the employ of Piesch in 1801. The Frenchman with whom he and Wallace dealt, therefore (assuming he existed at all), was likely a survivor of Jean-Jacques Dessalines’s purges in 1804. On February 14 of that year, the older Ritter arrived in Philadelphia from Jacmel on a schooner called *Fly*, though the vessel was owned by J. W. Foussatt and John F. Dumas, and was captained by Jeremiah Norris.3

The readers of Abraham Ritter’s narrative, however, would probably not have been troubled by such details. By 1860 Saint Domingue had become a byword for slave revolt in many American minds and had developed into a trope for the massacre of whites. In the wake of the Denmark Vesey trials in 1822, for instance, a South Carolinian expressed relief that Charleston had averted "a war of extermination to their fellow-citizens, their wives, and children, as was the case in St. Domingo." Faithful to this understanding, Ritter depicted the insurgents as a barbaric and inhuman force, and assumed his audience’s understanding of them was the same. Indeed this like-mindedness was important to his

3 For Jacob Ritter’s employment, see Henry Simpson, ed., *The Lives of Eminent Philadelphians, Now Deceased, Collected from Original and Authentic Sources* (Philadelphia, 1859), 846. For information about the *Fly*, see Inward and Outward and Coastwise Manifests, 1789–1918 (entry 1059B), box 71, Records of the U.S. Customs Service, Philadelphia, 1789–1791, Record Group 56, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Mid-Atlantic Regional Branch, Philadelphia. See also Records of Arrivals and Clearances (entry 1057), vol. 3, Record Group 56, NARA. Of the 657 bags of coffee Ritter brought back for Foussatt and Dumas, 36 were noted as destined for Piesch. The supercargo seems to have brought more coffee home on his own account. The *Fly*’s manifest notes 124 bags and six barrels of varying sizes as consigned to him. Ritter’s Captain Wallace proves more elusive. Both a James and a John Wallace captained vessels out of Philadelphia that traveled to ports in Saint Domingue from 1789 to 1803, yet none of them were called the *Fly*. Piesch was noted as the owner of only one vessel doing business on the island, the schooner *George*, whose master, William Dunton, sailed from Cap-Français to Philadelphia in October 1799 (see Inward Foreign Manifests (entry 1059B), box 37, Record Group 56, NARA; Records of Arrivals and Clearances (entry 1057), vol. 3, Record Group 56, NARA).
larger project in delivering a message about (and to) Philadelphia: her savvy merchants had taken deadly risks to make their city great.\(^4\)

Scholarship treating the meaning of the Haitian Revolution in the United States tends to focus on the facet of Haitian events that raised white hackles and black hopes around the Atlantic: the black violence that gave meaning to the Ritters’ story. These treatments are not wrong; the slaves of Saint Domingue fired imaginations as effectively as they had sugar works and the image of their violence was the dominant export of the island after that work was done. American economic interests in Saint Domingue, however, preexisted that violence and continued after it began. Sifting through the reports from the island in the Philadelphia press beginning in the mid-1780s furnishes an account that is predominantly about trade. Highlighting this news not only affirms Saint Domingue’s economic importance but also suggests how commercial concerns could condition the ways in which events there would be understood. As described in these newspaper reports, Saint Domingue is not a simple horror story (let alone an inspiration).\(^5\) Changes on the island after 1794—including a radical tilt of French colonial policy, invasion—

---


sion by British and Spanish forces, and the evacuation of thousands of
refugees to American port cities—made Saint Domingue a convenient
feature in what was an increasingly charged and partisan domestic politi-
cal discourse. But before that point, Philadelphia’s mercantile commu-
nity saw the island as an economic opportunity. Hundreds of voyages
were made to the troubled colony, even after various outbreaks of vio-
lence there. Plumbing the news that prompted these efforts suggests
opportunities to rethink the ways Americans made sense of the opening
years of what only later would be demarcated as a Haitian Revolution.

Information traveled alongside the sugar, molasses, and coffee that ves-
sels brought from Saint Domingue to Philadelphia. Once landed, this
part of the cargo was related in the city’s newspapers. Commercial news
was a mainstay for American newspapers in the 1780s and 1790s and
those in Philadelphia were no exception. In addition to arrivals and
clearances, editors printed reports from captains and merchants from
around the Atlantic littoral. Saint Domingue, as an important trading
partner, received close and constant attention; Philadelphia would be a
point of entry for news from the island throughout the 1790s. The
information brought onto its wharves was the basis for first, and often
lasting, impressions in the city and beyond.

Obviously, this commercial perspective was hardly objective or com-
prehensive. Commercial actors in Saint Domingue wrote to Philadelphia
about prices, markets, profits, and losses. The conditions of trade, there-
fore, directed the focus of the accounts printed in newspapers. Even on
the subject of business, however, commercial contacts were not always

---

6 For the centrality of commercial news in American newspapers, see Frank
Luther Mott, American Journalism: A History of Newspapers in the United States
through 250 Years, 1690–1940 (New York, 1941), 148–50. In the eighteenth century,
trading relationships conditioned the degree and quality of the connections between
geographically distant locales. For a study of the relationship between commercial
news, business decisions, and domestic urban development, see Allan R. Pred,
Urban Growth and the Circulation of Information: The United States System of Cities,
7 Philadelphia was home to a greater number of newspapers than any other
American city during this period (see Mott, American Journalism, 116–31). Mott
notes that, because of their inclusion of commercial topics, the development of com-
mercial dailies led to a functional readership of newspapers (esp. in the taverns of
Philadelphia and New York) well beyond their formal circulation lists. For the best
guesses as to circulation numbers (informed solely, however, by those of the editors
themselves), see Donald H. Stewart, The Opposition Press of the Federalist Period
Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic, Jeffersonian America
(Charlottesville, Va., 2001), argues that Philadelphia was the center of journalistic
activity in this period, and shows how its newspapers disseminated information
across wide sections of the nation (see esp. 174–95, 438 n. 49).
the most reliable sources of information. One editor bemoaned the difficulties of obtaining “authentic information” in tumultuous times. Captains and crews only saw events in Saint Domingue from the mastheads and wharves of the colony’s port cities. They rarely received news firsthand, and what they brought back was sometimes merely hearsay passed between mariners in the shipping roads. Language was another barrier. An editor complained about the “frequent contradictory accounts received” from the island, and noted the problems inherent to relying on “the reports of American Captains . . . who generally not speaking [French], and being the greatest part of their time on board their vessels . . . have not many opportunities of gathering information.” Furthermore, passage from the island to the North American coast took between one week and one month for much of the year, and could double in winter.8 Newspapers, therefore, recounted events that had transpired weeks previously and more than a thousand miles away.

Despite the imperfect nature of the information available to Philadelphia’s merchants as they evaluated their business prospects on Saint Domingue, the records of the Philadelphia Customs House depict a significant and extensive commercial relationship between the city and the colony in this period. From August 1789 to the end of 1793, vessels coming from the island made up between 18 to 25 percent of all arrivals to the city from foreign ports (Table I). The combined burden of those vessels totaled more than 56,500 tons.9 From 1789 to 1792, the tonnage arriving from Saint Domingue accounted for 7 to 15 percent of all imports to Philadelphia (Table II). A lack of data measuring Philadelphia’s total imported tonnage after 1792 make further evaluation of Saint Domingue’s contribution less precise, but the island’s totals alone are suggestive. From October 1, 1792, to September 30, 1793, for

8 (Philadelphia) General Advertiser, July 26, 1793 (“authentic information”), Aug. 4, 1793 (“contradictory accounts”). The travel time is a rough approximation based on the duration of trips mentioned in Philadelphia newspapers in this period. The ten voyages made by the brig Hetty to and from Philadelphia and Cap-Français from September 1789 to March 1792 ranged from nineteen to twenty-three days (see “Hetty, 1783–1792” [the vessel’s account book, actually covering the period 1787–92], Business Papers, 4 Dutilh 2, acc. no. 69.120.5, Independence Seaport Museum, Philadelphia).

9 This figure is derived from calculations performed on data from vessel manifests in Inward and Outward and Coastwise Manifests, 1789–1918 (entry 1059B), boxes 2–15, Record Group 36, NARA. The tonnage listed on these documents was the so-called customs house measure, as opposed to the carpenter’s measure made at the time of the vessel’s construction. To obtain a customs house measure, officials subtracted three-fifths of the vessel’s breadth from its length and multiplied the total by the breadth. The resulting product was multiplied by the vessel’s depth (defined as half of its breadth) and the whole was divided by 95 (see M. V. Brewin, “Tonnage Rules in 1799,” American Neptune 1 (July 1941): 295–96).
example, vessels carrying 19,754 tons arrived in Philadelphia from Saint Domingue ports. This total was from the island spanning a similar

If one follows the dating schema used in numerous federal records that measures annual totals from October 1 to September 30 of the following year, the proportion of tonnage entering Philadelphia from Saint Domingue is even more striking. In 1789–90, it made up 10.7 percent; in 1790–91, 12.3 percent; and in 1791–92, 14.8 percent. These figures were derived from Inward and Outward and Coastwise Manifests, 1789–1918 (entry 1059B), boxes 2–12, Record Group 36, NARA, in combination with "A Statement of the Tonnage of Vessels entered into the State of Pennsylvania from foreign ports, between the 1st day of October, 1789, and the 30th day of September, 1790, together with the Coasting and Fishing Vessels," in "Tonnage and Imports for the Year ending September 30, 1790," Thomas C. Cochran, ed., The New American State Papers: Commerce and Navigation (Wilmington, Del., 1973), i: 72; "A Statement of the Tonnage of Vessels entered

### Table I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Foreign arrivals</th>
<th>Saint Domingue arrivals</th>
<th>Saint Domingue as percentage of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1789</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1791</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1792</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1793</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1794</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1795</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1796</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1797</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1798</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1799</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1801</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1802</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1804</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1805</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The figures for 1789 begin in August.

Source: Inward and Outward Entry Volumes (entry 1057), Records of the U.S. Customs Service, Philadelphia, 1789–1791, Record Group 36, National Archives and Records Administration, Mid-Atlantic Regional Branch, Philadelphia.
period to that date and probably accounted for a similar height in its proportional contribution.

The thousands of hogsheads, barrels, and tierces unloaded from the holds of vessels arriving from Saint Domingue were consigned to or owned by hundreds of Philadelphians, including many of the city’s most successful and influential merchants. Large merchants typically shipped Saint Domingue goods on vessels they owned themselves. The firm of Dutilh and Wachsmuth, which conducted the most direct business with the island in this period, owned seven vessels that they sent there repeatedly from 1789 to 1793. Numerous small merchants, unable to afford such an outlay, paid freight charges on goods they had shipped on others’ vessels. Voyages to Saint Domingue in this period were conducted by more than three hundred captains, who sailed either on behalf of their merchant employers or in their own interest. Many did so repeat-

into the State of Pennsylvania from foreign ports, between the 1st day of October, 1790, and the 30th day of September, 1791, together with the Coasting and Fishing Vessels,” in “Imports and Tonnage for the Year ending September 30, 1791, and Exports for the Year Ending September 30, 1792,” ibid., i: 226. “A Statement of the Tonnage of Vessels entered into the State of Pennsylvania from Foreign Ports, between the 1st day of October, 1791, and the 30th day of September, 1792, together with the Coasting and Fishing Vessels,” in “Tonnage for the Year Ending 30th September, 1792,” ibid., i: 275.

11 The influential merchants included Stephen Girard, Henry Pratt, Étienne Dutilh, John Wachsmuth, and Ambrose Vasse. Merchants and firms were listed as consignees and/or as owners of the various voyages in the assembled manifests reviewed here. Recording conventions and consistency varied considerably over time, leading to different methods of representing, for example, a portion of cargo that was shipped by the captain on behalf of the vessel’s owners or shipped on their
edly. Richard Stites, for example, completed thirteen voyages between Philadelphia and various Saint Domingue ports beginning in September 1789 and ending in October 1793. Six of these ventures were undertaken in the schooner *Industry*, whose owners, Andrew Pettit and Andrew Bayard, sent it to Cap-Français roughly every three months from June 1791 to August 1792. Stites also traveled to Saint Domingue ports for a variety of other merchants. He saw Port-au-Prince in the West Province, Cayes in the South Province, and Môle Saint-Nicolas in the North Province, piloting the sloops *Betsy* and *Dolphin* for Henry Pratt, the sloop *Juliette* for William Gallathea, the schooner *Tryal* on behalf of the firm Harvey and Daves, as well as the sloop *Nancy*, in which he owned a share along with William Clark. In addition to the various vessels' owners, the goods Stites ferried to Philadelphia were consigned to forty-four other merchants and firms. Stites's experiences were far from unique. Goods and wares from Saint Domingue permeated Philadelphia's marketplace; the island was a vital part of the city's trade network in the early 1790s.

Events on Saint Domingue caused the trade between Philadelphia and the island to ebb and flow during this period. Analysis of the number of arrivals over time, however, demonstrates that contact was maintained, and even intensified, as the colony shook (Figure I). Indeed, the dips in the number of arriving vessels seem to have had as much to do with winter weather as with events on the island. The commercial news in the city's newspapers represents an attempt to negotiate these challenges. Whereas Abraham Ritter remembered the Haitian Revolution as a cataclysmic slave insurrection, the newspapers in Philadelphia indicate

behalf but sold directly to a separate firm on arrival. Regardless of these inconsistencies, however, the variety of individual and firm names is striking. Dutilh and Wachsmuch's vessels were the sloop *Commerce*, captained by William Belcher, the schooner *Hardy*, with Rufus Greene as captain, the brig *Hetty*, captained by William Davis, the schooner *Isabella*, captained variously by Daniel Stoy, Greene, and James McKeever, the brig *Jason*, with David Ross as captain, the brig *Leda*, captained by Joseph Vansise and later by Samuel Rinker, and the brig *Theodosia*, also captained by Vansise. By my counting the number of captains who traveled to Saint Domingue from 1789 to 1793 is 328. Due to ambiguities in spelling, gaps in the records, and such, the actual figure may vary slightly (see Inward and Outward and Coastwise Manifests, 1789–1918 (entry 1059B), boxes 2–12, Record Group 16, NARA).

All the various voyages undertaken by Stites are noted in Records of Arrivals and Clearances (entry 1057), Inward Entry, vols. 1–3, Record Group 36, NARA. For cargo and other details, see Inward Foreign Manifests (entry 1059B), boxes 2 (Sept. 25, 1790), 3 (Jan. 2, 1790; May 26, 1790), 4 (Aug. 26, 1790), 6 (Apr. 25, 1791), 7 (June 27, 1791), 8 (Aug. 30, 1791), 10 (May 10, 1792), 11 (Aug. 20, 1792), 12 (Dec. 14, 1792), 15 (Apr. 8, 1793), 15 (Oct. 21, 1793), Record Group 36, NARA. An entry on Jan. 4, 1792, is not noted in these records, as Stites paid his duties at Newcastle. Stites would travel twenty-eight times to various Saint Domingue ports across the decade and well into the 1810s.
For the lack of trade between America and continental France, see Alexander DeConde, *Entangling Alliance: Politics and Diplomacy under George Washington* that his mercantile forebears were equally interested in the doings of Saint Domingue’s white population, that they filtered the news they received through a vocabulary concurrently being employed to describe what was going on in France, and that, above all, they consistently found cause for optimism in the unrest.

Franco-American trade relations during the years following the American Revolution had been rife with unfulfilled expectations. Despite the hopes shared by Thomas Jefferson and French physiocrats and the treaties signed by the two nations in 1778, American trade with continental France failed to develop. The French merchant community, a forceful component of what would shortly become the revolutionary bourgeoisie, saw few advantages to a commercial relationship in which American goods had unfettered access to French markets. Trade with the French West Indies, however, flourished. By 1790 the value of American exports to Saint Domingue alone was greater than that to all other West Indian islands combined.13

13 For the lack of trade between America and continental France, see Alexander DeConde, *Entangling Alliance: Politics and Diplomacy under George Washington*
Woodrow Wilson, considered by scholars and popular opinion to be one of the 10 best presidents of the United States, had already been a successful president: of Princeton University. Wilson was a member of the Class of 1879 and president of Princeton from 1902 until 1910, when he was forced to resign by the Board of Trustees as he ran for the governorship of New Jersey. Before starting his career in politics, Wilson made many curricular reforms at Princeton.

“For all its subtle charm and beguiling air of academic distinction,” he wrote in his “Report on the Social Co-ordination of the University,” “Princeton, so far as her undergraduates are concerned, had come to be merely a delightful place of residence.”1 Wilson organized professors into departments. He also increased the number of electives students were allowed to take, which made advanced study of a particular subject possible. Freshman year, students took required courses, but during sophomore year they could choose between courses. Junior year, students were required to take certain courses and to choose a concentration. Senior year, all courses were taken in the concentration.2

Of the many changes Wilson made in undergraduate education at Princeton, the one with the biggest impact was the “preceptorial,” which was introduced in 1905. A precept is the idea of small groups of students meeting with a faculty member for discussion. Although we now think of precepts as places for going over the lecture or talking about assigned readings, the original purpose was for students to discuss “outside” readings. According to The Princeton Companion, the preceptorial plan brought immediate and far-reaching results. Comments in the press were favorable, and the American educational world watched with interest.


Sources Used in “Woodrow Wilson and the Princeton Preceptorial”


Many surveys have been conducted in order to construct rankings of the success of individuals who have served as President of the United States. Ranking systems are usually based on surveys of academic historians and political scientists or popular opinion…. Three Presidents—George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Franklin D. Roosevelt—always are ranked at the top of the lists. Normally ranked just below those three are Presidents Thomas Jefferson and Theodore Roosevelt. The remaining “top 10” ranks are often rounded out by Woodrow Wilson, Andrew Jackson, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower and James K. Polk.


*From p. 71:* The abrupt and acrimonious end of Wilson’s presidency in 1910—his forced resignation by the trustees as he ran for the governorship of New Jersey—could easily have slowed or reversed his curricular reforms and faculty development.


*From p. 78:* “For all its subtle charm and beguiling air of academic distinction,” he wrote in his ‘Report on the Social Co-ordination of the University,’ “Princeton, so far as her undergraduates are concerned, had come to be merely a delightful place of residence.”


*From pp. 82-83:* Wilson desired to increase the number of electable courses so that student programs could culminate in some kind of advanced study…. In 1903 all professors were grouped in twelve departments that in turn were organized in four divisions…. The freshman year remained prescribed, but during the sophomore year students were granted some choice between fundamental courses. At the beginning of the junior year students were required to complete a distributed number of upper-level courses and to choose a primary course of study. During the senior year all courses were in the student’s chosen area of study.


Preceptorial method, introduced in 1905 under Woodrow Wilson’s leadership, is a method of study whereby a small group of students meets in regular conferences with a faculty member…. The subject matter was not to be “the lectures of their professors or the handful of text books … but the reading which they should do for themselves.” … The new plan brought immediate and far-reaching results…. Comments in the press were favorable, and the American educational world watched with interest.
“Joe”—Take 2.1 (MLA citation style—for variety’s sake)

Woodrow Wilson and the Princeton Preceptorial: An Experiment in Democracy

Woodrow Wilson, a member of the Princeton Class of 1879, served as president of the University from 1902 until 1910, when he became governor of New Jersey on his way to the White House. Wilson believed that, for Princeton undergraduates, academics took a back seat to other pursuits. In his “Report on the Social Co-ordination of the University,” he observed: “For all its subtle charm and beguiling air of academic distinction, Princeton, so far as her undergraduates are concerned, had come to be merely a delightful place of residence” (qtd. in Duke 78). Wilson set out to change the situation by making a number of curricular reforms. Not only did he organize professors into departments, but he also increased the number of electives students were allowed to take, which meant that students could move beyond introductory requirements and engage in advanced study of a particular subject (Duke 82).

Perhaps Wilson’s most significant educational reform was the introduction of the “preceptorial” in 1905. Precepts, which we still have today, can be defined as small groups of students who meet with a preceptor for discussion. Instead of just listening to a professor give a lecture, students in precepts have the chance to express their own ideas and opinions—a dramatic change in the system that, according to A Princeton Companion, drew the attention of both the press and the entire educational establishment (Fitch). Although we now think of precepts as places for going over the lecture or talking about assigned readings, the original purpose was for students to discuss “outside” readings (Fitch). In that sense, the preceptorials of Wilson’s day were more independent than precepts today and, as I will argue, were an expression of Wilson’s belief in democracy—a belief that ultimately led to what historian James Axtell has called the “abrupt and acrimonious end of Wilson’s presidency [of Princeton] in 1910” (71).

Works Cited


E. Supplementary Readings

