

HANDOUT #2: Creating Your Research Trail, Part I

The following assignment requires you to complete a series of research exercises so that you can build a “research journal” to help you choose your topic and find a research base by the fifth week of the semester. Please follow the instructions for each exercise and turn it back to me on a typewritten sheet the following week. There will be three total exercises similar to this one. Taken together, these three exercises will form your “research journal,” which is to be turned in along with your final paper.

EXERCISE 1: Choosing a Topic is probably the most important step in writing a research paper. A topic should be interesting to you, should be just the right size for a single semester of work (not too narrow or too broad), and it should be a subject for which you can find sufficient research material. What topic(s) about minority efforts to achieve civil rights and engage in a broader freedom movement interests you? Pick a topic and write it below.

EXERCISE 2: Encyclopedias, Dictionaries, and Reference Material

Check at least three subject encyclopedias or dictionaries for background material on your research subject. You might need to look at either a biographical, topical, or subject index. Subject encyclopedias and dictionaries are located in the library’s reference section. They include works such as *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of African American Civil Rights: From Emancipation to the Twenty-First Century* and the *Dictionary of American Negro Biography* and are not the same as general encyclopedias or dictionaries like *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Instead, subject encyclopedias and dictionaries are more narrowly focused volumes with articles written by specialists in the topics. They often include a brief bibliography that will lead you to other books and articles or even manuscript collections. Choose at least three different encyclopedias or dictionaries and read the entry on your topic.

Some Examples

The Greenwood Encyclopedia of African American Civil Rights: From Emancipation to the Twenty-First Century.

Student’s Guide to Landmark Congressional Laws on Civil Rights

The Longman Companion to Slavery, Emancipation, and Civil Rights

W.E.B. DuBois: An Encyclopedia

Affirmative Action: A Documentary History

Civil Rights and Constitutional Litigation: Cases and Materials

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: Cases, Materials, and Commentary

Civil Rights in the United States

Encyclopedia of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement

The African American Male: An Annotated Bibliography

The Encyclopedia of Civil Rights in America

Chronology of African American History: From 1492 to the Present

Historical Dictionary of the Civil Rights Movement

Encyclopedia of American Indian Civil Rights

The ABC-CLIO Companion to the Disability Rights Movement

The ABC-CLIO Companion to the Native American Rights Movement
The ABC-CLIO Companion to the Civil Rights Movement
American Women Civil Rights Activists: Biobibliographies of 68 Leaders, 1825-1992
The Civil Rights Movement: References and Resources
Contributions of Black Women to America
Encyclopedia of American Political History: Studies of the Principal Movements and Ideas
Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia
African American Women: A Biographical Dictionary
Native American Women: A Biographical Dictionary
Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History
Encyclopedia of the American Left
Encyclopedia of American Social History

EXERCISE 3: Record the title and call#s of the three reference works you consulted. Check the index of each. Record the specific subjects you looked up in each and your findings. Make a record of possible keywords and important ideas, people, dates, organizations, events, etc.

EXERCISE 4: Now that you have looked up some reference material, rewrite your topic with a narrower focus.

EXERCISE 5: From your findings in the reference works you used for #3 above, begin to **develop your subject and keyword categories.** Do a search in the University of Maryland Library Catalog and record your findings. Make certain to look for books, videos, sources and archives. Remember the Library catalog allows you to search for books located in University of Maryland College Park libraries as well as those housed at other University of Maryland system schools.

Record the subject and keyword categories that you use and your finding (including when you find nothing).

EXERCISE 6: From your finding in EXERCISE 5 above, **list five books** that you think will be most beneficial to your project. Note whether these books are owned by a University of Maryland College Park library; if so, which one? Or will you need to order them from another University of Maryland system library? If they are not available in the University of Maryland system, are they available at the Library of Congress? Or will you need to order them through Inter-Library Loan? (ILL is a service that allows you to order books at no charge from libraries outside the UM system—Where is ILL located? How do you go about ordering a book or other items through interlibrary loan?)

EXERCISE 7: Find a biographical citation for one of the authors of the books you listed in EXERCISE 6. You might try: *Contemporary Authors* or *Dictionary of American Scholars*. *Contemporary Authors* is available online and also in print. Keep in mind that you may have to consult the print version if you find nothing in the online edition.

EXERCISE 8: Search for an article in the New York Times Index relevant to your topic. Find the article using the library's microfilm collection and make a photocopy. Include the citation for your article below and bring the photocopy with you to class.

EXERCISE 9: Locate at least two scholarly journal articles that you think might be helpful to your topic and give the full citation. Scholarly journals include endnotes and footnotes documenting where the author gathered the information for the article. Popular magazines are NOT scholarly journals. A good place to search for U.S. history journals is the online database: America, History, and Life (REMEMBER: your article citations must follow *The Chicago Manual of Style* bibliography format).