

Group Project and Presentation

During the group project and presentation, you will work with your peers to examine, read closely, and do research on a document (or small set of documents) from Special Collections. We will spend time in class discussing research techniques and how to approach your texts. With your peers, you will work through the research process and then decide how to teach your peers about what you have learned through your research. Through this process, you will build on and practice the close reading and research skills that you will need in order to write your final paper.

This project will require close collaboration with your peers both during class time and outside of class (you will be able to “meet” electronically if in-person meetings are not feasible). With your group, you will design and execute a research plan, and complete two written assignments (one written collectively, the other individually). Then, you will prepare and give a 15-minute presentation to the class on your collective work. Please read the following instructions, tips, and details closely before beginning the project.

Important Dates:

Preliminary Findings Report and Plan for SC Day 3 (3%)	Due XX
“The Best Detail/Discovery” Paper (1-2 pages) (6%)	Due XX
Group Project Presentation (6%)	Due XX

Step 1: Select a document or small set of documents (Special Collections, Day 2)

Before we arrive at Special Collections on XX, you and your group will have searched for and selected 2-3 documents as potential subjects for your research project (we will go over how to search the online catalogue in class). Additionally, I will have selected several texts that might be of interest. With your group, you will examine the options, and choose a document or a small set of documents to focus on for your project.

Step 2: Close-read your documents and design your research plan

Working together, you and your group will begin the research process with a close examination of your documents. Refer back to the questions that you answered on our first visit—what kind of document *is* this, and what is its story? Answer as many questions as you can in the time that we have in Special Collections.

With the last 15-20 minutes of our session, begin to pose research questions about your document(s): what do you want to know? What kinds of information will you need to track down in order to answer your questions? Generate a list of *at least* 10 questions.

Then, divide the work: decide who will try to answer which question, and how you will collectively proceed to research your document(s) and prepare for your presentation.

Step 3: Write the Preliminary Findings Report and Research Plan

It's likely that your research questions or your focus will change as you and your group begin to find information about your document(s); this is an important part of the research process! Allow your focus to change, and develop new, more specific or targeted questions to pursue.

Create a Google doc that each of your group members can access. In this document, work together to produce a 2-3 paragraph report on what you have already discovered about your document(s) from your first SC visit, your discussions with the librarian, and your first attempts at research. Provide a bibliography for the sources (websites, books, anything!) that you have consulted. Then, write a plan for your next SC visit; include a specific description of what each group member plans to do during our class time at the SC, and a description of what each Group member plans to do beyond the in-class meeting to prepare for your presentation.

***Divide the tasks for this step clearly and equitably; **you are free to assign the work as you see fit**, but here is a possible division of labor:

- Group members 1-2: talk with entire group to collect and then summarize the entire group's preliminary findings (each person could write 1 paragraph, or the two could work together to produce a first draft of the 2-3 paragraph report).
- Group members 3-4: Collate and correctly format the group's bibliography, according to MLA formatting guidelines; expand and help to revise the preliminary findings report; help to revise the research plan.
- Group member 5: talk with entire group and write out or collate the research plan.
- ALL group members: PROOFREAD the final document carefully. (You might take turns doing this, or meet in person to decide on the final wording, etc.)

Remember that writing collectively *is very difficult!* Communication, generosity, and participation are integral to your success on this step.

Send the link for your group's document to me by **5 pm on Monday, XX.**

Step 4: Execute your Research Plan (Special Collections, Day 3)

You should be able to make great strides in your research during our class time, but you may need to meet with your group outside of class or return individually to the SC to complete your research plan. You may also come upon dead-ends or be unable to find the information that you want; this is also a natural part of the research process! **Don't forget to ask for help** from me or from the librarians. Pursue each question that you have with vigor and perseverance, but also be open to "plan B" questions and foci if you get stuck.

Step 5: Write "The Best Detail/Discovery Paper" (Individual Assignment)

Decide on a detail about your document(s) or on a discovery that you or one of your group members made during the research process that surprised you, or that was exciting, new, energizing, confusing, important, etc. Write a 1-page paper about this detail or discovery and **how and why** it's important to the way we read your document(s). What's significant about this detail/discovery? Why is it the "best"? How did it change the way you read your document(s)? Why is it an important discovery? How and why does it contribute to / undermine / complicate / etc. a larger theme in or idea about the document(s) as a whole?

Due on SmartSite in the "Assignments" by **5pm on Monday, XX**.

Step 6: Prepare your Presentation

After you have conducted your research and written about your document(s) and discoveries, you and your group will prepare a 15-minute presentation on your document(s) and on the research process that you will give to the class. **Each group member must speak during the presentation** and you must include at least one visual element (handout, drawings, chalkboard/doc projector materials, powerpoint, poster, etc.).

Your presentation should follow roughly this format:

1. Present your findings (7-10 minutes). Introduce us to your document(s) and tell us the document(s)'s story. Organize this part of your presentation to have an introduction, a clear focus (or a **thesis statement or argument** about your document) supported by discussion of key details about the text and your research, and a conclusion.
2. Reflect on the research process (3-5 minutes). Discuss the following questions with your group (or any other questions that occur to you as you reflect on the research process):
 - What was the most difficult part of this project? What part was the most fun? Why? How did your group overcome challenges? What was the most interesting thing (big or small) that you learned? What unexpected skills/details/information/etc. surprised you about yourself, your group, or your object(s) of study? How would you proceed differently in your future research projects? What advice would you give to a group newly embarking on this project?Once you have discussed these questions, decide which of your answers or thoughts you would like to include in the presentation. Give us **a few pithy thoughts** about what you learned, as a group, about the research process.
3. Respond to comments and questions from your peers (3-5 minutes).

Step 7: Present!

On **Thursday, XX**, you and your group will give your presentation to the class. Be sure to speak clearly and with authority. Practice your presentation at least once before you give it, and be sure

to have all of your necessary notes, visuals, and materials ready. Consider the following rubric as you prepare your presentation.

Presentation Evaluation

The presentation counts for 5% of your overall grade. After your presentation, you will each receive the following rubric:

_____/25 Public Speaking (individual grade): Did you speak clearly and engagingly? Did you have a clear grasp of the material that you presented? Did you convey that material effectively to your audience? If you answered questions, did you do so thoughtfully, demonstrating your expertise on your document?

_____/25 Depth of Research: Did your presentation exhibit your expertise about the document(s) you chose to research? Did you offer ideas about how and why the close reading and research that you completed on the document(s) changed or deepened your understanding of the document's significance? Was the "story of the document" clear, thoroughly researched, and compelling to your audience?

_____/25 Presentation and visuals: Was your presentation interesting? Were your visuals well-prepared? Did they enhance your audience's understanding of your document(s) and your argument for your document(s) significance? Did your group comment on the process of researching your document(s) and on how came, collectively, to understand the document in more depth?

_____/25 Stimulating class discussion: Did your peers respond to your presentation with good questions and ideas? Did they seem interested and engaged during your presentation?

As you will have noticed, part of your grade depends on your group's ability to generate questions and discussion; **don't leave your peers high and dry!** If you can come up with good questions for the other groups when they are presenting, they'll be more likely and inclined to ask you good questions when it's your turn in the hot seat.