

Revised final assignment for HIST:4100:0002 (does not replace weekly readings & check-sheets!) (spring 2017)

The new assignment will allow us to “write the first draft of history.” Good history-writing means both assembling and analyzing the historical record. Our work in assembling the historical record will consist of following the news of the early stages of the Trump presidency and discerning larger trends. Our analytical question will extend the debate conducted in our readings: In what ways is the German experience useful or not useful for understanding our current political moment? Our readings address this question in the context of the campaign and the weeks between the election and the inauguration. Our final assignment will address the question in the context of the early stages of the Trump presidency.

In doing any kind of research, it’s important to remember that posing the question does not presume a particular answer. If we already knew the answer, we wouldn’t need to ask the question. In the case of a history that has not yet happened, it should be particularly clear that we don’t yet know the answers. Our aim is to collect the evidence, consider the analytical framework in question, and see where the process leads us.

In order to respond to new developments, I reserve flexibility regarding the latter stages of this assignment.

Our **first step – assembling the historical record** – will be to document the first stages of the Trump presidency. *We’ll start this part of the project right away, and it will involve just a few minutes per week outside class.* On the MyUI site, you’ll find a link under “collaborations” to a google spreadsheet on which we will record history in the making. (I’ll open up that link in class on January 30 – don’t worry that you can’t yet access it.) Each week, you’ll enter 1-2 news stories. Further instructions for this part of the assignment will be on the “collaborations” page.

If you don’t have a google account, you’ll need to get one. *You can go ahead and do this now.* Click [here](#) or use this URL: <https://accounts.google.com/signup>. Please use your uiowa.edu email address when signing up for your account, since your invitation to join the google spreadsheet will go there.

Our **second step – organizing our research** – will take the form of *in-class workshops*. In each class meeting, we’ll discuss our readings as originally planned. But in select class sessions, we’ll also carve out time to look over the news items we’ve collected. We’ll organize our research by thinking about sub-themes, patterns, trends, and connections to the analytical framework we plan to use.

Our **third step – analyzing our findings** – will involve *journaling in the second half of the semester*. The journaling assignments will ask you to consider current developments in relationship to the week-by-week themes we discuss in the second half of the semester in 0001.

Our **final step – presenting our findings** – will include a *range of options*. Examples might include (a) a short academic paper, (b) an opinion piece as one might find in a quality media outlet, (c) a multi-media digital essay (eg involving images and sound or video clips), or (d) an oral presentation. I am open to collaborative modes of presentation but will not provide instruction in digital modes of presentation. We will discuss options as our work unfolds. By April 10 we will nail this down so you can enter the final weeks in the semester knowing how to plan.

Important note on switching assignments:

The new assignment is designed to be roughly the same amount of work as the original assignment. Because of its collaborative and cumulative nature, however, I believe you will get more out of it. The collaborative and cumulative process also means that we need to know who will be involved. If you prefer to stick with the final assignment outlined in the syllabus, you may do so, but please let me know by **Monday, February 6** that you wish to opt out of the new assignment. If I don’t hear from you, I’ll assume you’ll take part in the new assignment.