**Zinn/Schweikart Term Paper Assignment**

(Adapted from from Lendol Calder, "Uncoverage: Toward a Signature Pedagogy for the History Survey," *American Historical Review* 92.4 (2006):1358-1370).

***Write a memo addressing the following scenario:***

President Barack Obama is upset. He has just read the Nation’s Report Card on U.S. History\* and the results are not good; the results are upsetting. Fifty-seven percent of the nation’s high school seniors scored below the “basic” achievement level that denotes only partial mastery of significant historical knowledge and analytical skills. In no other subject do more than half of high school seniors register below basic. It is upsetting that 50 percent of high school seniors can’t place the Civil War in the correct century. It is upsetting that 59 percent can name the Three Stooges, but only 41 percent can name the three branches of government. This is all very upsetting.

President Obama has convinced Congress to spend $100 million (he does like to spend money) in 2009 on programs to improve how history is taught in the public schools. But this is not enough. Obama wants to do something for adults, too. He wants to get adult citizens thinking and talking about the nation’s history. His plan is to have Congress declare May 2010 “American History Month.” In advance of this month, Congress will send, at government expense, a suitable history book to every citizen of voting age (you can think about whether or not this is a suitable use of government money and power!). Then, during the month of July, American citizens will be invited to participate in local book reading groups led by volunteer teachers, judges, college presidents, and corporate CEOs not in jail. Some people, of course, will not want to participate. To encourage a wide participation, President Obama will propose that Congress provide free beer and mixed drinks to all book club participants. Nonparticipants, however, will be sentenced to 30 days of service in the LU Garden or ten hours of Mr. Gibson’s lectures.

**You are a staffer for President Obama. Obama has directed his staff to submit proposals for books that could provide the basis for a national conversation on American history. Preliminary discussions have narrowed the choices down to either Howard Zinn’s *A People's History of the United States* or Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen’s *A Patriot’s History of the United States.* Obama wants your recommendation from you on his desk by** Dec 16, 2015**. Your memo should summarize the different “stories” told by each historian, comparing and contrasting them, and make a case for why you think one book would be a better choice than the other.**

**The final version of your memo will be due on the day of the Mid-term exam on Dec 16, 2015.**

\*See the results of the U.S. Department of Education’s “The Nation’s Report Card on U.S. History” for yourself at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/ushistory/>

# Expectations and Recommendations

1. **Please type your essay, aiming for 4-6 double-spaced pages utilizing Times New Roman, or Arial narrow 12 Font.**

2. **At or near the beginning of your essay, include a thesis statement that clearly answers the question and structures your essay.** In other words, in one or two sentences explain the basic difference between the two books and why one book would be preferable. We will talk about how to write an effective thesis statement in class.

3. **Make an argument**. The question asks you to take a stand, so make a choice and do your best to back it up.

4. **As stated above, explain the basic "story" or argument of each book.** It might be a good idea to take two or more paragraphs towards the beginning of the essay to do this.

5. **Essays will be graded for both content and writing** (grammar, spelling, style). Quality of writing and content are necessarily closely related, as difficulties with grammar, etc. detract from your argument. Likewise, clear sentences and good choices of words strengthen your argument.

7. **Citations**. Use parenthetical citations for Zinn and Schweikart.

Example: Howard Zinn argues that Bill Clinton “surrendered again and again to caution and conservatism.” (Zinn, 643)

You are not required to use any sources beyond those assigned for the course (nor will you receive extra credit for doing so). However, if you cite any outside sources (including websites), document them in footnotes with full citations according to MLA or Chicago style guidelines. (See me or Mr. Hoerster if you need help).

You are **are** allowed to use Zinn or Schweikart material that was covered in class. However, ou must independently do your own research of the books.

8. **Originality.** Your essay must be your own original work, composed without assistance from others (in the class or not) or undocumented sources. You are welcome to discuss the assignment with others in the class; however, when it comes to writing the essay, it is not a group assignment. **You will be submitting your paper to turnitin.com, so use your head.**

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| **Assignment of Grades for Papers**  **100 Possible Points**  You will receive a grade from 0 to 25 in the following four areas:  **Thesis Statement** **and Argument** -- Does the essay have a clear argument and thesis statement?  **Evidence** -- Is the argument / thesis supported by evidence from the assigned readings and lectures?  **Writing** -- Is the essay free of spelling and grammar mistakes? Is it clearly and eloquently written?  **Organization** -- Does the essay progress clearly and logically? Does the organization of paragraphs and sentences effectively advance the essay's argument / thesis?  I will then add these four grades to compute the overall grade for the essay. I also reserve the prerogative to award bonus points for intellectual creativity and engagement (i.e., does the essay make a particularly compelling or thoughtful argument, etc.?) | 180px-Peopleshistoryzinn  Patriots_History_cover2 |