**United States History**

**Semester One Project: Great Decisions**

**Introduction:**

America’s historical figures have made some crucial decisions that have reshaped not just their own lives but the lives of thousands. What leads a person to make a decision? What worldviews shape the great decisions of early American history? What were the consequences of those decisions? These are the central questions in the research paper you will be writing this semester.

**STEP 1:** Select a person and a decision. Consider the following list carefully. You will need to find a person and a decision that you can live with for the next eight weeks.

**COLONIAL PERIOD**

* Christopher Columbus’ decision to sail west (to the New World)
* Christopher Columbus’ decision to enslave the native peoples of the Caribbean
* Hernan Cortes’ decision to conquer the Aztecs
* Roger Williams’ decision to found Rhode Island
* Anne Hutchinson’s decision to challenge the religious leaders of Massachusetts
* Nathaniel Bacon’s decision to rebel against the leaders of Virginia
* King Philip’s decision to attack New England settlers
* Pocahontas’ decision to marry John Rolfe
* Olaudah Equiano’s decision to write an autobiography
* William Penn’s decision to found Pennsylvania for Quakers
* Pope’s decision to rebel against the Spanish (Pueblo Revolt)
* John Peter Zenger’s decision to challenge libel laws and the royal governor of NY
* Phillis Wheatley’s decision to write poetry
* George Whitefield’s decision to bring the Great Awakening to the American colonies

**REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD**

* Deborah Sampson’s decision to fight in the Revolutionary War
* Thomas Paine’s decision to write *Common Sense*
* Abigail Adams’ decision to urge her husband to “remember the ladies”
* Benedict Arnold’s decision to betray his nation
* William Franklin’s decision to remain a Loyalist
* George Washington’s decision to lead the Continental Army
* Pontiac’s decision to attack the British after the Seven Year’s War
* Benjamin Franklin’s decision to create the Albany Plan of Union
* Patrick Henry’s decision to support independence in 1775

**EARLY REPUBLIC**

* Thomas Jefferson’s decision to buy Louisiana
* Daniel Shays’ decision to be involved in Shays’ Rebellion
* James Madison’s decision to draft a new Constitution (the Virginia Plan)
* Alexander Hamilton’s decision to push for a National Bank
* Thomas Jefferson’s decision to write the Kentucky Resolutions
* George Washington’s decision to deliver the Farewell Speech
* Aaron Burr’s decision to fight a duel with Alexander Hamilton
* John Marshall’s decision to announce the power of judicial review
* James Madison’s decision to ask for a declaration of war in 1812
* Tecumseh’s decision to challenge Americans for control of the Northwest
* Tenkswatwa’s decision to renounce white men’s culture
* Denmark Vesey’s decision to start a slave rebellion in Charleston (1822)
* Samuel Slater’s decision to bring English textile technology to America
* Eli Whitney’s decision to invent the cotton gin
* Robert Fulton’s decision to invent the steamboat
* DeWitt Clinton’s decision to support building the Erie Canal

**JACKSONIAN AMERICA**

* Henry Clay’s decision to challenge Andrew Jackson by forming the Whig Party
* Andrew Jackson’s decision to support Indian removal
* Nicholas Biddle’s decision to ask for an early recharter of the Bank of the United States
* Andrew Jackson’s decision to “kill” the Second Bank of the United States
* John C. Calhoun’s decision to create the doctrine of nullification
* Joseph Smith’s decision to found the Mormons
* Henry David Thoreau’s decision to live on Walden Pond
* Henry David Thoreau’s decision to go to jail for not paying taxes
* David Walker’s decision to write his *Appeal*
* Frederick Douglass’ decision to escape slavery
* Sarah Grimke’s decision to speak out against slavery
* Elizabeth C. Stanton’s decision to fight for women’s rights
* William L. Garrison’s decision to demand immediate abolition
* Dorothea Dix’s decision to fight for asylum reform
* Horace Mann’s decision to support free public education
* Harriet Tubman’s decision to help slaves escape the South
* Stephen Austin’s decision to fight for the independence of Texas
* Neal Dow’s decision to stop liquor sales in Maine
* Robert Owen’s decision to found New Harmony utopia in Indiana
* Nat Turner’s decision to launch a slave revolt in Virginia
* Sojourner Truth’s decision to fight for women’s rights
* John Humphrey Noyes’ decision to found the Oneida Community
* Sylvester Graham’s decision to invent graham crackers

**SECTIONALISM**

* David Wilmot’s decision to sponsor the Wilmot Proviso
* Harriet Beecher Stowe’s decision to write *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*
* Stephen A. Douglas’ decision to introduce the Kansas-Nebraska Act
* Preston Brooks’ decision to cane Charles Sumner
* John Brown’s decision to raid Harper’s Ferry
* Dred Scott’s decision to challenge slavery
* Roger Taney’s decision to issue *Dred Scott v. Sanford*
* Henry Clay’s decision to craft the Compromise of 1850

**STEP 2:** Research your person to gain an overview of his or her life. FOCUS mostly on the events that led up to the person making his or her decision.

**STEP 3:** Focus on the decision.

* What led the person to make this decision? What other choices did he or she have?
* What was in this person’s world view, morals, or experience that led to this decision?
* What circumstances or context help explain why this person made this decision at this time? Were other people involved in this decision process and what roles did they play?
* What were the consequences of the decision? How did it alter the person’s life and the lives of others? How is the decision significant to American history?

**STEP 4:** Take detailed, reliable research notes.

* You are required to have at LEAST 3 different sources. One may be an electronic database such as *American National Biography*, another may be an online source such as a professor’s website, and the final must be a print source (yes, the library still has books). You may have MORE than 3 sources if you wish.
* Take notes on your sources, including the page numbers of where you get your information. For electronic sources, page numbers are not required. For each source, you should write down:
  + The name of the author of the source (if it is available).
  + The title of the source.
  + Where the source was published, by what company, and when
  + For internet sources: the URL of the webpage and the date you visited it.
* You will be using the MLA format for your paper, meaning that you will provide in-text *parenthetical citations* for your paper as well as a works cited page at the end.

**STEP 5:** Write a 900-1300 word (3 -4 pages) rough draft.

**Paragraph 1:** This will be the introduction to your person and his or her decision. The introduction should be general. You should:

* Tell a little bit about the person and the decision he or she made.
* Set the scene – when was this decision made and under what general circumstances? Was it during a war? On a plantation?
* Give the overall consequences of the decision and its significance for American history.

**Paragraphs 2 - 3:** These paragraphs will explain the background to the person’s decision. How did his or her life before the decision lead up to the decision? What events shaped this person’s role at a particular place and time in history?

**Paragraphs 4 - 5:** These paragraphs will explain the person’s mental universe when he or she made the decision. You should examine the person’s assumptions, beliefs, morals, and world views as he or she made the decision. How did this person explain the decision (if you can find this out)? How did others explain the decision? Are there different theories of how this decision was made? What other decisions did the person NOT make and why? Conclude this section by describing the exact decision made.

**Paragraphs 6 – 7:** These paragraphs will explain the consequences of the decision and how it changed this person’s life and the lives of others. What would be different about the past had this person not made the decision that he or she made?

**Paragraph 8:** This paragraph will conclude the paper. Summarize your main points about the decision that the person made and remind your reader of the importance this decision has in American history.

**Works Cited:** This is the last page of your paper.

**Timeline for the Project**

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| --- | --- |
| **DATE** | **I WILL HAVE DONE (BY THE DATE):** |
| **October 6, 2016**  **Lab 7239** | Brainstorm  Who are you interested in for the project? Do a little research about your person to find out if he or she interests you. |
| **October 7, 2016**  **Lab 7239** | I will have read and taken notes on **1-3 sources** about my person.  I will conference with O’Reilly about my project. |
| **October 10, 2013**  **Lab 7239** | I will continue to take notes from **1-3 sources** about my person.  I will conference with O’Reilly about my project (if necessary). |
| **October 11, 2013**  **Lab 7239** | I will continue to take notes from **1-3 sources** about my person.  I will conference with O’Reilly about my project (if necessary). |
| **October 28, 2013** | I will have finished my research notes (3 sources). |
| **November 9, 2013** | I will have written **Paragraphs 2 – 3** about my person. |
| **November 16, 2013** | I will have written **Paragraphs 4 - 5** about my person. |
| **November 22, 2013** | I will have written **Paragraphs 6 - 7** about my person. |
| **December 6, 2013** | I will have written my **introduction and conclusion** (remember that they are similar with different words). |
| **December 12, 2013** | I **will turn in my final copy of the research paper after going through the paper checklist.** |

**Paper Checklist**

**MECHANICS and SOURCES**

* I have eliminated spelling errors, punctuation errors, and grammar errors in my paper.
* I have read my paper out loud so that I can check for how it sounds and flows.
* I have three sources, properly cited (MLA Style) on my works cited page.
* I have provided in-text citations (MLA style) for every fact about my person that I use in my paper (at least one in-text citation for each paragraph).

**FORMAT**

* My paper is double-spaced.
* My paper contains a heading with my name, the date, and the teacher.
* My paper has a title.
* My paper has 1 inch margins.
* My paper is written in Times New Roman, 12-point font.
* My works cited is on a separate page at the end of my paper.

**CONTENT**

* My introduction provides the reader with an introduction to the person and why his or her decision is important.
* I focus my first body paragraphs on showing what led up to the decision made.
* I use my next body paragraphs to show the mental universe of the person as he or she made his decision.
* I use my final body paragraphs to show the consequences of the decision and its significance to American history.
* I explain all facts about my person by not assuming that the reader is familiar with them.
* I conclude my paper with a re-statement of person’s decision and its importance.