

Final Project: St. Louis Archive Stories

DUE DECEMBER 6

Your final project for this course is a two-part assignment consisting of a digital exhibit created using Storymaps.com and a reflective essay. Storymaps is a free online creative platform that lets you weave together storytelling with interactive maps and audio/visual components. Your exhibit will focus on a specific aspect of St. Louis' global Catholic history that resonated with you during the course. Your essay should be 2-4 pages in length and serve as a critical examination of your research and creative process.

Here's what you'll do:

1. **Choose your topic:** Reflect on the themes and topics we've covered in class. Was there a specific event, figure, movement, or aspect of St. Louis's Catholic history that sparked your curiosity? Perhaps you were drawn to a particular period or social issue. Select a topic that allows you to showcase what you learned this semester and curate a compelling story.
2. **Revisit the archives:** Utilize the archival collections we studied to find primary source materials relevant to your chosen topic. This could include photographs, letters, diaries, maps, newspaper articles, etc.
3. **Curate your story:** From the materials you encountered over the semester, select a cohesive set that tells a captivating narrative. Consider the chronological flow, the interconnectedness of the chosen pieces, and how they contribute to a broader understanding of your topic.
4. **Incorporate secondary sources:** Building upon the skills honed during our library sessions, integrate relevant secondary sources (academic articles and books) into your analysis of the primary materials. These sources will provide context and scholarly perspectives to enrich your exhibit's interpretation.
5. **Craft your digital exhibit:** Storymaps.com will be your digital canvas. Use the platform's features to create an engaging experience for your viewers. Integrate the selected archival materials alongside strategically-written interpretive "wall text."
6. **Master the art of "wall text":** You'll be provided with several professional resources about designing exhibits and writing "wall text." Of course, your wall text will all be digital, but the same standards should apply. Use these guides for crafting your own interpretive text for your Storymaps exhibit. Remember, this text should be clear, concise, and engaging, providing context and analysis for your chosen artifacts.

Evaluation:

Your final project will be graded on the following criteria:

- **Topic selection and focus:** Did you choose a theme that effectively utilizes the course content and allows for a focused exploration?
- **Use of archival materials:** Did you successfully utilize the primary sources from the archives we studied to support your narrative?
- **Incorporation of secondary literature:** Did you effectively use secondary sources to analyze and provide context for your primary materials?
- **Storytelling and curation:** Does your Storymaps exhibit effectively tell a compelling story with a clear chronological flow and interconnectedness between chosen materials?

Getting Started

1. Creating your Storymaps account:
 - Go to Storymaps.com and click the gray “Sign in” link at the top right corner.
 - Sign up using your email address. The easiest way is to “Continue with Google” so you don’t have to input all your information and remember a password.
 - You will now see a “Welcome, Your Name” screen.
 - Go to the top right corner and click the blue “Create +” button. Select “Story” from the dropdown menu.
 - You’re now ready to create your digital exhibit!
2. This is your digital exhibit and you have full creative control over how you organize your information. However, your work must align with the professional standards for presenting archival and historical information that we discuss throughout the semester. How can you successfully accomplish this?
 - Look at examples, both the ones I introduce you to and ones you find through your own research.
 - Fact check. Everything you publish/submit must be factually correct. Use your secondary literature to help you analyze archival items and, where possible, cite the source of your information. When in doubt...ask Wikipedia!
 - Follow the guidelines for a successful museum exhibit. This is not a research paper, a newspaper article, a short story, or an exam essay so don’t design it like one.

Exhibit Design

Apply your creative vision in constructing a compelling digital exhibit that incorporates the following essential elements:

1. Title
2. Subtitle
3. Summary of the exhibit.
 - Provide viewers with an overview of your exhibit. This is where you grab their attention and convince them it's worth scrolling down.
 - Consider opening with an interesting "hook."
 - Include useful information such as: the names of the collections you used, the people/places/events your exhibit covers, the time period/era.
 - This is where you note the goals of your exhibit and the research questions your presentation addresses. (You may also restate your research questions throughout the exhibit if appropriate)
4. Images
 - Use images creatively to stand in for your exhibit items. Each item must be represented by an image.
5. Timeline
 - Alternative: For those of you who want to include more elaborate media with each timeline event, you may create an embedded timeline using Knightlab: <https://timeline.knightlab.com/>
6. At least one Map (express map, thematic map, etc.)
 - The most successful maps will go beyond simply pinpointing places.
 - Make use of Storymaps' unique capabilities to transform static maps into dynamic storytelling tools. By incorporating multimedia elements such as images, text, and audio/video, you can create immersive experiences that encourage deeper interpretation and understanding.
7. Interpretive Text
 - Your exhibit must include interpretive text. This means following the guides you received about writing museum wall text. It also means including the kinds of interpretive analyses that you wrote in your Project Builders.
 - You must reference at least three secondary sources in your interpretive text.

Examples and Inspiration:

- [Nun Dolls: Connecting Sisters Globally Through Clothing](#) – This exhibit serves as the best example in terms of length, content, and multimedia integration that I expect for your projects
- [Some Were Neighbors: Choice, Human Behavior, and the Holocaust](#) – This exhibit obviously does not use Storymaps but demonstrates a nice use of interpretive text.
- [Transforming Dartmouth: Oral Histories of Black Students from the 1960s - 1980s](#) – This exhibit (and others created by Dartmouth University Students) was created using the less dynamic Omeka platform. But this one is very effectively organized and demonstrates an effective balance of archival sources and interpretive text.
- [Rewriting Representation: Success through the Struggle](#) - This exhibit was designed by a professional curator. This doesn't reflect my expectations for you, but it offers a great example of interpretive text.

Assignment Parameters

Every assignment you do for this course is designed to prepare you for your final project. You may use as much or as little text from these assignments directly in your final project.

Project Proposal (1 page) – Due at your scheduled professor meeting during Week 6

The project proposal outlines your proposed digital exhibit for the final project. This proposal should demonstrate your understanding of the course materials so far and your ability to conduct preliminary research.

Your proposal should include the following:

- **Topic:** Clearly articulate your chosen topic within the broader context of St. Louis Catholic history and the course content.
- **Research Question:** Develop a focused research question that will guide your exhibit's narrative.
- **Archival Sources:** Identify specific archival collections and at least 3 potential primary sources relevant to your topic.
- **Secondary Sources:** List at least 3 potential secondary sources (academic articles and/or books) that will inform your analysis.
- **Exhibit Narrative:** Briefly outline the story you plan to tell in your digital exhibit, including key themes and arguments.
- **Digital Platform:** Explain how you plan to utilize Storymaps.com to effectively convey your narrative. This may require you to take a preliminary tour of the site's exhibit-designing features.

Project Builder 1: Secondary Source Analysis (2 pages) – Due October 11

For this Project Builder, you will conduct an in-depth analysis of a secondary source relevant to your proposed final project topic. This source should be an academic article, book, or book chapter that you have accessed through the library.

Your analysis should include the following:

- **Source Information:** Provide complete bibliographic information for the source. This means citing the source according to the Chicago Manual of style (see pdf on Canvas).
- **Author's Argument:** Clearly articulate the author's main argument or thesis.
- **Evidence and Methodology:** Analyze the evidence the author uses to support their argument, including the types of sources cited and the methods employed.
- **Relevance to Your Project:** Explain how this source connects to your chosen topic and research question. Discuss how you plan to incorporate the findings of this source into your final project. In other words, you should begin to think about how the insights gained from secondary sources can inform your exploration of the primary materials you might use in your Storymap.
- **Critical Analysis:** Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the author's argument, considering factors such as the author's perspective, the limitations of the evidence, and the overall contribution of the work to the field.
- **Reflection on Research Process:** Reflect on your research process for this assignment. What challenges did you encounter? What strategies did you use to find and evaluate sources? How did this experience shape your understanding of your research topic?

This analysis should demonstrate your ability to critically engage with academic literature and to connect secondary sources to your primary research interests.

Note: While you may draw upon information from this Project Builder for your final project, the goal is not simply to summarize the source. Instead, you should focus on analyzing the source's content and its relevance to your research.

Project Builder 2: Primary Source Analysis (2 pages) – Due November 4

For this Project Builder, you will conduct an in-depth analysis of a primary source relevant to your proposed final project topic. Primary sources are firsthand accounts or artifacts created during the time period you are researching. These can include documents, photographs, letters, diaries, objects, or other materials.

Your analysis should include the following:

- **Source Description:** Provide a detailed description of the primary source, including its type, date, creator, and any relevant contextual information.
- **Content Analysis:** Carefully examine the content of the source. What information does it provide? What does it reveal about the time period, people, or events it relates to?
- **Historical Context:** Place the source within its historical context. What was happening during the time the source was created? How does this context inform your understanding of the source? (You may use secondary sources to help you answer this question)
- **Potential Significance:** Discuss the potential significance of the source for your final project. How might you use it to support your arguments or tell your story?
- **Limitations and Questions:** Identify any limitations or biases inherent in the source. What questions does the source raise? What additional information would be helpful to better understand it?
- **Reflection on Research Process:** Reflect on your research process for this assignment. What challenges did you encounter in finding and analyzing the primary source? How did this experience shape your understanding of your research topic?

This analysis should demonstrate your ability to interpret primary sources critically, to place them within their historical context, and to assess their potential value for your research.

Note: While you may draw upon information from this Project Builder for your final project, the goal is not simply to describe the source. Instead, you should focus on analyzing its content, context, and significance.

Project Builder 3: Storymap Development – Due November 11

For this Project Builder, you will begin to construct your Storymap exhibit. Your task is to develop one complete section of your Storymap, including at least one artifact or document, its accompanying description, and interpretive text.

Your submission should include:

- **Artifact or Document:** Clearly identify the primary source you have chosen for this section.
- **Description:** Provide a detailed description of the artifact or document, including its context, significance, and how it relates to your overall project narrative.
- **Interpretive Text:** Write informative and engaging interpretive text that explains the artifact or document to your audience. Consider using the principles of museum exhibit writing we have discussed in class and incorporating the scholarly perspectives of one or more secondary sources you encountered.
- **Reflection:** Include a brief reflection on how this work-in-progress section aligns with your overall exhibit goals. In other words, how does this section fit into and contribute to the rest of the project.
- **Storymap Section:** Submit a screenshot of your Storymap section or a link to your in-progress Storymap.

This assignment allows you to practice the skills of curation and interpretation while also making tangible progress on your final project.

Reflective Essay (2-4 pages) – Due December 6

This essay accompanies your digital exhibit and serves as a critical examination of your research and creative process.

In your essay, consider the following:

- **Research Process:** Reflect on the challenges and successes you encountered during your research. How did your understanding of your topic evolve throughout the process? How did your research questions change or develop?
- **Archival and Secondary Sources:** Discuss the role of primary and secondary sources in shaping your interpretation of the topic. How did you select and utilize these sources? In what ways did your engagement with secondary literature influence your analysis of primary materials?
- **Curatorial Choices:** Explain your curatorial decisions in creating your digital exhibit. What criteria did you use to select artifacts and images? How did you organize your exhibit to tell a compelling story?
- **Digital Storytelling:** Reflect on the effectiveness of the Storymap format in communicating your research. What were the strengths and limitations of this platform? How did you use the various features of Storymaps to enhance your narrative?
- **Historical Interpretation:** Discuss the historical significance of your topic. How does your exhibit contribute to broader understandings of St. Louis history? What new insights or perspectives does your work offer?

Your essay should demonstrate a deep understanding of your research topic, a critical awareness of your own research process, and a thoughtful reflection on the strengths and limitations of your digital exhibit.

Remember to support your reflections with specific examples from your research and exhibit.

Paper Formatting:

- Written work should be double-spaced, with 1 inch margins, 12 point font, in a standard, readable typeface.
- The header of each page should include your last name and the page number in the top right corner.
- On the top left of the page, please include your name, professor name, the class name and number, and the date you turn the assignment in.

- Center your title below the information in the top right corner. It should be the same size and typeface as the rest of the text and may be bolded, underlined, or italicized as you choose.