Honors US History Research Paper Topics
Revised 2019.04.30

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REF denotes books in the Reference section of the William L. White library. Reference books cannot be checked out from the library.

* denotes books on more than one reading list. Please do not check these books out of the library but place them on the reserve shelves so others may use them.

Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People

1. How did the Protestant churches in America react to changes after 1865?
* Mark Noll, “Protestantism Shaken,” chapter 14 of A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada
A. Hunter Dupree, Science and the Emergence of Modern America, 1865-1916

2. Why had science replaced religion as the cultural authority by 1900?
* Mark Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada (ch. 14, “Protestantism Shaken”)
Rebecca Edwards, New Spirits, chs. 7-8

3. Why did the U.S. annex Hawaii?
Beisner, From the Old Diplomacy to the New William L. Neumann, America Encounters Japan
*LaFeber, The New Empire
LaFeber, The American Age

4. Were the Open Door notes issued for economic motives?
Morgan, America's Road to Empire
Dulles, Prelude to World Power
Williams, The Tragedy of American Diplomacy
* Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the American People

5. Who were the Progressives?
Robert Wiebe, The Search for Order
Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform

6. Was the Social Gospel an effective response by Christianity to industrialization?
Sidney Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People
*Mark Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada
Winthrop Hudson, Religion in America
7. Was Theodore Roosevelt an overzealous trust-buster?
* George Mowry, *The Era of Theodore Roosevelt*
* Lewis L. Gould, *The Presidency of Theodore Roosevelt*

8. Did Theodore Roosevelt steal the Panama canal?
Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*
David McCullough, *Path Between the Seas*
H. W. Brands, *TR: The Last Romantic*
* Dalton, *Theodore Roosevelt*

9. Was President Taft a Progressive?
Paolo E. Coletta, *The Presidency of William Howard Taft*
William Manners, *TR and Will: A Friendship That Split the Republican Party*
Henry F. Pringle, *The Life and Times of William Howard Taft*
* George Mowry, *The Era of Theodore Roosevelt*

10. Did Theodore Roosevelt cause the Republicans to lose the election of 1912?
Mayer, *The Republican Party, 1854-1966*
Boardman, *America and the Progressive Era, 1900-1917*
Cashman, *America Ascendant*
* Dalton, *Theodore Roosevelt*

11. Who was responsible for the passage of the women’s suffrage amendment to the Constitution?
Sara Evans, *Born for Liberty*
* Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle*
* Steven M. Buechler, *Women's Movements in the United States*
Ellen Carol DuBois, *Harriot Stanton Blatch and the Winning of Woman Suffrage*

12. Was William Jennings Bryan too much of a pacifist?
Bryan, *The Memoirs of William Jennings Bryan, By Himself*
Koenig, *Bryan: A Political Biography*
Levine, *Defender of the Faith*
* Devlin, *Too Proud to Fight*

13. Did submarines cause U.S. entry into World War I?
Arthur Link, *Wilson the Diplomatist*
* Devlin, *Too Proud to Fight*
Knock, *To End All Wars*
John Milton Cooper, Jr., *Woodrow Wilson*

14. Did Woodrow Wilson kill the Treaty of Versailles?
Canfield, *The Presidency of Woodrow Wilson*
August Heckscher, *Woodrow Wilson*
* Thomas A. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*
John Milton Cooper, *Breaking the Heart of the World*

15. Does Marcus Garvey deserve the title “the father of black nationalism”?
No author, *Modern Black Nationalism: from Marcus Garvey to Louis Farrakhan*
Amy J. Garvey, *Garvey and Garveyism*
John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*
Mary Lawler, *Marcus Garvey*

16. Did the 1920s and 1930s movement in African-American arts and letters in Harlem deserve the label of a “Renaissance”?
Howes, *Harlem Renaissance*
Wintz, *Black Culture and the Harlem Renaissance*
Varlack, ed., *Critical Insights*
* Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*

17. Was Warren G. Harding a corrupt President?
Trani & Wilson, *The Presidency of Warren G. Harding*
Francis Russell, *The Shadow of Blooming Grove*
Mee, *Ohio Gang*
Harold Faulkner, *From Versailles to the New Deal*
18. Was the Scopes Trial a victory for religious conservatives?
   Ray Ginger, *Six Days or Forever?*
   Garry Wills, *Under God,* chapters 8-10
   de Camp, *The Great Monkey Trial*
   George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*

19. Why did the KKK revive in the 1920s?
   Lay, *The Invisible Empire in the West*
   David Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*
   Kenneth Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*
   Paul Carter, *The Twenties in America*

20. Did Prohibition work?
   Frederick Lewis Allen, *Only Yesterday*
   Sinclair, *Prohibition, The Era of Excess*
   Richard F. Hamm, article in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of American Political History*

21. Were Sacco and Vanzetti unjustly executed?
   Joughin and Morgan, *The Legacy of Sacco and Vanzetti*
   Russell, *Sacco and Vanzetti: The Case Resolved*
   Watson, *Sacco and Vanzetti: The Judgment of Mankind*
   Young, *Postmortem*

22. Did the women’s rights movement fade in the 1920s?
   Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*
   Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*
   * Flexner, *Century of Struggle*
   * Steven M. Buechler, *Women’s Movements in the United States*

23. Was there a “revolution in manners and morals” in the 1920s?
   Allen, *Only Yesterday*
   Leuchtenburg, *Perils of Prosperity*
   Editors of Time-Life Books, *The Jazz Age, the 20’s*
   Carter, *The Twenties in America*

24. Did Al Smith lose the election of 1928 because he was Roman Catholic?
   Josephson, *Al Smith*
   Oscar Handlin, *Al Smith and His America*
   Page Smith, *Re redeeming the Time: A People’s History of the 1920s and the New Deal*
   Linda Jacobs Altman, *The Decade That Roared*

25. What caused the stock market crash of 1929?
   John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Great Crash, 1929*
   Maury Klein, *Rainbow’s End: The Crash of 1929*
   * David Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*
   Bruce Glassman, *The Crash of ’29 and the New Deal*

26. Did the New Deal end the Depression?
   McElvaine, *The Great Depression*
   Hiltzik, *The New Deal*

27. Was Robert Moses good for New York City?
   Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*
   Caro, *The Power Broker*
   Ballon and Jackson, eds., *Robert Moses and the Modern City*
   Gratz, *The Battle for Gotham*

28. Did FDR blunder in attempting to “pack” the Supreme Court?
   Burns, *Packing the Court*
   * David Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*
   Friedel, *FDR*
   Feldman, *Scorpions*
29. Was Huey Long a demagogue?
   Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*
   Oplotowsky, *The Longs of Louisiana*
   Williams, *Huey Long*
   *David Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*

30. How did the Great Depression affect the American People?
   *David Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*
  editors of Time-Life Books, *Hard Times, the 30s*
   Richard H. Pells, *Radical Visions and American Dreams*

31. Did FDR allow Pearl Harbor to happen?
   Buchanan, *The United States and World War II*
   Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941*
   Gordon Prange, *At Dawn We Slept*
   Robert B. Stinnett, *Day of Deceit*

32. Did “Rosie the Riveter” win World War II?
   Elaine Tyler May, *Pushing the Limits*
   Doris Weatherford, *American Women and World War II*

33. Was the dropping of the atomic bombs justified? (I)
   Peter Wyden, *Day One*
   Keith Wheeler and the editors of Time-Life Books, *The Fall of Japan*
   Martin J. Sherwin, *A World Destroyed: The Atomic Bomb and the Grand Alliance*

34. Was the dropping of the atomic bombs justified? (II)
   Hamby, *Man of the People*
   Herken, *The Winning Weapon*
   J. Samuel Walker, *Prompt and Utter Destruction*
   Ronald Takaki, *Hiroshima: Why America Dropped the Atomic Bomb*

35. Who caused the Cold War? (I)
   Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War*
   Fink, *The Cold War: An International History*
   Mason, *The Cold War, 1945-1991*

36. Who caused the Cold War? (II)
   Gaddis, *We Now Know*
   Graebner, *The Cold War*
   Gardner, *Architects of Illusion*
   *Combs, *American Diplomatic History*

37. Did the GI Bill democratize American housing and education?
   John Morton Blum, *V Was for Victory*
   Geoffrey Perrett, *Days of Sadness, Years of Triumph*
   *James Patterson, *Grand Expectations*
   Glenn Altschuler, *The GI Bill*

38. What caused the urban crisis between 1945 and 1980?
   Be selective, focusing only on the post-1945 period.
   Charles P. Cozic, ed., *America’s Cities: Opposing Viewpoints*
   Lewis Herber, *Crisis in Our Cities*
39. Did William Levitt invent suburbia?
   Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*
   * Patterson, *Grand Expectations*

40. Was Alger Hiss a communist?
   Smith, *Alger Hiss*
   Weinstein, *Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case*
   Whittaker Chambers, *Witness*
   Sam Tanenhaus, *Whittaker Chambers: A Biography*

41. Was Joseph McCarthy’s anti-communist crusade good for America?
   Thomas Reeves, *The Life and Times of Joe McCarthy*
   Cook, *The Nightmare Decade*
   Griffith, *The Politics of Fear*
   Morgan, *Reds*

42. How did Harry S Truman win the election of 1948?
   * Ferrell, *Harry S Truman*
   Hartmann, *Truman and the 80th Congress*
   Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., ed., *The Coming to Power*
   Gary Donaldson, *Truman Defeats Dewey*

43. Why did the US recognize the nation of Israel in 1948?
   Nadav Safran, *The United States and Israel*
   * Thomas A. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*
   Donald R. McCoy, *The Presidency of Harry S. Truman*
   * Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman*

44. Why did Adlai Stevenson fail to become President?
   Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower*
   David Halberstam, *The Fifties*
   Alden Whitman, *Portrait: Adlai E. Stevenson*
   John Bartlow Martin, *Adlai Stevenson and the World*

45. Why did the United States intervene in Korea in 1950?
   Goulden, *Korea: The Untold Story of the War*
   Paige, *The Korean Decision*
   MacDonald, *Korea, the War Before Vietnam*
   Catchpole, *The Korean War*

46. Why didn’t the *Brown* case result in immediate desegregation of schools?
   Schwartz, *A History of the Supreme Court*
   James T. James Tackach, *Brown v. Board of Education*
   Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education*
   Kluger, *Simple Justice*

47. How did the United States get involved in Vietnam in the 1950s?
   * Dudley & Bender, *The Vietnam War: Opposing Viewpoints*, chapter 1, #1-2
   Podhoretz, *Why We Were in Vietnam*
   Brinkley, *Dean Acheson*
   Karron, *Vietnam: A History*

48. Was Betty Friedan “the mother of modern feminism”?
   Frost-Knappman, *Women’s Progress in America*
   Linden-Ward & Green, *American Women in the 1960s*
   Kerber & deHart, *Women’s America* (3rd or 4th ed.)
   Buechler, *Women’s Movements in the United States*

49. Why did John F. Kennedy win the election of 1960?
   Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President, 1960*
   Christopher Matthews, *Kennedy and Nixon*
   * Stephen Ambrose, *Nixon*

50. Did “the pill” revolutionize the lives of American women?
   Elaine Tyler May, *America and the Pill*
   Blanche Linden Ward, *American Women in the 1960s: Changing the Future*
   Stephen Buechler, *Women’s Movements in the United States*
   Glenna Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*
51. Did Kennedy justifiably risk nuclear war in the Cuban Missile Crisis? (I)
Raymond A. Gartoff, “The Cuban Missile Crisis: An Overview,” in James A. Nathan, ed., The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited
Dino A. Brugioni, Eyeball to Eyeball
Blight and Welch, On the Brink
Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Robert Kennedy and His Times

52. Did Kennedy justifiably risk nuclear war in the Cuban Missile Crisis? (II)
Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., A Thousand Days
* James N. Giglio, The Presidency of John F. Kennedy
May and Zelikow, The Kennedy Tapes
Fursenko and Naphtali, “One Hell of a Gamble”: The Secret History of the Cuban Missile Crisis

53. What did King’s “I Have a Dream” speech accomplish?
Garrow, Bearing the Cross
Oates, Let the Trumpet Sound
Lewis, King: A Biography
Weisbrot, Freedom Bound

54. Why did President Kennedy challenge the nation to send a man to the moon?
McDougall, The Heavens and the Earth: A Political History of the Space Program
Burrows, This New Ocean: The Story of the First Space Age
Levine, The Missile and Space Race
Lewis, Appointment on the Moon
Dallek, An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963

55. Did Barry Goldwater’s candidacy for President in 1964 constitute a “conservative revolution”?
Perlstein, Before the Storm
Goldwater, With No Apologies
Theodore H. White, The Making of the President 1964
* Patterson, Grand Expectations

56. Who should receive credit for the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965?
Klinker, The Unsteady March
Hulsey, Everett Dirksen and His Presidents
Garrow, Protest at Selma
Lawson, Black Ballots

57. Was Malcolm X at the center or fringe of the black civil rights movement?
David Gallen, Malcolm X
Clayborne Carson, Malcolm X: The FBI File
Clarke, Bailey & Grant, Malcolm X
*John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom

58. Did Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society bring about economic and racial equality in America?
Doris Kearns, Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream
Gentleman and Mermelstein, eds., The Great Society Reader: the Failure of American Liberalism
Reuben J. Margolin, The War on Poverty

59. Why did President Johnson escalate the Vietnam War in 1965-67?
* George Herring, America’s Longest War
Brian VandeMark, Into the Quagmire
Lloyd C. Gardner, Pay Any Price
Turner, Lyndon Johnson’s Dual War

60. Was Lyndon Johnson’s policy in Vietnam a success?
Irving Bernstein, Guns or Butter
H.W. Brands, The Wages of Globalism
Larry Berman, Lyndon Johnson’s War: The Road to Stalemate in Vietnam
Joseph A. Califano, The Triumph & Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson
61. Was the Tet Offensive of 1968 a military and political defeat?
* Dudley & Bender, The Vietnam War: Opposing Viewpoints, ch. 2
Ronald H. Spector, After Tet
Robert Dallek, Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1961-1973
* Dudley & Bender, The Vietnam War: Opposing Viewpoints
* George Herring, America’s Longest War
Lomperis, The War Everyone Lost – and Won Summers, On Strategy

62. Did George Wallace’s candidacy affect the outcome of the 1968 election?
Dan T. Carter, The Politics of Rage
* James Patterson, Grand Expectations
Tom Shachtman, Decade of Shocks
Jules Witcover, The Year the Dream Died

63. Why was the Stonewall Riot known as the birthplace of the gay rights movement?
Eisenbach, Gay Power
Faderman, The Gay Revolution
McGarry & Wasserman, Becoming Visible

64. Did Nixon and Kissinger gain “peace with honor” in Vietnam?
Robert Mann, A Grand Delusion
Howard Jones, Crucible of Power: A History of American Foreign Relations from 1897
Robert Dallek, Nixon and Kissenger: Partners in Power
* Ambrose, Nixon

65. Why did the US lose the Vietnam War?
Dudley & Bender, The Vietnam War: Opposing Viewpoints
* George Herring, America’s Longest War
Lomperis, The War Everyone Lost – and Won Summers, On Strategy

Goodale, Fighting for the Press
Rudenstine, The Day the Presses Stopped
Graham, Personal History
Sheehan, The Pentagon Papers

67. Was Richard Nixon guilty of committing a crime in the Watergate scandal? (I)
Perlstein, Nixonland
Fred Emery, Watergate
Jeffrey and Maxwell-Long, Watergate and the Resignation of Richard Nixon
Melvin Small, The Presidency of Richard Nixon

68. Was Richard Nixon guilty of committing a crime in the Watergate scandal? (II)
Kutler, The Wars of Watergate
White, Breach of Faith
Drew, Washington Journal
Olson, Watergate: The Presidential Scandal That Shook America

69. Was the US effort to overthrow the Allende regime in Chile in 1973 justified?
Devine, “What Really Happened in Chile,” Foreign Affairs, Vol. 93, No. 4
(30 July/3 August 2014), 26-35. [available from JSTOR)
Prados, President’s Secret Wars
Ranelagh, The Agency
Sater, Chile and the United States

70. Did the 1975 Church Committee hearings change the Central Intelligence Agency?
Weiner, Tim, Legacy of Ashes
Woods, Shadow Warrior
Jeffreys-Jones, The CIA and American Democracy

71. Did the Iranian hostage crisis cost Jimmy Carter the presidency?
Wilentz, The Age of Reagan
Borne, Jimmy Carter
Gould, The Modern American Presidency
Carroll, It Seemed Like Nothing Happened

72. Did the United States mount an effective response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979?
* Jones, Crucible of Power
LaFeber, America, Russia and the Cold War, 1945-1990
Jordan, Crisis
73. **What caused the rise of the Religious Right?**
Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*
Flippen, *Jimmy Carter and the Rise of the Religious Right* [available only on Wuastia]
Williams, *God’s Own Party: The Making of the Religious Right*

74. **Was Ronald Reagan’s foreign policy in the Middle East effective?**
Oren, *Power, Faith, and Fantasy*
Bell, *The Reagan Paradox*
Schulzinger, *US Diplomacy Since 1900*
Teicher and Teicher, *Twin Pillars to Desert Storm*

75. **Did Ronald Reagan’s domestic policies constitute “a conservative revolution”?**
Stockman, *The Triumph of Politics*
Evans & Novak, *The Reagan Revolution*
Pemberton, *Exit With Honor*
Ehrman & Flamm, *Debating the Reagan Presidency*

76. **Should Ronald Reagan have been impeached for the Iran-Contra Scandal?**
Irman & Flamm, *Debating the Reagan Presidency*
Emerson, *Secret Warriors*
Pemberton, *Exit With Honor*
Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*