History 203 L   Michael R. H. Swanson, Ph.D.
Dimensions of History Lab   Office: CAS 110
Wednesdays, 5:00 - 7:50 p.m.   Hours: T, 10:00 - 11:00
CAS 128   M, F, 1:00 - 2:00, W: 2:00-3:00
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Spring, 2008   e-mail: dimensionsofhistory@msn.com

Week of Wednesday, February 27

Reviewing the class to date, you've begun a reflective exercise thinking about the study of history through your commonplace book. At *least* I hope you have...a couple of you have been remarkably casual about this particular requirement for the course. We've spent some time exploring a variety of tools for accessing information electronically through the Internet. This prepared you to begin the *second* of the major projects for the lab: creating annotated bibliographies for two Roger Williams University History or American Studies Courses. The annotated bibliographies will be hosted on MURL. Most (but not all) of you have created MURL accounts and sent the web address to me. I'm going to start sending snide and nasty reminders about these responsibilities. Be fairly warned!

We now are about to embark on the third major project for History 203 lab, the research paper which will be transformed into a web document. We will also begin another skill-building project–one which will allow you to make your own contribution to historical scholarship as a way to start paying back the people who have provided so many things for your interest and use. I will use this week's lab session to introduce both of these to you.   The project isn't glamorous–proofreading never is, but it is absolutely essential as part of the process whereby larger and larger storehouses of information are made available to people. Countless volunteer hours go into making web documents accessible and reliable. You're going to provide some of those hours–if not exactly as cheerful "volunteers" at least as students of history with a sense of the importance of this project for the scholarly world.

To prepare for this week you'll need to do two things *prior* to the beginning of the lab period.

1.   At a *minimum*, decide which of the 10 eras of London you want to investigate further. This implies **having read, at least casually, the Rutherfurd Book.** The eras are outlined on the London Page: http://dimensionsofhistory.homestead.com/2008London.html

2.   Visit the Home Page of the Distributed Proofreader's Project at http://www.pgdp.net/c/, do the "walkthrough" which is a kind of mini-tutorial (http://www.pgdp.net/d/walkthrough/00_Main.htm), and register for an account, at http://www.pgdp.net/c/accounts/addproofer.php. From now until the end of the semester you'll proofread pages and add them to the books being assembled. You will be accountable for a minimum of 5 pages to receive a **C** for the exercise, and greater numbers of pages will allow for the bestowing of a higher grade. There will be a prize for the Proofreading Prince (or Princess) at the end of the term.

Thoughts on choosing a topic for the research paper.

1. **Choose a topic which interests you. This part of the course will be a dead bore if you do otherwise.** With nearly 2000 years of English history to cover, and a culture which contains everything from bawdy houses owned by bishops to a great fire, to the blitz, it shouldn't be too hard to find something of interest.

2. **Choose a topic appropriate to the required length of the paper. I expect this paper to include approximately 2000 - 2500 words of text.** In other words, about ten typed pages, double spaced. This sounds like more than it is. Depending on what part of the country one is from (New Jerseyites speak faster than everyone else, Iowans slower) this would be between 10 and 15 minutes of oral delivery. What will make this paper difficult is choosing a topic to narrow to discuss at that length *or* one so broad that deciding what to omit will create a major headache.

3. **Whether the focus is a movement, a personality, an event, or an idea, it must have interacted in some way or other with one or more of the members of the interlocking clans whose story forms the skeleton upon which Rutherfurd constructs the story of London.**

4. **You must be able to locate *and use* Primary source materials in your investigation. These may be literary materials, objects or facsimiles, maps, photographs or works of art.** You should also be able to locate *some* secondary source materials, using books or online scholarly resources through J-Stor or Lexis-Nexus.

   Phase one, which commences right now, is to select an era and, within that era, two to five topics to begin preliminary investigations upon. Approach these in order of interest. If you strike a goldmine of materials on the first topic, you have no obligation to proceed with further ones. We do *not* want many papers on the same topic. So we're instituting an "first come-first served policy" When you have a good idea of what you wish to write about **create a title and get it to Professor Mulligan and myself**. This will reserve the topic for you.

5. **Want help locating an interesting topic? Here's a hint. TALK TO US.**