Final Essay Assignment:
Living History—A Research Project

All this semester we’ll be reading Erik Larson’s nonfiction book *Devil in the White City*, impressive not only for its historical accuracy and the research involved in its construction, but also for the way it makes forgotten historical figures like Burnham and Holmes come alive so vividly on the page. We’ll be using Larson’s work as an inspiration for our own research, exploration, and recreation of a historical figure of our choice using mostly primary documents to make history feel present and animate.

**Writing Task:** Choose a historical figure whom you are interested in discovering more about AND who has primary documents available at Hoole Library. Using these materials, conduct a research investigation to prepare your own recreation, in a historically imaginative research paper, of one primary facet of that person’s life. By “historically imaginative” we mean that your recreation must be based in historical fact (using the primary documents you found on your character), but also must, for the sake of reader interest, imaginatively recreate parts of your character’s life, setting, personality, experience, and world. Your goal is to understand this one facet of your subject’s life so well that you can depict it confidently to your reader. So in essence, your goal is to create an authentic representation of your figure (“not,” as Larson says, “a work of fiction”), but to use extensive research to make this bygone world seem as lively and memorable as possible.

The content of your paper (or portrait) should include the following qualities:

- a focused subject and thesis
- a synthesis of at least ten sources to create a focused portrait of some aspect of your subject’s life
- a clear thesis statement—may be nuanced, but it should be clear how you intend to present this figure to your audience
- a vivid presentation of events/setting/historical and cultural background of the time and place you are depicting

**Important Requirements:**

- at least TEN total sources
- at least FIVE sources coming from Hoole Library or the Williams Collection (i.e. primary documents)
- NONE of your sources may be derived from internet research, but you will be allowed to use secondary sources derived from Gorgas library and/or its databases to fulfill your research requirements
- use of MLA endnotes rather than parenthetical citations in the text so as not to get in the way of your engaging narrative; that said, it should always be clear where your information is coming from

**The specifics:**

- **TYPED Rough Draft (TWO copies)** due in class (and to Turnitin on Blackboard, before class) on **Tuesday, November 19** for peer review workshop focused on content and development
- **REVISED Draft** due in class on **Thursday, November 15**
- **FINAL Draft due** (EN 103-14) to Turnitin on Blackboard on **Thursday, December 12 at 10:30 a.m.**
- **FINAL Draft due** (EN 103-15) to Turnitin on Blackboard on **Friday, December 13 at 10:30 a.m.**
- **Relevant Brief Guide chapters:** Chapter 10 (Argumentative Synthesis) (review of 2, 3, 4)
- **Word Count:** 2500 words
- **Grade Weight:** 25% of your final average
Grading Criteria—Essay 4: Argumentative Synthesis (Research)

Content & Development: Superior  Good  Average  Developing

- The argumentative synthesis meets the requirements of the assignment (includes at least ten sources, clear, effective thesis statement, etc.)
- The argumentative synthesis is thorough (gives a comprehensive yet focused view of one major aspect of your character’s life)
- The argumentative synthesis appeals to readers’ sense of reason (logos) by being clear and informative about the topic, really using the extensive research to portray the world clearly
- The argumentative synthesis appeals to the readers’ emotions (pathos) by using language that is evocative and captivating, and by depicting scenes that appeal to the readers’ sense of wonder
- The argumentative synthesis makes an appeal to his or her own credibility (ethos) by engaging in enough research to make a clear argument/depiction of the character, and by making clear to the reader where the information is coming from
- The argumentative synthesis doesn’t reveal text information block by block, but instead provides a clear synthesis of information (WR 386-87) based on all the research conducted
- The argumentative synthesis effectively utilizes MLA documentation (using endnotes, and with a properly formatted Works Cited page)

Purpose & Organization: Superior  Good  Average  Developing

- The argumentative synthesis has an overall structure that is logical and easy to follow
- Transitions between not only paragraphs but between sentences work to make the essay flow more smoothly from one point to the next (i.e. sentences “hold hands”)
- The essay effectively utilizes signal phrases when appropriate
- The essay effectively integrates the original source texts (through paraphrase, summary, or quotation) when appropriate

Style / Word Choice: Superior  Good  Average  Developing

- The vocabulary is precise and used correctly
- The writing is strong and clear
- There is variety in vocabulary, sentence length, and sentence structure
- Style, tone, and voice are all appropriate for the audience, purpose, and topic
- Incorporates sentences with an active construction whenever possible
- The style avoids unnecessary wordiness or repetition

Grammar / Mechanics: Superior  Good  Average  Developing

- The paper uses standard grammar without major errors that affect the paper’s clarity (i.e., run-ons or fragments, pronoun references, subject/verb agreement, verb tenses)
- Correct spelling and punctuation help to convey points clearly
- The paper includes correct usage particularly of the comma and the semicolon