

CENTENNIAL EXHIBITION PROJECT OVERVIEW

As part of this course, you will be participating in a special project connected to Students and Faculty in the Archives (SAFA), a program first developed at the Brooklyn Historical Society. SAFA aims to bring students in introductory college courses into local archives to examine and analyze primary documents firsthand. For our purposes, we will be working with the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP) and their collection of materials on the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. We will be studying these documents to better understand the Centennial's significance in modern world history, with particular attention to themes of nationalism, industrialization, and imperialism.

If at all possible, you should participate in the group visit to the HSP library on Monday, October 9. If you cannot attend this trip, you will still participate in the class discussions about the Centennial Exhibition, using common secondary readings and some additional online primary sources, as discussed below. All students will write a paper connecting the Centennial Exhibition to the major themes of the course unit.

Monday, October 7

Before your visit to HSP, please try to read the background essays on the Centennial by Stephanie Grauman Wolf and John Maass, which are both available online via Blackboard. Having this background in place will allow you to examine the documents more knowledgeably and effectively.

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania is located at 1300 Locust Street in Center City Philadelphia (southwest corner of 13th and Locust Streets). You are responsible for your own transportation to the Historical Society. If you take SEPTA Regional Rail, take either the 4:35 or 5:05 train from Overbrook to Suburban Station; once you get above ground at Suburban, it's a 10-15 minute walk south and east to HSP. If you drive or carpool, make sure to allow for rush-hour traffic; parking is available in a commercial lot across the street from HSP, in several nearby garages, or on some local streets via kiosk meters (check the street parking signs very carefully!).

However you travel, please try to be at the Historical Society by 5:30 or so in order to check in, stow your personal items, and get organized in the reading room. Our library session will run from 5:45 to 7:15. Students returning to campus via SEPTA should be able to catch the 7:45 train from Suburban Station, arriving back in Overbrook at 7:58.

During the HSP library session, you will be divided into small groups. Each group will then rotate through several stations, each of which will feature a small set of documents relating to a particular element or theme of the Centennial Exhibition. For each station, you will consult a handout containing identifying information about the documents and a series of brief questions for you to consider. You'll work as a group to examine the documents, answer the questions, and make connections among the various thematic stations.

All students visiting the Historical Society MUST submit a completed copy of the Research Registration Form. This form is attached to this overview handout; *please fill out and sign the form and bring it with you on Monday evening*. Pay particular attention to the following library policies, as noted on the registration form:

- Please use pencils. The HSP has pencils and pencil sharpeners for your use. Items that may accidentally damage library materials, such as pens and markers, are not permitted.
- Please leave coats on the racks and store briefcases, backpacks, and hand bags in the secure lockers in the lobby.
- Laptop computers, paper notebooks that open on three sides, loose paper, and other research supplies are welcome. Please declare all personal research materials at the front desk.
- Cameras and phone cameras are allowed with the use of a photography permission form, available at the front desk. Digital handheld scanners are not permitted.
- Please keep cell phones inaudible. If you must place or take a call, please do so in the lobby.
- Food, drink, and chewing gum are not permitted. Please eat and drink only in the lobby.
- Library materials must be used in designated areas.
- All materials will be subject to a security check upon leaving the library.

Wednesday, October 9

During our regular class meeting, we'll talk about our visit to HSP and work through some of the questions from the handouts. We'll also put the HSP materials into their broader context by referring to the essays by Wolf and Maass.

Students who did NOT go to HSP should read the Wolf and Maass essays and examine additional online primary sources from the Free Library of Philadelphia (accessible via Blackboard). You should explore this digital collection as follows:

- Briefly read through the secondary discussion under "Exhibition Facts."
- Click on "Tours," and then use the interactive map to explore the major buildings.
- For each building page, look carefully at the images. Ask yourself how visitors in 1876 would have felt when walking through the fair's buildings and grounds. What would have struck them most about the Centennial Exhibition, and why?
- On the building pages, also note any excerpts from firsthand testimony about the Exhibition. How did people respond to the fair in 1876?
- Search for images and text related to the following terms: the "balloon view" of the grounds; the Corliss steam engine; the Spanish and Japanese buildings. Again, ask yourself how visitors might have reacted to these images and structures.
- Search for the digitized book, *Something for the Children*. Browse through the book and think about how a young reader in 1876 might have responded to its story and images of the fair.

Students who DID go to HSP are also encouraged to explore the Free Library online collection and to use these materials in their papers.

Friday, October 11

First, we will complete our in-class discussion of the Centennial. I will then distribute a handout on the paper assignment, and we'll spend the rest of the class meeting going over the instructions and discussing strategies for crafting a strong thesis, constructing effective supporting paragraphs, and providing proper source citations. Your papers will be due in class on **Wednesday, October 23**.