

Historical Interview Assignment

In this 9-10 pp. paper, you will write an interview with a figure from the history of journalism based on an imaginary write-up of your subject's reaction to a news event from the past eight weeks. It is important to make a relevant connection between your subject and the news event, e.g. Frederick Douglass and a recent affirmative action case.

Although your primary reference will be a published biography (rather than an autobiography) of the historical figure you choose, you may also conduct research on your interviewee by examining press statements about the person, articles and critiques published about their actions, and biographies that help to explain their life and actions. Because the goal of the imaginary part of the exercise is for you to demonstrate how well you understand this person, in your research you will be looking for indicators of your interviewee's political affiliation, what his or her main cultural concerns were, how he or she earned their money (what his or her financial concerns might be), and who they have important relationships with. Once you have gathered this data, you will apply it to a pre-formulated set of questions you would ask this person if you could. You will answer for them, basing your answers on the data you have gathered.

In the interview, you will assume the role and identity of a reporter. Choose the name of a newspaper or broadcast news organization as your identity. Describe yourself that way in the paper.

Once the deadline for choosing a subject has passed, you may **not** change topics or subjects. So, choose well based on materials and the subject's fit with the chosen news item (and vice versa).

To develop the paper:

1. The paper (9-10 pages) should *include* an introduction that clearly defines who you are as interviewer and who your interviewee is (or was) and how he or she is relevant to our overall discussion. Introduce yourself in 1-2 paragraphs.
2. Select a prominent historical figure who either worked in news journalism or who was greatly affected by journalism. You may refer to our reading or to another source. Note: The journalist you select must be the subject of a published biography. Internet sources may supplement this information, but a published biography is required first.
3. Then write a one-page, double-spaced biographical sketch of the person, including:
 - Birthplace and date of birth
 - Education
 - Any early experiences that shaped the person
 - Professional experience
 - Major professional highlights, focusing on the person's political and professional perspective(s) on major events during his/her lifetime.
4. Write 10 questions that are directly related either to the person's work (questions about the innovations or strategies the journalist used) or a topic related to his or her career (e.g., comparing Spanish-American War coverage to Gulf-War coverage or the War on Terrorism). This is the list of ten questions to pose to your subject. They should follow this general format:
 - **Three** questions about the figure's career. These should be answerable from the biography you're reading. (In your paper, give the page numbers that these answers come from in parentheses at the end of each answer in the following form: Author, date of publication, page number(s).
 - **Five** questions about the chosen current event, e.g. "How is war correspondence in the War on Iraq different today than during the Spanish-American War?"
 - **Two** questions about some unexpected point that you think would be interesting, e.g., "Have you had the chance to surf the Internet?"

Formatting instructions:

- Italicize this biographical introduction above your Q. & A.-formatted interview.
- Write your questions in italicized type, numbering each (1-10).
- The finished paper should be 9-10 pages long, typed, double-spaced, and in a 12-pt. *Times New Roman* font with 1-inch margins.
- Use a running header to list your name and a page number on each page.
- Include a bibliography listing the full references for the book(s) you have used, as well as the news article(s) you are referring to. (You may use the same book and subject of your book review, *if* it was biographical. As before, e-mail Prof. Durham to check any new titles.)
- The finished product should also have attached a typed summary of the questions you have “asked” your historical figure (attached behind the bibliography).
- The finished product is due in your Friday section meeting. See syllabus for due date.

Historical Interview Grading Rubric

<u>Stage 1— General Comments</u>	<u>Value</u>
1. Appropriateness of topic and interviewee	20
2. Biographical sketch (Concise, complete and coherent)	5
3. Interview questions (Well-informed, appropriate)	15
4. Answers (Fit character of Interviewee and well-supported)	20
5. Research used in the paper (In-text citations and bibliography page)	5
6. Format (follows all assignment guidelines)	5
7. Creativity and style (Voice, transitions, approach, strategy)	15
8. Overall effectiveness	15
	Subtotal _____ (+)
9. Errors/penalties: Accuracy and mechanics (per error) (Facts = 5 pts.; Grammar =5 pts.; Spelling = 5pts. Punctuation = 5 pts.)	
	Subtotal _____ (-)
Total/final grade	_____/100