Victorian History Policy Briefings

The Victorians confronted a number of issues that face us as well. What can the way the Victorians addressed these issues teach us? Did the experiences of the Victorians provide any insights into the policy challenges we face today? In other words, what can we learn from the past about the present? These are the questions this assignment is designed to address.

The four topics selected by the class—military interventions overseas, women’s rights, rich vs. poor, and religion vs. science—remain as relevant to our society as they were to the Victorians. Each group will work collaboratively to prepare a briefing to the rest of the class about how the Victorians dealt with the issue of military intervention, etc., and draw insights from their experiences about the challenges we face in addressing the same issue.

The National History Center’s Congressional Briefing program (available at http://nationalhistorycenter.org/) provides a model for you to draw on as you prepare your presentations. Working as a group, identify the parameters of the subject you intend to address and divide the various tasks among the group members. Each group should prepare a one-page briefing paper for distribution to the class, produce a PowerPoint presentation, and select several members of your group to make the public presentations. Others members of the group might conduct a social media campaign about the briefing via Twitter, Facebook Live, and so on. Feel free to adopt any other strategies that you consider appropriate. But keep in mind that your presentations will be limited in their entirety to 30 minutes, so concision is critical.

If anyone assigned to your group fails to participate to the project, you should inform me of this fact. Your grade will be based on the work of the group as a whole—the briefing paper, the oral presentations, the PowerPoint slides, the social media campaign, etc. What I will be looking for is: (1) knowledge of the history of the subject you are addressing; (2) understanding of the ways this history is (or is not) relevant to current policy challenges; and (3) ability to communicate to your findings in a clear and engaging fashion.