History of Space Exploration
Fall 2015

Writing Assignment #1: Exploration and the Race to Space

Purpose of this assignment:
To write an argument that supports your thesis using primary and secondary historical sources including your evaluation of those resources and your evaluation of a countering perspective.

How to proceed:

✦ You need to invent a thesis! This statement or claim should be related to topics covered in the first 3-4 weeks of class. Specifically, arguments related to the motivation for space exploration, the evolution of the US and Soviet Union manned space programs, the recruitment/treatment of early astronauts and cosmonauts, the rapid technological advancements executed between 1958-69, public perception and the space program, etc. are all welcome. A thesis statement should go beyond a statement of fact, or a statement made in one of your sources, it should be something *you* figure out and not a quoted opinion of someone else.

✦ You need to support your thesis with 4-5 sources (at least). It may actually be beneficial to choose a general topic and formulate your thesis after doing some reading, rather than seeking out resources for evidence to support a thesis. Of course, the readings we discussed in class can serve as a useful starting point!

✦ Write a 4-5 page paper (double spaced) that: 1. Explains your thesis, 2. Demonstrates that your thesis is likely correct based on your sources, 3. If applicable, discusses the support (or lack of support) for a countering point of view. Remember that you might need to include some discussion of any potential bias and reliability of your sources.

✦ Include necessary endnotes and a bibliography of all your sources (not part of your page limit). If you are citing a section of a book, remember to indicate the pages in the reference.

Timeline for Assignment:

Thursday, 9/10/15 – Turn in your thesis and a ‘paragraph outline’ of your argument. You should include the first sentence of each paragraph along with supporting references to be used in each paragraph. Remember that these ‘sentences’ provide the narrative for your paper; you may find yourself moving in a different direction than your original thesis! This is fine, but will require you to revise your thesis or your narrative!

Thursday, 9/17/15 – Turn in first complete draft (3 copies) of your historical argument paper. This will be evaluated by your peers for clarity of argument, organization of discussion, and overall writing.

Tuesday, 9/22/15 – Return your ‘review comments’ to classmates and to me (so 2 copies). Each of you will have two papers to review.

Tuesday, 9/29/15 – Turn in final version of your paper.