

ANT 324
From Colonialism to Global Society
Ethnohistory Project: The Jesuit Relations

The Jesuit Relations: An Overview

The Jesuit *Relations* is one of the most important sources for recreating the history of New France. It also has become an important source of information about Native societies encountered by the French, and the economic, social, demographic, and cultural consequences of these encounters. Most of the relations written by the Jesuits in New France were published in Paris by Sebastien Cramoisy. The series was started officially in 1632 by Paul le Jeune, a Jesuit priest and the Superior of the missions in New France. The letters, however, range in date from approximately 1619 to 1673.

Reuben Gold Thwaites undertook a major project from 1896 to 1901 to translate the *Relations* into English from the original French, Latin, and Italian sources. He also included other papers, manuscripts, and letters from the Society of Jesus Archives, and indexed the entire collection. A copy of the complete Jesuit Relations is available in the DePaul Special Collections Library.

The Purpose of this Assignment

I have created this assignment to meet two main pedagogical goals in this class. The first is methodological. I want to help you all work through a research project that uses primary historical sources- a very different enterprise than using secondary source materials. Through this project you will learn what real historical “raw data” looks like, and the skill it takes to accumulate, organize, and interpret thoughtfully this type of material. The steps of this project are designed to aid in this process. The second issue is directly related to the objectives for this course. The *Relations* are ethnohistorical sources: they present historical information about groups of people who were not themselves the authors of the sources. Therefore, if we wish to learn about the Native populations of North America presented in the *Relations* we need to look at these cultures through an historical lens provided to us by Europeans. The Jesuit *Relations* require us look through two such lenses, the original writings of the European Missionaries, and the later compilation, organization, and indexing of the materials at the turn of the 20th century.

General Information

All writing assignments should be turned in typed, double-spaced, single sided, and using standard 12 point font and standard margins. If you choose to e-mail me your papers or use digital drop box, which is acceptable, please be certain that the paper is, in fact, attached to the e-mail, and that you send it in MSWord format or an .rtf file. All writing assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day specified in the course outline. Late assignments are subject to the late policy outlined in the syllabus.

Your Project

This is an extensive project that requires you to use primary ethnohistoric sources to answer a research question of your choosing. You will have four different writing assignments as part of the larger project. We will also devote some class time to your projects to discuss findings/problems/issues you are encountering in your research. You will also have a Writing Fellow

There are five main steps in your project.

1) You must come up with a research question about Native culture(s) in North America (**not** about the Jesuits) to guide your work with the *Relations*. This question should not be so vague that you cannot compile a useful, coherent, and meaningful body of information in the time allotted (e.g., What about Native religion?), nor should it be so specific that the sources will not provide adequate data for your research (e.g., What was the role of food production in gender relations among the Seneca at the time of first contact?). Your question should address an anthropological topic that is of interest to you- religion, ritual, gender, ethnicity, economy, demography, material culture etc. etc. You may want to formulate a question in conjunction with a preliminary perusal of the *Relations* so you can be assured that your question is relevant and feasible given the information at hand. You should also clear your research question with me prior to beginning your research. I want your topic to be of interest to you, but also to be one that you will have success in researching. **Please clear your topic with me by next Wednesday.**

2) The Indexing Project: Your first written assignment is to present/evaluate/ and problematize the indexing of the Jesuit *Relations* as it relates to your topic. For any project, you will need to review the index extensively to compile a list of the potential headings that will shed light on your topic. In addition to looking for headings of interest to you, I would like you to think critically about the process of indexing these documents. What can you learn from the index? Who are you learning about? What might the index obscure/misrepresent (think of this term broadly) for your research? Why? In a three to five page paper, present (1) your research question (2) how you went about analyzing the index to find relevant headings (3) the headings that you think will be important for your paper- rank these under three categories- very important/important/somewhat important (4) a thoughtful discussion of how the indexing of these documents will affect your research. **Paper due January 20th.**

3) Data Presentation/Preliminary Analysis: Your second written assignment is focused around the data collection for your research paper. You will present a summary of the data you have collected under the different headings you identified in the index. Was the information you encountered under each heading what you expected? Were there areas that were more or less useful than you anticipated? Characterize the nature of the documents in the *Relations*. What were the Jesuits' attitudes towards the Native populations? How do you think this has affected what was being reported and how things were reported? How does the document type(s) play into this? What are the implications of these latter issues for your research? **Paper due February 3rd.**

4) Draft of Jesuit Relations Research: This paper will begin to look like a final draft in that it will contain several sections that will appear in your final paper. You will need to prepare several key elements of your paper. I can easily imagine this paper being at least five and as many as ten pages in length.

1. Clearly present your research question
2. Present your methods for data collection
3. Summarize the raw data you collected- this might include a table of “types” of references- a summary narrative that uses a few specific quotes to illustrate your findings- or a combination of these or other means of presentation. This is a summary- not an accounting of all of your data.
4. Analyze your data. This should be where you link your research question to the data you recovered. What does the data tell you about your question?

You will meet with your Writing Fellow in Week 6-7 to review this draft of your paper. The paper is due on February 22nd. You will be peer-reviewing these papers in class on that day.

5) Final Paper: In this paper, which should be 10 to 15 pages in length, you will present the results of your research in a formal paper. This paper will build on the initial draft, but also incorporate secondary sources, including but not limited to Blackburn. Sections 1-4 should reflect revision based on meetings with your writing fellows, your peer-evaluation session, and any feedback you receive from me on the previous draft!

1. Clearly present your research question
2. Present your methods for data collection
3. Summarize the raw data you collected- this might include a table of “types” of references- a summary narrative that uses a few specific quotes to illustrate your findings- or a combination of these or other means of presentation. This is a summary- not an accounting of all of your data.
4. Analyze your data. This should be where you link your research question to the data you recovered. What does the data tell you about your question?
5. Discussion- this is really the most important part. I would like you to present a very thoughtful critique about your research as well as linking it to secondary source materials. How strong do you think your analysis is? Where are its weaknesses? To whom would this be useful? What do you wish was different about your sources? And, perhaps most importantly, how did European views/categories/perspectives affect the research process and the final product, and how did you overcome/acknowledge the issues posed by working with ethnohistoric documents in your project? How does your analysis relate to what other scholars have said about this topic (perhaps those that did and did not use the Relations in their analysis)? In this way you should relate your research to the broader topics/discussions/materials of the course.

You will meet with your Writing Fellow in Week 9-10 to review this draft of your paper. The paper is due on February March 10. You will be peer-reviewing these papers in class on that day.

Your final paper is due on March 17th.

Important Information

You must sign up to use the Jesuit *Relations* in Special Collections. There is a system set up on blackboard to facilitate the reserving of space. Sign up will be on a first come/first serve basis. The Special Collections Department has limited space, staff, and not to mention only one set of the *Relations*, so you all need to plan your time to access these documents. No photocopying of these documents will be allowed for this project.

Although some parts of the Jesuit Relations are available on line, you will be required to use the actual archival materials as part of this course in addition to the online sources.

Grading

For each portion of this project, an **A Paper** will not only reflect the time, effort, care, and organization necessary to collect/present/analyze the appropriate data, but also will engage with the course topics/materials/discussions/themes to present a thoughtful critique of the source materials and research results. A **B paper** will be of overall high quality, but will be lacking in depth in either the research or reflection/critique. A **C paper** will be lacking in both research quality and analytical reflection reflecting. Such a paper will reflect only a cursory understanding of the course material and the process of primary research. Papers below these standards will be graded accordingly.