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FURSCA

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End of Summer Report

My project goal was to research the effects of US Christianity on the Cold War whilst learning how to do archival research in a collegiate setting. I wanted to research the course of Christianity and religion through the Cold War and the impacts it had on the US, Cuba, China, and the USSR. I also wanted to research the effects of propaganda both pro and anti-religious. This led down several avenues of different forms of propaganda and discerning the difference in domestic propaganda and foreign propaganda. Over time my project evolved and adapted to what I was finding, and I discovered the topic of Communist nations creating a religious ideology. One of the final aspects of my project was looking into the archival information found at Michigan based religious colleges, Hope College, Calvin University, Hillsdale College, and of course Albion College. I also wanted to include the University of Michigan to supplement my research with missionary documents held at the Bentley Historical Library. My goal was to visit several if not all these colleges during the 10 weeks to gather evidence, from newspapers to faculty/student writings and images, that would support my claim that religion in the US negatively demonized the “other” during the Cold War.

Did I achieve all of this? No. Did I get close to achieving all of this? Not really. I aimed high with my goals when setting out to do this project with not enough know-how to fully pull it off. I realized quickly that getting to some of these colleges and universities would prove difficult with some of the restrictions still in place. Communications between myself and some of the organizations worked very slowly, not hearing back from some at all. In the end, I was only able to visit Albion to do archival research. I was able to access digital archives for most of the schools I was interested in and found a good supply of newspaper articles that both supported and contradicted my original thesis. In my research, I struggled with the fact that my thesis continued to change and develop with each source I explored and read. Having a liquid thesis caused me to struggle in what I was looking for and made it difficult to narrow in my research. My research expanded constantly and allowed me to chase down interesting subjects but also led me down several rabbit holes of information. In terms of execution, I got around to the archival research significantly later that what I had originally planned. This caused my research to stall early on and progress very slowly in the middle of the process. My lack of primary sources made it near impossible to start writing; this forced me to adapt my project for the future.

It was always my intention to continue this project during the school year as my senior thesis, my goal was to get all the research done over the course of the summer. This became more and more difficult, as stated above. As I move towards the semester, I am planning on continuing my research. There are more books and sources that I want to explore, some found late in my research like For God and Globe by Michael G. Thompson. One of the key areas of my research was the Moral Re-Armament Movement; I discovered them with the help of Dr. Ho near the middle of my research and found two separate collections stored at Columbia University in New York and at the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. One of my goals for the semester is to be able to visit both locations and see the collection in person. I want to also attempt to gather oral records of the state of the college during the Cold War, interviewing prominent figures such as past Albion chaplains and professors such as Professors Wesley Dick and Andrew Grossman. I want to make this my senior thesis and work towards making it a reference for graduate programs in the future.

I want to give a huge thank you to everyone from the FURSCA program for all the support during these 10 weeks, especially Professor Vanessa McCaffrey and Renee Kreger. I also want to give a huge shout out to my advisor, Dr. Joseph Ho, for all of his hard work in helping me tackle this large project. I could not have made it even this far without Dr. Ho being the expert and constant that he is.