Senior Project Sample Proposal

Name: Fred Kleinschmidt
February 8, 2013

Type of Project: Research

Topic: What criteria do historians use to define some American Presidents as “great” while placing others in the “average” or “poor” category? How do they reach consensus?

I will be using the American Historical Association’s ranking list of American presidents as my guideline. I plan to do research into the top three and the bottom three presidents’ administrations and see if I can identify characteristics these administrations have in common, both good and bad. In my presentation, I will name the common characteristics among the various presidents and explain how these traits contributed to each one’s ranking. My presentation will also include how these characteristics may have been reinterpreted over time, as ideas about the success or failure of a particular administration have evolved.

Proposed Source Areas for Research: In addition to books and the Internet, I plan to interview eminent historian David Kennedy at Stanford University for his insights into the success or failure of my chosen administrations.

Preliminary Bibliography:


Felsenberg, Alvins S. The Leaders We Deserved (and a Few We Didn’t): Rethinking the Presidential Rating Game. New York: Basic. 2008.


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Mr. Steven Schuh
Mentor