

## **SURF Research Proposal Form**

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**Instructions:** The SURF proposal has 5 sections. Each section specifies how long your response should be (approximate word number). Please keep your responses single space and use 12pt font. While it is useful and appropriate to use technical language in parts of your proposal (terms specific to your discipline), you should aim to have your proposal understandable to a more general academic audience. Avoid jargon or overly abstract phrasings. Type or paste in your responses to the 5 prompts below. When you are finished, save the document as a PDF with a filename in this format:

***ProposalYourLastName.pdf (example: ProposalSmith.pdf)***

You will be asked to upload this completed PDF research proposal form when you submit your application online.

**1. Research Statement:** 150-200 words. What specific question will you pursue with your research and why is it important to the field? This section enables you to give the reviewers an overview of your project. Keep in mind that other sections give you an opportunity to develop more details around the background, methodology, and rationale for the project.

How did women's clubs shape women's roles in the creation of modern conservatism in the 20th Century? Women's clubs are often exclusively remembered as advocating for progressive causes—education, suffrage, conservation—but little attention has been paid to the way that some of them gave rise to nationalist, anti-communist clubs for women. How did the structure of those clubs compare to that of the YWCA, or any of the hundreds of women's clubs across the country? How did women reconcile their often-simultaneous involvement in progressive clubs and far-right, more conspiratorial ones? Answers to these questions will help us to better understand the enduring appeal of far-right conspiratorial thinking to women, including modern proponents of theories such as QAnon. While the history of conspiracy theory is increasingly recognized as an important field of study, little research exists on women in far-right conspiratorial groups. Who were the women involved in those groups, and what might they teach us about the appeal of conspiracy to modern women? This project will utilize archival materials from midwestern women's clubs (conservative and otherwise) to explore the social circles, intellectual interests, and political inclinations of clubwomen.

**2. Background to the Topic and Rationale for Your Research:** 300-400 words. What is already known about the field of research you will be working on? How does your research project fit in with what is being done currently in the field, and how does it build upon knowledge on the topic or fill in gaps in the field? Please cite references from the literature when applicable; these citations should be listed in #5 of this proposal.

My interest in this topic builds on my research on a little-known clubwoman named Marguerite Dice. By digging through newspaper archives and reading hundreds of articles, I pieced together her surprising life story. Born in 1884 to a Republican Union Army veteran father and politically connected mother, she dedicated her life to

progressive women's clubs, but spent at least the last 30 years of her life advocating for conservative, anticommunist causes. Her life neatly tracks with the evolution of the Republican Party over the same period—she was born into the semi-liberal party of Lincoln, but died a fervent supporter of the hyper-conservative party of Goldwater and Nixon in 1969—making her an interesting case study in the evolution of not only women's conservatism, but American conservatism generally. Functionally no secondary source material exists on her life, save for brief mentions of her role as hostess for the inaugural meeting of the far-right John Birch Society (Kempker 2018, Mulloy 2018), and my project will seek to convey her demonstrated political savvy and significance in a way that no research has attempted to. Her life provides temporal and geographic limits on my project: my research will focus on the Midwest in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Existing literature on the politics of women's clubs recalls them to be progressive, and indeed, many organizational publications from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century display liberal leanings (Groeling 1949, Izzo 2018). However, Dice and her clubmates suggest that many clubwomen were not as liberal as their club affiliations might suggest (Kempker 2018), and this is where my project will break new ground. Scholars have not yet compared progressive women's clubs with their conservative counterparts, and my project will seek to explore structural and ideological similarities between the two so as to build a more complete history of women on the American right. White, middle and upper-class women are increasingly understood to be critical actors in conservative organizing (Delegard 2012, Jeansome 1996, McGirr 2001, Mulloy 2018, Nickerson 2014), and I hope to add a new dimension to our understanding of how women gained the ideological and organizational tools necessary to successfully influence local and national politics throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond. Existing research on conservative women (McGirr 2001, Nickerson 2014) focuses on organizing tactics that women deployed in their communities, and I hope to trace those strategies back to their non political civic and social organizations.

**3. Research Plan - Methodologies and Timeline:** 450-700 words. Please define the main challenges of your project and what research methods you will use to address these challenges. Describe your research plan for the summer in chronological order - either use a week-by-week timeline or phases approach (i.e. week 1, week 2...or phase 1, phase 2...). Each week/phase should specify goals, action items, and methods. Please include in your plan information about exactly how/when you will check in with your research mentor.

**Phase 1: Analysis of women's civic and social clubs (May 23 – June 5)** During the first week of this phase, I will read select chapters of *The History of the Women's Club Movement in America* (Croly, 1898) and *American Girls and Global Responsibility* (Helgren, 2017) to better acquaint myself with the social and political role of women's clubs in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The former describes, in great detail, the Progressive Era development of women's clubs, and will serve as a primer on the early years of women's clubs. The latter takes a broader view of women's political involvement in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, which is where my project will focus. During the second week of this phase, I will turn to archival material I have collected. Specifically, I

will reference Dorothy Groeling's collection of YWCA materials from the 1940s and put them in conversation with Dr. Erin Kempker's *Big Sister* to compare and contrast women's approaches to nationalism versus internationalism, which Kempker argues was a central component of conservative women's organizing. Groeling's materials are accessible online, and outline specific tactics used by YWCA chapters to promote political involvement.

### **Phase 2: Mapping Marguerite Dice (June 6 – June 26)**

During this phase, I will complete my review of primary source material relevant to the life of Marguerite Dice, an influential clubwoman and conservative activist. I have begun the process of curating a comprehensive timeline of her life through reading and organizing nearly five hundred newspaper clippings, and in this phase, I will review all of those clippings, record their contents in citation management software, and analyze patterns of women she socialized with (as recorded in the "Society" pages of newspapers) and ideas she was attracted to, as indicated by talks she gave and speakers she hosted. My goal will be to create a map of her social network and intellectual interests, which will in turn allow me to understand who, exactly, ran in her circles, and how other women engaged with apolitical and anticommunist clubs. I am also in conversation with archivists in Topeka, KS and Indianapolis, IN to devise a plan for me to gain remote access/photocopies of materials I have identified as relevant.

In this period, I will also be in contact with the only scholar with any published research on Dice as a subject. I have already been in touch with Dr. Erin Kempker of the Mississippi University for Women about her research, and plan to further consult with her about archival material she has accessed and things she has learned about Dice as a social and political character.

**Phase 3: Analysis of women's anticommunist clubs (June 27 – July 17)** I will begin this phase by reviewing materials I collected during my recent visit to the Bancroft Library. There, I accessed anticommunist organizer Joseph Kamp's lengthy pamphlet on political organizing within the YWCA, and took photos for further review. I also accessed materials from the Minute Women of the USA and other far-right groups (part of the George F. Malone collection) and photographed everything relevant to my research. I will examine these materials for information about the structure and activities of women's right-wing groups, with the express goal of comparing them to materials I reviewed in phase 1. If COVID conditions allow, I will return to the archives and adapt my source base depending on what is possible at the time.

I will also tie up loose ends from previous weeks and phases and work on a plan to continue my research in a History 199 independent research course in the fall (which I intend to enroll in as a part of the year-long honors thesis program). Because I plan to be finished with the bulk of the research by mid-July, I will be able to extend phases as necessary.

Throughout the summer, I will provide weekly (every Friday afternoon) updates to Professor Rosenthal about my progress via email. At the end of each phase, I will

schedule a meeting via Zoom to summarize my findings and what they mean for the next phase, and in the final week, the meeting will discuss next steps for the fall semester.

**4. Your Qualifications and Project Affiliations:** 150-250 words. What experiences have prepared you to carry out this research project, including coursework, previous research experiences, and other relevant skill building? If your project involves access to people and/or institutions to support your work (i.e. interviewing subjects or partnering with institutions), please describe the affiliations, permissions and agreements you have already established as part of your plan.

I have completed coursework in a broad range of subjects in American history, including a proseminar on the history of American conservatism. In my proseminar, I focused my studies on the far-right and the development of conspiratorial groups, opting to write several papers on the topic, and doing initial archival research on groups such as the John Birch Society that will serve as a foundation for my project.

I am a research apprentice at the Oral History Center at the Bancroft Library, where I am doing original archival research on prominent women in Berkeley history, and using what I find to write profiles and podcast scripts that document their professional and personal lives. In this position, I am learning how to view the archives from an investigatory position, and am honing my ability to tell stories based in primary source material.

Additionally, I have conducted preliminary archival research on several anticommunist groups and publications at the Bancroft Library, including materials from the Minute Women of the USA (of which Marguerite Dice was a leader), and *Women's Voice*, an anticommunist women's newsletter. My preliminary work on Dice and these groups reveals the sort of trends this project would build off of and has equipped me with the skills necessary to draw useful information out of primary source materials.

**5. Citations and Core Texts:** No longer than 1 page. This section should contain citations for any references you made in your proposal, and you are welcome to list any additional texts that you feel are central to your project.

Croly, J.C. *The History of the Woman's Club Movement in America*. Alexandria, VA: Alexander Street Press, 1898.

Delegard, Kirsten. *Battling Miss Bolsheviki: The Origins of Female Conservatism in the United States*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

Groeling, Dorothy T. *The YWCA and the United Nations: Education Activities and Action for World Understanding*. New York, NY: Woman's Press, 1949.

Helgren, Jennifer. *American Girls and Global Responsibility: A New Relation to the World During the Early Cold War*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2017.

- Izzo, Amanda L. *Liberal Christianity and Women's Global Activism: The YWCA of the USA and the Maryknoll Sisters*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2018.
- Jeansonne, Glen. *Women of the Far Right: The Mothers' Movement and World War II*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Kamp, Joseph P. *Behind the lace curtains of the YWCA: a report on the extent and nature of infiltration by communist, socialist and other left wing elements, and the resultant red complexion of propaganda disseminated in, by and through the Young Woman's [sic] Christian Association*. New York, NY: Constitutional Education League, 1948.
- Kempker, Erin M. *Big Sister: Feminism, Conservatism, and Conspiracy in the Heartland*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2018.
- Malone, George F. Carton 1 and Box 1. George F. Malone collection of anti-communist and right-wing literature, 1940-1965. Northern Regional Library Facility at Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley Libraries, Berkeley, CA. 11 February 2020.
- McGirr, Lisa. *Suburban Warriors*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Mulloy, D.J. *Enemies of the State: The Radical Right in America from FDR to Trump*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018.
- Mulloy, D.J. *The World of the John Birch Society: Conspiracy, Conservatism and the Cold War*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt Univ. Press, 2014.
- Nickerson, Michelle M. *Mothers of Conservatism: Women and the Postwar Right*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014.
- Wendt, Simon. *The Daughters of the American Revolution and Patriotic Memory in the Twentieth Century*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2020.