

Potentially Fun Paper Topics

Ideas about Boston/Cambridge

- Investigate the impact of Prohibition and Progressive Movement in Boston through the [Boston Brewery Posters](#) (Digital Commonwealth).
- Understand the importance of Boston Harbor and MIT in developing US maritime technology and strategy through Leventhal Map Center's [Maritime Charts and Atlases](#) and the MIT Museum's [Hart Nautical Collection](#).
- How did Boston urban planning respond to the development of American sports like baseball? Examine the history of Boston sport arenas like Fenway Park through [Boston Sports Temples](#) (Digital Public Library of America).
- Use the [Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps](#) to think about how Boston was built as a city through the Progressive Era.

Ideas about MIT/history and science

- During WWII, the US government invested a great deal of money in universities to develop military technologies. What did MIT students' and faculty participation in the war effort actually look like, and how did this reflect other political and social realities in the 1940s? Use case studies like [Project Whirlwind](#) or the [MIT Radar School Collection](#) to think about dual-use scientific research (MIT Institute Archives).
- Taylorism and the "incorporation of America" often has a parallel in modern-day operations research, which has its roots at MIT during WWII. Use the [Philip Morse papers](#) to think through the historical development of optimizing labor.
- MIT has a long history of leveraging scientific expertise in public policy and diplomacy. Use the [James R. Killian Collection](#), [Arthur Ippen Papers](#), or the [Victor Weisskopf Papers](#) to think about different ways that technical expertise can impact American politics.
- Unlike math or physics, disciplines like [chemical engineering](#) or [linguistics](#) were established relatively recently. Using the papers of some of the founding professors in these disciplines, how did the social or political circumstances of the time necessitate the creation of these new departments?

Related to contemporary topics

- Historicize the plot of *Black Panther* using [African American Newspapers Database 1827-1998](#) and [African American Periodicals, 1825-1995](#): is Killmonger a villain? What is Afrofuturism? What are the stakes of armed Black struggle in the United States, using *Negroes with Guns* as a starting point?
- The ACLU is increasingly dealing with cases concerning privacy and technology. Using the [ACLU Papers 1912-1990](#), investigate a historical case that helped shaped the ways that law enforcement, surveillance, or privacy protections govern technology today.
- Use [CIA Family Jewels Indexed](#) to investigate one of the CIA's most closely held secrets about domestic intelligence activities during the Cold War to think about the role of intelligence agencies, national security, and surveillance in the US.
- The US was very concerned about China during the Cold War. Use the [China and the US: From Hostility to Engagement](#) and [US Intelligence and China](#) collections to investigate diplomatic cables and US intelligence estimates concerning the US-PRC security relationship to think about the Global Cold War and the Color Line.