Limitations on Jewish Immigration to the U.S. During World War II

My research paper will deal with the immigration restrictions set forth by the United States during World War II, specifically on Jewish refugees from Europe during the Holocaust. In 1938, the U.S. slightly relaxed its existing immigration restrictions, but from 1939 to 1941 the nation almost completely closed its doors to outsiders. From 1941 until 1944, President Roosevelt and his advisers debated whether to increase the number of Jewish refugees admitted into the U.S., but ultimately decided against changing the existing policy. During World War II, the United States admitted fewer than half of the number of immigrants allotted according to the quotas. Furthermore, the country intentionally required documents that Jewish immigrants could not provide. I seek to find out why FDR and his top advisers stood by and allowed so many Jews to be killed in Europe.

Some research has been done on this topic, yet there is still room for much more examination. David S. Wyman’s *The Abandonment of the Jews* provides a comprehensive, relatively objective account of the many groups conflicting over the country’s lack of action and of the many meetings that took place to look for a solution. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has put together exhibits on its website and in the museum, which I intend to visit in March. Another useful source is Richard Breitman’s *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933-1945*, which argues that the poor economic condition of the United States, not anti-Semitism, was the major reason for not accepting refugees. Finally, there are a number of recently declassified U.S. government documents from the Roosevelt era that should prove most valuable in shedding new light on the FDR administration’s decision-making process. Many historians have wrestled with why the United States government refused to help a people in dire need, and I hope to contribute new scholarship to this debate.
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Working title

Thesis/Research Question (i.e. what you plan to accomplish with your research)

Topic

Potential Sources