Argumentative Research Paper
Page Length: 5-7 pages
Fall 2016 || ENG 111-019L

This assignment is designed to teach you effective argument writing and research skills, as well as how to synthesize multiple sources with your own ideas. The assignment involves multiple steps and an investment of time on your part. This cannot be completed in a day or two or even in a week. Work accordingly, pace yourself. Long-term projects are part of college life and take time for research, analysis, and writing. This is a mini-version of a major paper; working through the components should assist you in learning the process as it applies to other college-level work.

Prompt

For this assignment, you will be crafting a researchable, arguable, and sufficiently narrow thesis that touches on the topic of higher education.

The researched argument assignment asks you to pick a topic about which you feel passionate— a problem you see in the area of higher education. Choose a target audience who has interest in your topic. Generalized topics for generalized audiences may not be appropriate for this essay unless you can conclusively demonstrate that you have a new angle and an audience that could indeed be changed by reading what you write. Emphasis will be placed on the fact that this problem must be specific and narrow – in other words, not just “animal abuse” but rather “the problem of greyhound abuse in Fairfax County”; not “being green” but “supporting Virginia farmers by shopping at farmer’s markets”; not “women’s rights” but “equalizing representations of women’s history in D.C. museums.” You will write a thesis statement explaining why your problem is serious and/or what approach must be taken to solve it.

You may choose your own topic, so long as it meets the above requirements, or choose from a list of prompts. Begin your paper by establishing your ethos and building your reader’s confidence in your words. Build the body of your paper using at least four sources and address the common requirements, issues, and alternatives to your particular topic.

Required Research:

Find at least 5 reliable sources related to this topic, including at least one source that focuses on alternatives or arguments different from the one you plan to make, one book, and at least one scholarly, peer-reviewed journal article from a database, to complete your annotated bibliography. Web based sources are not allowed for this essay, or must be preapproved.

You will integrate references to at least 4 of those sources into your final essay. Your outside research should help you understand the problem at hand hasn't happened yet and help you persuade your audience to move with you toward your conclusion.
Part 1. Getting Started Formulating Your Research Question:

Question Formulation Component: 15 points

Due: Wednesday 2 November 2016

One way to get started is by asking “how” and “why” questions. They can lead to discovering how something works.

Examples of How or Why questions:

- Why do people apply to so many colleges? Is it necessary? Is it realistic? How can this system be changed to make the college selection process more streamlined?
- Why don’t women lacrosse players wear helmets?
- Why aren’t there more non-academic activities offered on campus after six in the evening or on weekends?

Assignment: Please submit 3 questions in the “how” or “why” format that could lead to a research-based paper. Below the three questions, list three sub questions.

FORMAT EXAMPLE:

1. Why are long boards and paddleboards making a significant impact on the surfboard market?
   a. Who is buying these boards? Older surfers?
   b. What is the price range?
   c. What is it about these boards that make them appealing?

2. Why do sand replenishment projects disturb the wave formation and how long do the effects last?
   a. How do they decide where to replenish and how much?
   b. What recourse can be had if the replenishment causes drastic changes to the coastline and or surfing conditions?
   c. Is the ecosystem affected either positively or negatively?

3. How well do transfer students from community colleges perform compared to their peers who begin their college educations at four-year institutions?
   a. What is their comparative graduation rate?
   b. What percentage drops out after the transfer year?
   c. What are the most popular majors between the two groups?

Suggested Websites and Databases:

- [http://libguides.nvcc.edu/findtopic](http://libguides.nvcc.edu/findtopic)
- [http://www.nvcc.edu/library/](http://www.nvcc.edu/library/)
  o Click on “Articles”
    - Issues and Controversies
    - Opposing Viewpoints

Submission: Submit your three “How” or “Why” questions each with three sub questions to the Research Essay Submission section of Blackboard by Wednesday 2 November 2016
Part 2. Where Should I Look to Find Information & What is My Best Opinion?
Research Process Component

This Involves:
  Research Process – 11/2/16
  Annotated Bibliography – 11/9/16
  Three (3) Paragraph Literature Review – 11/9/16

1. The Research Process
   We will be going to the library on 2 November 2016 to conduct research, explore databases, examine primary and secondary sources, learn research methods.

2. Annotated Bibliography
   You will collect at least 5 sources. Of these, at least 4 need to be cited in your actual work. In your Annotated Bibliography, you will first make a Bibliography according to MLA format (in alphabetical order; hanging indents; etc.), and then write a short paragraph below each entry about the argument the author make in that text. In your paragraph, you should discuss: the author’s argument and main focus and then in what ways this work will aid in your argument for your research paper. You can comment, for example, on the text’s length/size/medium, and how a particular chapter or data point will be useful to you.
   For further information, see: Everyone’s an Author Ch. 23, pp. 500-504, “Annotating a Bibliography.”

3. Three (3) Paragraph Literature Review
   In the literature review, you will take stock of the 5 sources that you have examined all together. Unlike the Annotated Bibliography, where you considered each source separately, this will be an overall view of the current state of research in your field. It will be helpful for you if you group the overall research into genres or categories, and discuss them in that way.
   For example, you may say: “Thus far, research in the field of W has primarily focused on the following broad categories: X, Y, and Z.” You can go on to describe each category.
   This paragraph can later be inserted directly into the opening pages of your research paper as you work to differentiate between what research already exists and the new knowledge you are contributing in your research paper.
   For further information, see: Everyone’s an Author Ch. 15, pp.317-324, “Literature Review.”

Submission: Submit your Annotated Bibliography and your Literature Review to the Research Essay Submission section of Blackboard.
Part 3. Prepare and Share: Some say 80% of Writing is Prewriting

Prewriting Component

This involves:
- One (1) Sentence Thesis Question – 11/16/16
- Structured Outline – 11/16/16
- Five (5) Minute Research Presentation – 11/16/16

1. One (1) Sentence Thesis Question
   Write a clear, well-crafted, and explicit single sentence Thesis statement. This should be an open as opposed to a closed thesis statement that is original and sufficient narrow and touches on the topic of higher education. (You will still have an opportunity change it, but you need to have a concrete statement of what you think you will be writing about.)

2. Structured Outline
   In your Structured Outline, you will synthesize and analyze your various sources in service of the argument of your paper. An outline is a “blueprint” or “plan” for your paper. It helps you to organize your thoughts and arguments. A good outline can make conducting research and then writing the paper very efficient. Your outline page must include your:
   - Paper Title
   - Thesis statement
   - Major points/arguments indicated by Roman numerals (i.e., I, II, III, IV, V, etc.)
   - Support for your major points, indicated by capital Arabic numerals (i.e., A, B, C, D, E, etc.)

Roman numeral I should be your “Introduction”. In the introduction portion of your paper, you’ll want to tell your reader what your paper is about and then tell what your paper hopes to prove (your thesis). So an Introduction gives an overview of the topic and your thesis statement. The final Roman numeral should be your “Conclusion.” We will discuss ways to craft a conclusion so that it is not simply a summary of what you have written thus far. Remember that a good outline makes writing easier and more efficient.

3. Five (5) Minute Research Presentations
   Finally, as part of the assignment, each student will briefly (5 minutes) present the results of his/her research at this point and a summary of the argument.

Submission: Submit your single (1) sentence Thesis Statement and your Structured Outline to the Research Essay Submission section of Blackboard.
Part 4. Writing is Rewriting: Writing it Down, Giving Credit, and Revising
The paper based on your research and analysis.
Bring in Various Rough Drafts and Progress Work: Throughout

This Involves:
   Your 5-7 page Research Paper
   Revisions: First Drafts, Subsequent Drafts, Final Draft
   Works Cited Page

1. Writing a Draft and Using Supplementary Research

   It is possible to spend a lifetime researching one topic but eventually the research must stop, the analysis begin, and the paper written. Despite your best plans, a small amount of research will may be required to fill in gaps you discover as you write your paper. If you do additional research, keep it short.
   
   To be fair and complete, your paper will present your supporting evidence but also note dissenting viewpoints. Part of analysis is the ability to recognize another opinion but differentiate it from your own.

2. Works Cited Page
   Giving Credit Where Credit is due, and proper formatting
   Citations will be graded separately and worth up to 15 points.
   
   The process of communicating your ideas to a scholarly audience invites debate and discussion. In order to facilitate the exchange of ideas it is important to correctly cite the sources of your information in order to help readers locate the material and examine it. Another important reason to cite your sources is to give credit to another writer for their ideas, opinions, and reported research findings.

3. The Revision Process (It’s never really over)

   It isn’t over until the fat lady sings. Writers often go through many drafts on a piece before it is considered ready for publishing. As you write your drafts, we will be conducting workshops and conferences. Here, we will check in on what you’d like to accomplish and discuss constructing your paper in such a way that demonstrates a greater understanding of your research argument.

Submission: Submit your Rough Draft and Final Draft with Works Cited Page and Author’s Note to the Research Essay Submission section of Blackboard.
Part 5. Sharing our Ideas: Radical Revision—Advocacy Letter, “Tell it to the Judge”
Minimum Length 500 words/Maximum 800

This “radical revision” assignment will have you transforming your argumentative research paper into a different kind/style of writing that you will attempt to PUBLISH somewhere (or send out into the world/beyond the walls of our classroom). Essentially, this assignment will show how you can adjust your writing, tone, and organization depending on your targeted audience.

One purpose of research is to use evidence to change the way a community thinks about an issue. Sometimes the first step to creating new legislation or new products comes from research papers. The challenge is getting new information derived from research to the people who have the ability to make change happen. The challenge of this two-page letter is to identify a person who has authority or expertise to help disseminate the findings of your research paper. The person may be a Congressman or a Senator, or even a local official or head of an organization. The purpose of your letter is to present the problem, what you discovered during your research and your suggested solution. This letter will ultimately ask the person in power for some form of action. Don’t be surprised when they write back to you with a response.

In this assignment, you will radically revise your researched argument into a piece of writing or performance that has the potential to directly make a difference in the world. Do not underestimate your abilities and voice to be heard. The purpose of this revision can be to inform, educate, or inspire action, and can take almost any form, including more creative alternatives. For example, you could revise your paper into a letter to a senator, a song, a poster, a poem or a proposal.

You may not gather any new information—i.e, use only the research from your research essay. You will need confirmation of your attempt to publish it (e.g. the obligatory “Thank you for your comments” from The Washington Post or local congressman’s office, etc.).

Submission: You must submit your Radical Revision letter to the Research Essay Submission section of Blackboard as well as “BCC” (blind carbon copy) me in your email to your organization (Bcc: dmohiuddin@nvcc.edu).