

Research essay

ENG 180, Spring 2007

Write a four or five page argumentative essay which involves formal or informal research, using rhetorical techniques of your choice. Polish your essay to ensure it is your best work.

Schedule & assessment

Milestone	Date	Points
<i>Prospectus</i> : explain your topic and the claim you wish to make.	4/10	15
<i>Draft</i> : a draft of your essay which we can discuss in a conference.	4/19	40
<i>Conferences</i> : thirty minutes discussing your essay with me.	4/19 – 4/26	20
<i>Rewrite</i> : a substantial rewrite of your essay which builds on the draft.	4/26 or 5/1	50
<i>Final</i> : the final essay, including your prospectus, draft & rewrite.	5/10	175
Total		300

Milestones

Prospectus: Explain your topic (your subject matter) and the claim you wish to make (your argument about that subject). Note the rhetorical strategies you expect to use. Note the texts and types of texts you anticipate drawing on for research.

Delivery: Email or deliver this to me by 4/10. I will respond by email.

Assessment: completeness, timeliness.

Draft: A first attempt to write the essay. The more complete the better, but I don't expect polish or perfection at this point. However, you should attempt to follow MLA format and you should be quoting and citing appropriately (it's easier to do this right the first time than go back). Your draft should include any research materials you've found but haven't figured out how to integrate into your essay—I can help with that. Finally, you should also note any problems you are having, so I can help you address them.

Delivery: Deliver to my mailbox 4/19, in lieu of class. I will respond at your conference.

Assessment: completeness, strength of ideas, quality of research, quality of commentary.

Conference: Make an appointment with me and spend 30 minutes reviewing your draft. Be on time and be prepared to discuss what you're proud of, what you think needs work, and ways I can help you with the essay.

Delivery: Come to my office (Simpkins 217) when scheduled 4/19–26. Sign up in class 4/17.

Assessment: timeliness, preparedness.

Rewrite: Rewrite your draft, taking our conference into account, and striving to make your paper as high-quality as possible. Include a copy of your draft.

Delivery: Turn in to my mailbox (Simpkins 122) 4/26 (if your conference was before 4/23) or bring to class 5/1 (if it was after). I will bring comments to our final class 5/3.

Assessment: organization, strength of argument, improvement from draft

Final: This should be your capstone—your best work, well-executed in every way, the best writing you can do. As was the case with previous assignments, please turn in your draft and all materials with the final paper. Correctness and format matter, so pay attention to those!

Delivery: Turn in to my mailbox (Simpkins 122) by 5/10 at 4:00pm.

Assessment: organization, strength of argument, writing style, correctness, MLA format—basically everything we’ve covered this semester.

Requirements

A lot of these will be familiar...

- ✓ Identify a topic which is relevant and interesting to you. Develop a claim which is arguable and avoids “entrenched” arguments—abortion is (not) evil, the US should (not) be in Iraq, etc. Local topics are always more interesting.
- ✓ Make your argument using research techniques such as testimony, direct quotation of expert knowledge, statistics, etc. Don’t overload on facts; just use them to support your argument.
- ✓ Your essay should have a beginning, middle, and end, as defined by Keith Hjortshoj.
- ✓ Correctness and style count! Use Williams’s *Style* to critique and improve your drafts. Print and re-read your final draft carefully, and spell-check it as well.
- ✓ Follow MLA format as described in my formatting handout and *Reading Rhetorically*. If you have a question which isn’t answered in those references, try the *MLA Handbook* (sixth edition) by Joseph Gibaldi—if you don’t have a copy, visit the University Writing Center, the library, or my office.

Strategies

- Start early! As we get closer to the end of the semester, all of us get a lot busier. If you need extra help from me or other sources, much better to seek it in April than May.
- We will probably visit the library and/or talk more about research in class. Expect to do a lot more work with research in ENG 280. This is just a start.
- Because correctness matters on this assignment, give yourself enough time to print and proof carefully. Use the paramedic method to help.
- Visit the University Writing Center for help with any part of this assignment. Make an appointment (and keep it)—UWC tutors are always very busy.