

Introductory Writing: Research Assignment Guidelines, Criteria, and Expectations

For this assignment, you will write an 8-12 page research essay. The objective in developing this inquiry-based research essay is not, perhaps, like other research essays with which you may be familiar. In an inquiry-based essay, the development of a research question is the cornerstone of the essay, providing a guideline for you to follow in your research wherever the information takes you. You will be expected to use a variety of sources to develop your ideas. The following types of research must be incorporated into your essay:

- Primary sources
- Secondary sources
- Qualitative data
- Quantitative data
- Scholarly sources
- Popular media sources relevant to your topic

Research essays will continue the issues and debates we are exploring in course readings and focus on some aspect of the politics of rhetoric, literacy, and/or language at work in society. In developing your individual foci for the research paper, consider the range of issues, debates, and/or definitions we have discussed, furthering this discussion to focus on what seems a significant point of contention, the least addressed yet important issue, or a perspective that, in your opinion, has not adequately been explored. Your paper should follow this criteria:

- 8-12 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font (standard one-inch margins).
- 6-8 sources (primarily scholarly)
- Essay features should adhere to English 101 rubric criteria (see handout), including MLA or APA documentation (in-text and end-of text citation)—choose one and use consistently.

You will seek connections between the information you discover during your research and the potential significance to your topic, identified audiences, and further inquiry. Your thorough research of multiple sources, and full analysis of your findings, will be the foundation from which you develop your essay. Your sources should be used as evidence to support, contradict, or expand on your ideas, and your essay must include extensive analysis around the question you explore. Please keep these dates in mind while you formulate and craft your ideas:

- Research Proposal due on Thursday 10/27.
- Research Draft due to BB on Thursday 11/3.

As long as draft is completed on time and in good faith, you will receive full credit for it. Drafts will be workshopped in class and commented on by me, so that each student receives constructive feedback for revising. Final drafts of selected work will be evaluated in portfolios at the end of the semester (portfolios worth 60% of final grade in English 101).

Introductory Writing: Research Assignment Additional Drafting Tips

Remember you are investigating and possibly raising additional questions (“unpacking” an issue) rather than providing a definitive answer or arguing for one side or another. Therefore, the careful formulation of a solid research question about your topic is crucial to ensure your inquiry will be effective. Do not try to cover the entire range of rhetoric or literacy in developing your analysis. You will necessarily need to narrow your focus to question and investigation to one issue among the many you might take up.

Once your research is finalized, you will conduct extensive inquiry into the potential implications and significance of your research question. Here are some additional drafting tips that will help you in the writing process:

- A difficult part of the research essay, often, is narrowing your focus to something manageable. Be sure to think through the scope of your inquiry before you begin researching and drafting. We will work on brainstorming topics and narrowing foci in class, too.
- Most scholarly research requires some sort of “literature review,” so be sure to demonstrate your familiarity with the literature pertaining to your topic. Where/how you include that review will vary per essay.
- Clearly state your thesis and extend it using passages that focus and refocus your topic (we’ll discuss this more as the “evolving thesis statement”). The body of your paper should provide evidence to support and further your thesis, in a logical, fully developed, and consistent manner. For each new subtopic that supports your overall thesis, be sure to articulate in your text how that subtopic ties into and furthers your overall argument.
- Beware of the tendency to regurgitate research information! As you draft, synthesize the information gained from sources and weave them into a conversation, using the sources as evidence to support key points. Avoid creating a paper which is just a string of quotes. Your analysis should demonstrate *how* you are making sense of the subject *through* your source material. Utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data will assist in this process.
- As we have discussed in class, use quoted material selectively. When you do include quotations, be sure to explain, contextualize, and use them in your analysis. Be sure to cite your sources, too.
- Use a variety of relevant sources. For the most part, your sources should be scholarly and timely. They should also demonstrate a range of potential views/perspectives on the topic.