

ENGL 240 Signature Assignment (Research Paper)

The Research Paper assignment is broken into two key parts:

- Part A: Research Paper Components
 - o Week 1: Topic Submission
 - o Week 2: Thesis Statement and Source Analysis
 - o Week 3: Outline
 - o Week 4: Introduction and Conclusion
 - o Week 5: Annotated Bibliography
 - o Week 6: Rough Draft
 - o Week 7: Peer Review
 - o Week 9: Reflection
- Part B: Research Paper Final Draft: This is also the Signature Assignment for this course, which is due in Week 8.

Purpose: The research paper will explore a controversial topic in an informative style. This means that the writer must present an equal amount of information for both points of view related to the topic. The topic should be a debatable subject concerning social, political, or cultural relevance. **The paper must present both sides of the argument without providing personal thought or opinion.** Each side will be neutrally presented allowing your audience to make their own decision as to which side to support. Topic ideas are provided at the end of the syllabus.

Some things to think about as you approach this undertaking:

- Will I be able to refrain from interjecting personal thought, opinion, and ideas?
- Will I be able to find at least eight credible sources from books, journal articles, academic websites, interviews, etc.?
- Will my sources be up-to-date? (Please do not use any source that is more than eight years old without prior approval.)

Research Paper Requirements:

1. No personal opinion should be given. Please refrain from using “I think” or “I believe.”
2. Five to seven pages, not including the title and reference pages.
3. Minimum of eight resources for your final paper.
4. In-text citations should be provided throughout the paper, giving credit for the sources used.
5. Reference page should be written in APA style, using the sixth edition of the manual.
6. Do not use Wikipedia; it is not a credible source.
7. All assignments related to the research paper will be due on Sundays.

Note: The paper is broken down into several pieces during the class. Your final paper will be due in week 8. Please read the weekly assignments carefully!

Guidelines for Writing: The Structure of an Informative Paper

- **Introductory paragraph:** Sets the stage for the topic and earns the audience’s interest. Historical context and other features of an introduction (preview of topic, thesis statement) should be contained in the introductory paragraph.
- **Thesis statement:** States the scope of your paper; for example, “Before deciding which side to take, readers should be aware of both positions regarding “X.” It should be the last sentence of your first paragraph.
- **Background information:** Gives readers the basic information they need to understand your thesis. As appropriate, you might include definitions of key terms, historical or social context, prior scholarship, and other related material. Often times, this can be included in the introduction or in a paragraph immediately after the introduction.
- **Evidence and reasons related to point-of-view “A”:** The first part of your paper should present information that people from the “A” point of view agree with. This is the core of the essay. Each reason or piece of evidence usually consists of a general statement backed up with specific details and examples. Evidence needs to meet the standards for critical thinking and reasoning to be logical. Depending on the length of your essay, you might devote one or two paragraphs to each reason or type of evidence. For organization,

you might choose to present the most familiar reasons and evidence first, saving the most unfamiliar reasons and evidence for last. Alternatively, you might proceed from the least important to the most important point so that your essay builds to a climax, leaving the most powerful impact for the end.

- Evidence and reasons related to point-of-view “B”: The second part of your paper should present information that people from the “B” point of view agree with. And as stated earlier, each reason or piece of evidence usually consists of a general statement backed up with specific details and examples. Evidence needs to meet the standards for critical thinking and reasoning to be logical. Depending on the length of your essay, you might devote one or two paragraphs to each reason or type of evidence. For organization, you might choose to present the most familiar reasons and evidence first, saving the most unfamiliar reasons and evidence for last. Alternatively, you might proceed from the least important to the most important point so that your essay builds to a climax, leaving the most powerful impact for the end.
- Concluding paragraph: Ends the essay logically and gracefully—never abruptly. It often summarizes the controversy, elaborates its significance, or calls readers to action.
- Sources: A source is any form of information that provides ideas, examples, information, or evidence. A primary source is an original work created by groups or individuals being studied, including original documents, letters, diaries, poems, books, paintings, artwork, films, news footage, etc. Nothing stands between you and a primary source. A secondary source reports, describes comments on, or analyzes someone else’s work. When completed, your research paper will be a secondary source.
- Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the intended or unintended use of someone else’s words and/or ideas as your own. According to Troyka, “plagiarism occurs when you take ideas or words from a source without revealing that you used a source” (p. 17).