

English 101: **Writing and Research:** 80741
Fall 2018

Research assignment: overview

The second half of our course will have a somewhat different structure from the first. Over the last eight weeks of the term, you will be working and writing on one major project: a *research assignment*, on a topic of your choice.

Schedule

Everyone will complete this project in a *research cycle* of three major stages. Each stage will have its own specific requirements and expectations, and you'll get more details about each stage as it comes. But for now, here is the schedule for the major stages of the assignment:

<i>Research proposal:</i>	rough draft due (in class) Nov. 9
up to 50 points	final due (before class) Nov. 16

In this paper, you state your research topic, give your reasons for choosing it, and articulate a question that establishes that a successful research essay can be written about it.

<i>Annotated bibliography:</i>	rough draft due (in class) Nov. 30
up to 150 points	final due (before class) Dec. 7

In this paper, you document your research on your topic and plan your response to your sources.

<i>Research essay:</i>	draft due (in class) Dec. 14
up to 200 points	final due (by 9:00 pm night before class) Dec. 20

In this paper, you present your finished argument.

- As with the essays you wrote in the first half of the course, all *drafts* before the final versions will be ungraded in and of themselves. (They will only be assessed a penalty if they are not submitted on time or do not meet length and source requirements.)
- Final drafts will be graded, according to standard WCC English department *rubrics* you'll receive for each stage.
- *Peer-review activities* and written *reflections* on the stages of your writing process will provide you with opportunities for additional credit throughout the research cycle.

The research cycle will conclude with your *research presentation* to the class on Dec. 21, worth 50 points.

Key concepts for the assignment

As you complete the major stages—along with several informal writing responses to chapters of our textbook, *The Craft of Research*—you will move toward articulating a valid *research question*: your attempt to solve a specific *problem* you see facing researchers in your topic area today. After selecting a *topic* that interests you (and that you successfully establish is a current subject of research), you will *analyze* a range of claims and information from the sources you find discussing that topic. The answer to your research question will then be your research essay's *argument*, which you will have developed in response to other researchers' claims about the topic.

Topic and research guidelines

The readings we've done together in the first half of the course are meant, in part, to give you a sense of what is an appropriate and possible *topic* for you to pursue on your own. As you brainstorm, reflect, and then begin your research, you may be surprised to see how many popular topics can be, or are already being, treated seriously under an academic lens.

- On the other hand, one criterion (standard) a research topic needs to meet is whether it has *significance*—whether the answer to your question will matter to your essay's intended *audience* (which you should think of as your English 101 and, more broadly, WCC classmates, who are your fellow researchers), rather than just to you personally.
- Another criterion for college-level research writing is whether the question is *current*, rather than a settled issue that is just new to you as a research beginner. What this means is that certain subjects that might at first be appealing because they seem like tried-and-true term paper topics are actually outdated and will probably not be workable unless you can bring the topic to date with a specific question that is actually being asked by researchers in 2018.

To meet the information literacy goals of the assignment (and the course), you will need to show that your research sources are numerous and varied. This will mean at least *six sources* by the annotated bibliography stage, and some of these will need to be library sources, that is, materials you find using WCC's library system. You will be expected to continue the research process as needed through the writing of the research essay—in other words, you may in the end need to find additional sources beyond the 6+ on your annotated bibliography.

Expectations for the research essay

Length. To treat a research problem adequately, successful research essays are generally at least six to eight pages (of double-spaced text) before the list of Works Cited.

Structure. Like the essays you wrote in the first half of the course, your research essay will have three distinct sections:

- the introduction, where you introduce your topic, question, and argument (claim);
- the body, where you support and develop your argument with reasons and evidence, acknowledge its limitations, and anticipate objections;
- and the conclusion, where you sum up your argument (in new language) and suggest where further research might go.

The body will naturally be the longest section, and it will be rather longer than the body of the shorter expository and analytic essays you wrote in the first half of the course, since you will have more context to establish and perspectives to address.

Documentation and format

Our class will use the Modern Language Association (MLA) style for documenting sources, making citations, and formatting papers. Current MLA style is the 8th edition (2016), and this edition's rules are the ones you will be responsible for following. You will have in-class lessons on MLA citation; additionally, the college library's resources, which are up to date, are available to you at all times.