The Research Assignment WR123 Research Writing

Research can be daunting – and exciting! Writing can be worrisome – and wonderful! Research writing can take us beyond what we think we know about a topic and can show us the depth and breadth and complexity of any subject under the sun. And things are usually more complex than they seem.

For academic purposes, we generally find two sorts of research papers:
1. those that report information only and
2. those that report information and then synthesize that information to create and relate the researcher’s own ideas about the situation. This is the type you’ll be writing.

We only have one essay assignment for this class, so we spend the entire term going through a series of tasks to “build” the paper. Formatting: one inch margins, 12 pt. font, typed, double-spaced, 7-9 pages, although you may go up to 15 pages. MLA or APA style is preferred, although if you are a science or medical major, you may want to use CSE.

Overview

For this project, students will explore a topic of their own choosing (or one which requires a similar type of document for another course) and write a single paper. The document will require library and internet research in addition to an interview (face to face or phone), documentation of sources, and a formal, academic format. The topic will need to be one which has at least two (but maybe several) viewpoints, and the students will need to know what those viewpoints are and to address those viewpoints in the research document. The essay will address a particular audience. Therefore, students will need to know what the audience thinks or believes about the topic and will need to determine the best argument strategy for that audience.

Since this is a course designed to help students learn the process of research writing, several steps are involved, and students will need to complete each step along the way. Each step will then be compiled into a portfolio which will be turned in with the final written document. Each week, students will have reading assignments from the text which will correspond with assignments which are due or with the stage of research and/or writing which will be dealt with that week.

What you’ll need:

2. Access to a computer for internet work and for word processing. There are several written documents to be turned in along the way in addition to the final document.
3. A disc or flashdrive to back up your work. Do not store everything on the hard drive of your desk-top or lap-top computer. They’ve been known to crash or be stolen.
Update your back-up regularly AND keep hard copies of everything.

4. A folder or binder for your portfolio. Dividers to separate the sections of the portfolio. You may want to use note cards for note-taking or for bibliography cards.

Adapted from Pam McLagan’s syllabus