

Documented Research Project

Description:

For this assignment, you will be writing an 5 to 6 page documented research paper. Your topic **MUST** be approved by me, so do not begin research until your topic is approved. Being a documented paper, you will have to cite all of your sources in the correct MLA citation format. Your objective is to fully research your topic, and compose a compelling argument around one or more particular issue(s). Given the length of the paper, you should ideally be addressing three or four very specific points about your chosen issue. You will want to take a firm stance on one or more of the issue(s) – or at least **fully explore** your topic, and cite outside sources to reinforce/augment your argument (this does not mean you simply adopt someone else's argument). Bear in mind, one of the purposes of rhetorical discourse is to persuade your audience to adopt a certain belief/idea, or to take a particular desired action.

Keep in mind the following rhetorical elements:

- Purpose: (What are you trying to accomplish?)
- Audience/Relationship to the Reader (To whom are you addressing your argument?)
- Context: (What are the influencing factors surrounding your argument, for both the audience and yourself?)
- Voice: (What tone are you going to use, to most effectively persuade your audience?)
- Genre of writing (What type of writing will work best?)

Your argument should employ one or more of the following three elements of the rhetorical appeal:

- Ethos: Appeals to the character and expertise of the writer or speaker
- Logos: Appeals based on logic, reasoning, and evidence concerning the subject
- Pathos: Appeals to the beliefs and values of the audience

Develop your argument using the following methods and technique:

- A strong thesis (claim)
- Supplemental claims that support your thesis.
- Evidence to support your claims
- A strong conclusion

All of your claims ought to be **fully** developed, and preferably backed by authoritative sources.

Be sure to cite your sources according to the proper format guidelines. These include

- Direct quotations
- Paraphrased statements
- Ideas you summarize from an outside sources

Audience:

The writing you do in this class is considered *public* writing. Therefore, the audience for your Documented Research Paper is the instructor and your classmates (they are the one(s) you are trying to persuade).

Process:

1. Choose Your Topic (and stay with it):

Avoid straying too far from this topic, or your argument will become unfocused.

2. Consider Your Purpose: Keep in mind at every stage of your writing process (What am I trying to accomplish by writing this word, sentence, paragraph, text?). At the beginning stages, you will want to focus on developing a strong thesis (conversely, some find it helpful to consider the conclusion *first*, and develop the essay backward). Ultimately, you want to ask, “Where do I want to go...?” A good way to begin is to write out on a separate piece of paper what you think your purpose is (including the thesis of the essay), and where it may be heading. Contemplate on that for a little while (perhaps, discuss your ideas with someone else). Then, come back to it with a new perspective. Some writers find a formal outline helps keep them on track (by specifically focusing their writing on certain aspects – this can, additionally, help to ensure you include all of the specific points of your argument. An outline is HIGHLY recommended.

3. Develop a Clear Thesis Statement: This is perhaps the most critical step in the writing process. You must ask yourself, “What is my purpose for writing this essay?” Then you should be able to come up with a strong (unique) thesis statement. Your thesis should provide the reader with a clear direction of where you’re heading (i.e. what’s your purpose, and how are you going to accomplish this)—a roadmap. *One technique* is specifically, yet briefly, list all the points you are planning to address—road signs.

4. Consider What You Already Know and What You Need To Find Out: Think about the information you already know about your topic (will that be of use to you, given your purpose, audience, context, etc.?) What do you still need to find out to fill in the blanks? Note: You don’t want to choose a thesis that will be too broad (i.e. cover too much information), or you will not be able to develop your points in great enough detail. Conversely, you want to avoid having a thesis that is too narrow; this will not give you enough room to “breath,” forcing you to insert irrelevant information.

5. Support Your Thesis Statement: The body of your essay should be devoted to supporting evidence in support of your thesis statement. This will entail techniques of quotation, paraphrasing, and summarizing. Do not simply string together a bunch of quotes from other sources (this is YOUR essay). Your paragraphs should each, subsequently, address the major points you are trying to make. Hint: You may want to limit yourself to discussing one specific issue per paragraph. Make sure each point is relevant to your thesis (avoid straying too far from your purpose). Additionally, a common technique is to provide your reader with a “topic sentence” for each paragraph

(you can think of this as a kind of ‘mini-thesis’ for each paragraph; it should clearly indicate the specific point you are trying to make. Traditionally, this comes at the very beginning of the paragraph.

6. State Your Conclusion: The purpose of your conclusion is to clearly, but briefly, reiterate what you were hoping to accomplish in your essay. In other words, it should reflect (mirror) your thesis. Note: It should not simply be a restatement of your thesis. It is designed to have the reader (re)contemplate the thesis in light of the evidence you provided in the body of the text.

7. Create the Citations: You will cite all of your sources using the proper citation format. Your bibliography needs to have one complete citation per source. As per MLA guidelines, be sure to include the *entire* title of the work (including sub-titles).

- **CAUTION:** If are using a citation creation tool (e.g. Citation Machine, EasyBib etc.) or are using the citations provided by some databases, you will have to be sure to **DOUBLE/TRIPLE CHECK** to make sure your citations are properly formatted. These programs/sites are **NOTORIOUSLY** inaccurate/outdated. Purdue’s OWL **is** current, up-to-date, and correct for all of the citation styles. **HINT:** Double check your citations against the examples given on the Purdue OWL site.
- **Note: You are expected to provide a photocopy of all source material you quote, paraphrase, or otherwise utilize.** I expect you to hand in a minimum of one page for every source you use (the purpose for this is for me to be able to quickly locate your source material. Thus, it should include all of the information necessary for me to find the *text/quote*, if necessary – typically, this will be a photocopy/printout of the specific page you are referencing. Please include a copy of the title page, if the source is unclear).

Cautions:

- In the body of your paper, you should thoroughly explain the issue(s) and the conclusions you draw (i.e. explain the “what’s and why’s” you are writing about).
- Avoid assuming your audience will automatically see the issue(s) the way you see them (i.e. consider possible questions and counter-arguments). Often times, preempting a question or counter-argument lends strength to your position (you are acknowledging there is another point of view, but are choosing not to support it, based on your ideas).
- Avoid making statements solely based on your *beliefs*; beliefs differ from evidence by virtue of their supporting facts. By definition, beliefs are a matter of faith (i.e. they are not supported by “facts”). It is, therefore, not a sound argument if it is based solely on matters of belief/faith (Note: This is not to say matters of belief/faith are somehow less important, or they somehow don’t “matter”).
- Avoid using “I” statements. This is your paper. We know this is how you think or feel. Also avoid second person pronouns—you or your.
- Avoid lengthy, verbatim quotations and/or paraphrases of outside sources. Limit your use of these to succinct quotes (one or two sentences, typically – per issue). The majority of your paper should consist of your own ideas. When you use outside sources, make sure they are relevant to what you are trying to say.

Requirements:

5 to 6 typed pages

Works Cited page—this does NOT count as one of your pages

3 sources from MoreNet

3 Internet sources

Times New Roman 12 pt. font

Double spaced

1" margins

MLA documentation