Research Project

We need to recognize . . . that who we are and what we have to say is in so many ways interwoven, directly and indirectly, consciously and unconsciously, with our local environs.

Derek Owens, Composition and Sustainability: Teaching for a Threatened Generation

During the next eight weeks, you will be engaged in researching, narrowing a research topic and incorporating your research into your writing. The broad subject area for this project is the Los Angeles community in which I grew up and/or live. You will be focusing on your immediate community or neighborhood in order to critically examine it. You will choose a particular aspect of your community to concentrate on in detail. Focus on a specific topic related to one of the following general subjects: place, work, education, or culture. In completing this project, you will gain a greater awareness of a specific place, its history, current condition, and how it shapes residents’ lives.

I. Interview: An Oral History
You will interview an older person in your community/neighborhood about his/her experiences living there. Through asking open-ended questions on many aspects of living in your community, and then some follow-up questions, you will gather enough information to write one person’s oral history; this person’s story in some ways is representative of others’ stories in your community. Information from this interview may help you to identify a particular aspect of your community to focus on in your research paper.

II. Progress Reports
In three progress reports, you will report your preliminary, draft, and final topic, research exploratory questions, and several research sources related to your topic.

III. Research Paper Proposal & Works Cited
After reviewing your research, including your interview and notes from your research, write a proposal that states why you chose this topic, your narrowed topic, a draft thesis, research completed and still needed, and a brief summary of your main points. In other words, what you plan to write. Conclude with any unanswered questions that remain and any information you still need.

Attach a formal, correctly formatted Works Cited page that includes annotations for each entry.

IV. Essay #4: Research Paper
Write as fully developed first draft as possible for our peer-editing workshop, including some of your research sources. Revise, add additional sources if needed, and finalize your research paper for submission by the due date. If you do not submit your essay by the due date, you may not be able to revise it by the day of the final exam.

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V. Essay #4: Research Paper – Revised Final Draft
Using the comments and suggestions provided on your first draft, do additional research, revise, and finalize research paper further.


RESEARCH PROJECT PORTFOLIO: All assignments for the research project, including the final revised Essay #4: Research Paper, must be saved and placed in a two-pocket folder. You must submit the entire portfolio. The complete Research Project Portfolio represents 20% of your final grade for this class.
Many of today’s languages are rapidly becoming extinct. Just as with languages, ways of living, cultures, stories, tribal/family histories, knowledge, and memories also disappear. This assignment gives you the opportunity to record one person’s story: you will draft interview questions, interview, ask follow-up questions, and write an oral history that will record parts of one person’s life, memory, and history.

Assignment: Ideally, find an older person who matters to you. This person could be an older relative, family friend, neighbor, or a nearby acquaintance. Plan on spending approximately a total of an hour and a half interviewing this person. See me immediately if you have difficulties finding someone to interview.

1. Draft a list of questions you’d like to ask this person. The questions should be open-ended, so they can’t be answered with “yes” or “no,” but instead get the person to talk as much as possible. Include questions that will give you information related to the place, i.e. neighborhood; type of work and professions of interviewee and residents; interviewee’s education and experiences with local schools; and neighborhood’s culture and how it’s exhibited.

2. Interview the person for at least 45 minutes. The best interviewing technique is to both write notes and record the interview.

3. Review your notes and the recording. Ask your interviewee any follow-up questions, to clarify responses, and/or say more at some points. In either interview format or as a narrative, write the results of your interview. If using interview format, the text will resemble a play. Each paragraph will begin with either your name or your interviewee’s name, followed by either your question or comment, or your interviewee’s response. If you choose to write a narrative, you will be paraphrasing the interview results, including some direct quotations. This approach may require some rearranging and include some of your comments. Either approach requires accurately and truthfully reporting what the person said – strive to convey the interviewee’s ‘real voice.’ Your interview report must be as well written as your formal essays.

Requirements: Must be 3-5 pages, double-spaced using standard font size. An edited draft must be attached.

Final draft due Tue., Apr. 27
Progress Reports

In a series of three typed Progress Reports, you will demonstrate the progress you are making in choosing a preliminary topic that culminates in the final topic for your research paper. The initial research questions you pose to guide you in your research, as well as several research sources will be reported also. Both WWR and the PH provide guidance on forming a research question. Additional questions are follow-up questions for refining your topic and exploring supporting ideas.

#1 Progress Report: Preliminary Topic & Research Exploratory Questions:
To ‘test’ a topic – to see if it interests you and whether it has potential as the focus of an essay – start with a preliminary topic and pose a series of questions to help you to do some initial research. One question should be a central guiding question that should be answered in your essay; other questions should be more focused and specific. If you decide to change your topic, this step should be done again.

Assignment: State your topic and list your questions beneath it.

Due: Th., 4/29

#2 Progress Report: Draft Topic & 2 Research Sources:
By now, you should have a viable draft topic and a series of questions to help guide you in continuing your research. In doing research, you will be locating and reviewing more sources than you will find relevant and useful. Applying your research questions helps you in this process so that you can find strong, relevant sources.

Assignment: Using one question, find an answer in a source (newspaper or other periodical). List the source, formatting it as a Work Cited entry. In a brief paragraph below your listed source, summarize the information from it. Provide another source from a general publication to address a question, list it, and summarize the information from it the same way as the first one.

Due: Th., 5/6

#3 Progress Report: Topic & 2 Research Sources
As you continue your research, you will review your sources, revise and refine your research questions, and think ahead to starting your draft. Take notes as you review promising sources, and write down all necessary information for your Works Cited page. Locate as many authoritative sources as possible.

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Assignment: Using a research question, find an answer in a new source of your choice. List the source and summarize the information, as stated above for #2 Progress Report. For your second source, find an answer to a research question in an academic/scholarly journal. EBSCO databases through an SMC Library’s online search should lead you to this type of publication. Ask a reference librarian for help if you get stuck. List the source and summarize the information in the same way as above.

Due: Tu., 5/11
Essay #4: Research Paper Proposal

The next step in your research project requires that you decide your chosen topic interests you, review your research, and define and revise the topic’s specific focus. Then write a proposal that includes stating why you chose this topic, your specific topic and draft thesis, a summary of your main points, overview of your research, and what your essay will address. Indicate any remaining questions, concerns, or additional research.

Use the related chapters in WWR and The Pocket Handbook to help you in narrowing your topic, taking notes and reviewing research, critical reading techniques, pre-writing, and writing a preliminary thesis. Review your research as soon as possible and decide what additional research is still needed. The following assignment is designed to outline your plan:

I. Essay #4: Research Paper Proposal: By now, you have begun your research, listed several potential sources in a working bibliography, and read and taken notes to develop your thinking about your topic. You are at the point of forming a general idea of what you plan to write about in your research supported essay. Narrow this down to a more specifically focused topic and formulate a tentative thesis. In a 2-3 page, single-spaced summary propose what you think you are going to write about and how you plan to approach writing it, i.e. ideas provided by interview, initial research and additional research needed, what questions have been answered and what remains to be answered, anticipated conclusion, etc.

Think of this proposal as an opportunity to describe the “Grand Design” you have in mind at this point for writing your essay. Include the following:

Subject/Topic: Using first person (“I”), begin by introducing the general topic and why it interests you. Then state what you plan to do: “I plan to write about . . .”

Why I Chose This Topic: Explain what prompted you to choose this topic. The idea may have emerged from your interview; describe the context and what your interviewee said at that point of the interview. If you chose your topic for a different reason, indicate the source and what influenced your decision.

My Current Understanding of This Topic: Offer as much detailed information about this topic as you currently have based upon your initial research, notes, thinking, and pre-writing. (Hint: If you cannot say much, this may indicate you have not done enough research and/or your level of interest. You may wish to go back and reevaluate/revise your responses to the previous questions.)
My Current Opinion(s) on This Topic (which may change later): State any opinions and or feelings you have related to this topic. Why do you think and feel this way?

What More I Need to Find Out: List information you need and note any questions that need to be answered.

Avenues of Research: Describe your plan for additional research on this topic. (Additional interview(s), additional reference works, general publications, films, books, Internet sources -- be as specific as possible.)

Due: Th., May 13
Works Cited with Annotations

Annotated Works Cited: Prepare a list of at least five varied sources you have researched on your topic as a Works Cited page. It must be formatted according to MLA guidelines and each entry should be followed by a brief annotation. This annotated Works Cited page is the same as a "Works Cited" page attached to your final essay, except that it is a ‘work in progress’ and also contains descriptive and/or evaluative comments on the sources. Your annotated Works Cited with at least five sources listed must include the following types of sources:

-- Internet accessed article from an authoritative source (Wikipedia articles not acceptable)
-- Newspaper and/or magazine articles
-- One scholarly or academic journal article
-- At least 1 book

Your sources must be listed and formatted correctly, including a brief descriptive comment. The following is an example of an annotated source listing:


[Above example taken from *MLA Handbook*, 3rd ed., p. 86]

Requirements: The format of the Annotated Works Cited must be in accordance with the MLA guidelines, which is a major part of the final grade. Refer to the WWR, Chap. 14; *The Pocket Handbook* (PH), p. 172-181; or, the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* in the reference section of the library. See me if you have any questions.

Prepare and revise a correctly formatted, well written Annotated Works Cited page that includes the required types of sources. Attach it to the back of your Research Paper Proposal.

**Due: Th., May 13**
Essay #4: Research Paper

In an effectively written 6-8 page essay, synthesize all the research you have done on the topic you have chosen related to your community or neighborhood, focusing on a particular aspect of place, work, education, or culture. To help you in identifying your essay’s topic, you can compare your chosen neighborhood to the one where Luis Rodriguez grew up as described in *Always Running*. Think of the ways in which environment shapes the lives of its residents.

In your essay, you may choose to persuade your reader to consider your position (if this is appropriate for your topic) or the validity of your perspective regarding a particular aspect of this topic -- in either case, as a research essay, it must be supported largely by the facts, information, and authoritative opinions gathered through your research. You must provide adequate, comprehensive, and relevant support for your thesis. Integrate and correctly cite your research to support your opinion and ideas. Your goal should be to demonstrate your expert, in-depth knowledge of the particular focus you have developed regarding your specific topic or issue.

You have already accomplished much of the initial work, such as choosing a topic, writing a proposal, and doing research, so at this point you should be able to focus on doing additional research, refining your thinking and developing it in more depth, and finalizing your thesis to provide a specifically stated starting point for writing the research paper. As *Writing Worth Reading* states, "Research is a recursive rather than a linear process. Be ready to rethink your thesis many times. . ." (3rd ed., 330).

You are encouraged to use the ideas you have already developed in your previous papers. **However, you must completely rewrite and fully integrate anything previously written so that it becomes an integral part of the thinking and writing contained in this paper.**

*WWR*, Chaps. 6, 7, 13 & 14, is helpful and informative regarding research and writing a research paper. Also, refer to *The Pocket Handbook*, Part 6 & Chap. 31. MLA documentation with sample citations is explained and a sample student research paper formatted in accordance with the MLA guidelines is provided in both the *PH* and *WWR*.

**Requirements:** You are expected to rigorously follow all the appropriate guidelines specified in your texts and this assignment handout. Essay must be 6-8 pages, double-spaced using standard font size (see sample student research papers). All secondary sources must be cited in accordance with MLA style guidelines and a Works Cited page attached, as demonstrated in both texts. You must also attach peer-edited drafts, and your first draft when submitting the revised final draft in your portfolio. These are **requirements** for this paper and will be considered in evaluating and assigning a grade.

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Deadlines: Initial draft & 3 copies for peer editing due Th., May 20
First, fully developed, polished draft + peer-edited drafts due Tue., May 25

**Final Portfolio:** Final revised draft + peer-edited drafts & first final draft; Annotated Works Cited; Research Paper Proposal; Progress Reports; and, Oral History in two-pocket folder due **Final Exam Day: Tue., June 8**

**NO LATE PORTFOLIOS ACCEPTED**
**Research Project Checklist**

Include this checklist in your final portfolio. Indicate with a check mark those assignments that are completed and submitted:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Completed</th>
<th>Included in Portfolio</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tu, 4/27</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview: Oral History Report</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th, 4/29</td>
<td></td>
<td>#1 Progress Report: Preliminary Topic &amp; Research Exploratory Questions</td>
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<td>Th, 5/13</td>
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<td>Research Paper Proposal &amp; Works Cited</td>
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<td>Th, 5/20</td>
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<td>Tu, 5/25</td>
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<td>Essay #4: Research Paper</td>
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<td>Tu, 6/8</td>
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<td>Essay #4: Research Paper – Revised Final Draft</td>
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All of the above required assignments must be placed in a two-pocket folder with this checklist. The complete Research Project Portfolio which represents 20% of your final grade is **due at the time of your final exam.**