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 in 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 be used to identify a particular aspect of your community to focus on in your research paper.

II. Annotated Working Bibliography

Research sources related to the specific aspect you have chosen, e.g. education, culture, etc. List sources using MLA format and write a brief description and comment for each source.

III. Personal Narrative/Prospectus

After reviewing your research, including your interview and your notes, write a personal narrative (using “I”) about what interests you most and why. Try to narrow your focus and write a draft thesis for your research paper. Then conclude by writing a brief summary of what you plan to write.

IV. Essay #4: First ‘Final’ Draft

Write your first, fully developed, formal draft of your research paper, incorporating as much research as you can.

V. Essay #4: Final Draft

Using the comments and suggestions provided on your first draft, do additional research, revise, and finalize research paper further.

The Interview: Oral History, Annotated Working Bibliography, Personal Narrative/Prospectus and First Final Draft Essay #4 combined grade equals 20% of your final grade.

RESEARCH PROJECT PORTFOLIO: All five assignments for the research project, including the final revised Essay #4, 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.
English 1
Sandi Powazek

Interview: Oral History

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; 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.’

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

Deadlines:
Workshop: Interview – Oral History
Th., Apr. 30
Final draft due
Tue., May 5
Personal Narrative/Essay #4 Prospectus

The next step in your research project requires that you decide what interests you, review your research and narrow the topic you have chosen, then write a personal narrative of what interests you and why, ending with a summary of what you plan to write in your research paper.

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. It is important that you begin your research as soon as possible to be prepared and meet the required deadline. The following assignment is designed to give you a start:

1. Personal Narrative/Essay #4 Prospectus: After starting your research, preparing a working bibliography, and reading and taking notes, think about what interests you most. Then begin to form a general idea of what you plan to write about in your research supported essay. Narrow this down to a more specific focus 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, background or historical information needed, research focus, type of research, what questions might be answered, anticipated conclusion, etc.

Think of this personal narrative/prospectus 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 most likely 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. (Hint: If you cannot say much, which may indicate your level of interest, you may wish to go back and reevaluate/revise your response to the previous question.)

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: How do you plan to do additional research on this topic? (Additional interview(s), check reference works, types of publications, films, books, Internet sources -- be as specific as possible.)

Deadlines: Peer-editing workshop Tue., May 12
Final draft due Th., May 14
Annotated Working Bibliography

Preparation of an annotated working bibliography involves listing at least five varied sources you have researched on your topic in an annotated working bibliography format according to MLA guidelines. An annotated working bibliography is the same as a "Works Cited" page except that it is a "work in progress" and also contains descriptive and/or evaluative comments on the sources. Your bibliography 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
- 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 Working Bibliography 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.

**Deadlines:**
- Peer-editing workshop: Tue., May 12
- Final draft due: Th., May 14
Essay #4: Persuasive Essay

In an effectively written 7-8 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 opinions gathered through your research. You must provide adequate, comprehensive, and pertinent support for your thesis. Integrate 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 some initial research, so at this point you should be able to focus on doing additional research, developing your thinking in more depth, and refining your thesis to provide a 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 7-8 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 final draft. These are requirements for this paper and will be considered in evaluating and assigning a grade.

Deadlines: Initial draft & 3 copies for peer editing due Th., May 21
First, fully developed, polished draft + peer-edited drafts due Tue., May 26

Final Portfolio: Final revised draft + peer-edited drafts & first draft; Annotated Bibliography; Prospectus; and, Oral History in two-pocket folder due Final Exam Day: Tue., June 9

**NO LATE PORTFOLIOS ACCEPTED**