

Part 6. Research Assignment from Critical Reading and Argumentation Class

A six to eight page research paper counts 25% of the course grade and will be due on Thursday May 1 in class. There will be no final exam. We'll be discussing research projects between April 24--April 29.

Objective: To put into practice some of the methods of persuasion we've been studying this semester and to help meet our course objectives. The paper will incorporate sources to support the key ideas.

Requirements:

- The paper needs to be in some form an argument about rhetoric or argumentation.
- A thesis (arguable assertion, the writer's opinion) will provide a central focus for the paper.
- At least four but no more than ten credible, well-selected sources will be included in the paper.
- Sources must represent a number of kinds of materials, including at least two scholarly journals and one book. Other sources may be from the Internet, mass audience periodicals, documentaries, interviews, etc. so long as they represent *variety* and are credible.
- Documentation (citations) and a Works Cited list in MLA style will be required.

Suggestions:

Draw on your disciplinary major, personal interests, or an issue we've touched on in class as your starting point. You should develop a list of potential topics and then perform the research. After researching, taking notes, and finding a focus, you should then start to plan the paper.

You might write an argument using a theoretical framework in part or whole. For example, you might develop a Rogerian argument, or use Toulmin as an invention and/or arrangement model. You might use Stasis Theory, or Questions at Issue as an invention/arrangement technique and then draft your argument in another form. Keep in mind that rhetoric will be the heart of the paper. So, rather than write an argument paper in favor of the Patriot Act, you might write an argument about how rhetoric is being used in debates over the Patriot Act.

Consider the audience and purpose of your argument as you plan. The audience includes members of our class (instructor too).

Work carefully with quotations. The success of the paper will depend in good part on how well quotations fit the ideas around them. Ideally, you'll want to construct a kind of conversation with your sources. Quotations should move the ideas ahead and add value to the paper. Be sure you understand what constitutes plagiarism and avoid it.

Be sure to use specific examples and concrete details. These not only help give shape to abstract ideas, but they add interest to the ideas and show your reader more clearly how you see the world, what's specifically on your mind.

EVALUATION OF RESEARCH PAPER:

Content

Strong central idea
Effective use of quotations/readings
Specific details, examples
Original ideas
Overall clarity
Follows assignment instructions

Format

Paper structure (coherence)
Paragraphing
Sentence structure
Grammar/mechanics
Follows Style Sheet
Uses MLA Style correctly