

## English 103: Research Project #2 Guidelines

- Students will write an 8 FULL – 10-page paper.
- Students will provide an accompanying Works Cited page that lists alphabetically, according to the author(s)' last names, the sources used—and only the sources used—within the paper.
- Students will provide the following as evidence for the paper:
  - 2 book sources
  - 1 newspaper
  - 3 academic or scholarly journal articles
  - 2 substantive magazines
  - 1 specialized reference source
  - 2 internet sources
  - 1 primary source
- Students will be submitting on the due date of the paper a set of 50 notes obtained over the 4-5 weeks from their evidence (see directly above).
  - The notes taken will be an assortment of paraphrases, direct quotations, summaries, personal, précis, and field notes.
  - We will discuss that in greater detail elsewhere.

### The TOPIC

- Students are writing an argumentative research project again—this time with slightly less independent choice on the topic.
- Our topic will cover broadly speaking a form of communication that creates conflict, controversy, misunderstanding. Your thesis statement will address this point of conflict, controversy, or misunderstanding from a claim of value standpoint (evaluative argument--
- An explicitly-stated thesis statement that expresses a clear preference and a clearly-debatable position. (a claim of value)
- As part of or follow-up to that thesis statement that explicitly declare the criteria or standards by which you will choose to evaluate your subject.
- Recall from the lecture that the unique challenge of an evaluative argument is that the topic quite often will be exploring one of the following potentially sensitive areas: aesthetics, morality, or ethics. As such, you will be making determinations about the following values: the good or the bad; the worthwhile or worthless; the beautiful or the ugly
- Because the subject matter involves distinct matters of taste or morality and ethicality, it is imperative that you support your arguments with concrete standards for measuring or construing the value of your topic choice (thus, a clear set of standards for evaluation

### Research Paper #2 Evaluative Topic List:

This paper will address a topic from the following vantage points:

- perceptions vs. the reality or .....
- the concoction of myth vs. reality

Listed are possible topic choices to illustrate the bullet points above:

- See examples given below just to illustrate how broadly this topic can be defined. It can be construed in many, many ways.
- Should rappers be able to parody political figures in denigrating or potentially punitive ways without some repercussions? (For example, Snoop Dogg recently parodied Donald Trump in a video, and Trump declared that he should be jailed.)
- At what point is the First Amendment used to cover up offensive language and ideas that could conceivably be considered hate speech? Where do we define the line between the two? (For example, a Henry County Board member who was notorious for being an offensive individual was brought before the board to apologize to a lesbian couple whom he had ridiculed on Facebook.)
- The number of openly aggressive actions against Jewish cemeteries (knocking over headstones, painting swastikas, etc.) is increasing in prevalence. How has this form of communication—as hateful action, suggested by the increasing prevalence gained an open forum? What can or should be done about it?
- People argued about the Jan. 20th March suggesting that this monumental movement was against Donald Trump's presidency and thought it inappropriate. Others in favor of the march felt it to be an expression of solidarity toward all issues that are meaningful for women. Is overt protest a problem? It is a protected act, but as a form of communication, where is the controversy here?
- Having worked in the textbook industry as a freelance writer for some years—many years ago, I recognize fully that there is much more than educational imperative at work for creating the content of history books. Every state has a set of standards for how they want material presented and a material to be minimized if covered at all. Investigate the mythologies created by the textbook industry that lead to expurgating negative aspects of history and consequently, a scrubbed version of events. What is the problem when education is viewed through a political and cultural lens (state-level) rather than adhering to the historical truth.
- Evaluate series titles, such as *Downton Abbey* or *The House of Elliot*, or *The Irish R.M.* These very popular (once-upon-a-time) series were period pieces with lavish, elaborate settings, costuming, set designs, etc. all contributing to a sense of historical authenticity. An evaluation based on one show could address a whole range of possibilities: a message about Anglo-Irish relations, historical authenticity vs. dramatic cinematic intentions; undercurrents of feminism or contemporary messaging couched within these early 20th century settings (how realistic do you suppose? Is it anachronistic?). *Downton Abbey* was an enormous hit with U.S. audiences, so is there some sort of mythological reverence that we have for the rich/poor aristocracy of England—some fascination with a world that we couldn't possibly relate to . . . castles, queens, hunts, etc.
- Evaluate the influence of rap music—for the good or bad---on our culture. Are the perceptions unfairly negative from certain populations? If a fan, what could you present as a case to those who view this music unfavorably—to foster appreciation for this music as an art form? Address the perceptions and mythologies surrounding rap music and reveal the truth to an audience who doesn't understand.
- Address the perceptions or mythologies of feminism (second-wave, third-wave, fourth-wave—whichever timeframe you choose to focus on). Often the truth behind the movements were skewed by outside forces who didn't understand and chose to denigrate instead. Through the maligning campaign, feminism was mythologized and morphed into something else. On the other hand, active members of the second-wave movement, for example, didn't exactly help dispel those negative perceptions either. In this evaluation,

address those mythologies as a means of understanding the contemporary form of feminism. Have these negative perceptions been exorcised at this point?

- Address a movie genre (horror/video game/computer game (League of Legends, for example) that has been attributed negative or disparaging qualities (perceptions and mythologies). Your task is to create an evaluative defense (reality) of your choice, bearing in mind the criteria or standards by which you will judge and evaluate your selection thereby addressing the negative perceptions and revealing the positive reality.
- Address the prevalence in recent years of apocalyptic films: Mad Max, Maze Runner, Cloud Atlas (one of my all-time favorite movies), Seeking a Friend for the End of the World (another very good movie) to illustrate my point. There are probably at least 100 other such examples out there that you could use for your own evaluative argument (not all 100—that would be a very, very long paper). Analyze the perceptions of a viewing public with the reality—your analysis of the American mindset that seems so fascinated with the dark contests for the survival of humankind—or at least the special chosen handful remaining—often exemplified in these movies.
- Address the perceptions and seemingly widely varying realities of members of both political parties. Be sure to address logical criteria or standards for judgment and to address the topic in a thoughtful manner for recognizing/understanding both sides of the political spectrum with reason and civility. (This is where that lecture on Tuesday regarding sensitivities come into play . You will have to state a preference (as with all evaluative topics) and argue for it with the above considerations.