

RESEARCH ARGUMENT ESSAY

LOGISTICS

Assignment Description: This assignment asks you to deliver your research in the form of an academic research paper of 2800+ words, utilizing at least 12 sources, with a balance between primary and secondary research. Both the draft and the revision of the research essay should be prefaced by a reflective memo.

Due dates:

- Draft #1 due: Tuesday, May 13, by class
- Introductory paragraph (required) & Draft #2 due (optional): Thursday, May 29, by class
- Final Revision due: Tuesday, June 3, by class

Paper Format: 2800+ words; 1.5 spacing; separate title page including name, title, and date; page numbers; in-text citations and works cited in MLA form; 1" margins; visual evidence (as appropriate) with captions.

Submission Format: Electronic posting of all materials to your student portfolio as they are due (this includes title pages, reflective memos, abstracts, works cited as they are due).

Grading: This assignment is worth 35% of the overall class grade.

Recommended *Envision* reading: Chapters 6 & 7

ASSIGNMENT GOALS

This assignment has three interrelated goals:

1. To ask you to take on a sophisticated research project, working with both primary and secondary sources, on a subject related to the intersection of gender and technology.
2. To encourage you to develop skills in delivering complex research effectively in written form.
3. To help you develop skills in presenting a powerful and articulate argument about a topic, using evidence to substantiate your claims.

DETAILED ASSIGNMENT

All PWR 2 students are required to complete an extended piece of academically rigorous research writing, designed to reinforce the skills learned in PWR: research strategies; deliberate use of rhetoric; clear and forceful argumentation.

Your research paper should include **an argumentative thesis** that represents your own claim about your topic. This thesis should be supported by evidence derived from both primary and secondary research. You should utilize at least 12 sources and, as applicable, fieldwork (interviews, surveys, etc.) -- in many cases, you

will find it necessary to utilize more than 12 sources to make a persuasive argument. Sources can be online or print as appropriate to your topic, but be sure to consider the ethos and credibility of the sources you choose. You must use the Stanford databases as part of your search strategy to help you find scholarly sources related to your topic. Source material should be cited appropriately, using MLA style for parenthetical documentation and your works cited. Note: consult with me if you'd prefer to use a documentation style more applicable to your intended major.

DRAFT #1

Your first draft is due Tuesday, May 13 by class

This draft should be as complete and polished as you can make it at this time -- though this will vary from student to student. At the very least, your draft needs to include:

- A thesis statement
- An expanded outline of your main body
- 6 paragraphs in prose form (these do not necessarily need to be consecutive – write the parts you're ready to write – you do not have to start by writing an introduction if you're not ready to yet)
- Your current working bibliography (note – this does not have to be in MLA form yet)

The items above represent the minimum requirements; your goal should be to write as much as possible and turn in a more complete draft, if you are able. In your outline section try to add in source notations, direct quotations, examples, analysis, notes to yourself: anything that helps to flesh out the argument and move you closer to writing a full draft. Remember: the more complete this draft is, the better feedback you will receive.

Post this draft to your student portfolio. No print out needed.

Drafts are mandatory, but will not be graded. However, if a draft is not turned in or if it shows a lack of effort, the overall grade for the research paper will be reduced by one half a grade (from an A- to an A-/B+).

INTRODUCTION (REQUIRED) AND DRAFT #2 (OPTIONAL)

A complete version of your introduction is due on Thursday, May 29, by class. Optional: submit at the same time, a revision (however minor) of your draft.

For class on May 29, you should prepare a full introduction to your essay; this is required. Upload your introduction to your portfolio.

For this same date, please post a revised version of your draft as well. Your revisions might be major or minor, but keep in mind that this is the version that you will be receiving feedback on, so it is in your best interest to spend some time on revision. Try to include a drafted title as well, in addition to any visual evidence, citations, footnotes, subheads, etc. so you can receive feedback on them. In addition, append your most updated bibliography to your introduction/new draft, implementing any corrections you received in feedback on draft #1.

Post the introduction and draft to your portfolio and bring 3 copies with you to class.

Note that for this draft you need to also include a **draft cover memo**. This prefatory memo should be at least 200 words in length and is intended for your peer reviewers. It should identify your goals for further

revision and research and pinpoint what in particular you'd like your peer reviewers to focus on (i.e., argument, integration of sources, transitions, structure) as they read your essay. This should be included as the first page of the electronic copy of your essay, in the same Word document.

To reiterate from above: Drafts are mandatory, but will not be graded. However, if a draft is not turned in or if it shows a lack of effort, the overall grade for the research paper will be reduced by one half a grade (from an A- to an A-/B+).

FINAL REVISION: THE DETAILS

Your final revision and accompanying reflective memo are due at our last class on Tuesday, June 3.

The final revision: This is the version that will be graded; it should be fully polished, sophisticated researched argument accompanied by a cover memo. It should be at least 2800 words in length and should use at least 12 sources, combining both primary and secondary materials. In terms of format, your research paper should have

- A separate title page with interesting, relevant title
- A staple and page numbers
- Effective use of visual rhetoric as appropriate; if you use visual rhetoric please include captions and figure #s
- Image sources cited in a caption or in an image sources section at the end of the paper
- Informational footnotes *only* – use parenthetical documentation for citing sources
- Consistent, appropriate documentation of source material in MLA format unless you have had approved an alternative style with me
- A reflective memo (see below)

The final reflective memo: This memo for your revision should be at least 300 words in length and should be designed to give your reader insight into the rhetorical strategies you employed and the decisions you made in writing and revising your document. You may use an informal voice in this document, but your writing should be clear and your development linear. You may use subheads if you want to structure your letter.

Here's what should be included in your memo (not necessarily in this order):

- **A reflection on the process of writing this paper**, from the invention process (choosing a topic), through research, drafting, peer review, writing center appointments, and revision. Think of this as the story of your project. Please include in this section some comment on how the process of writing and delivering the academic presentation affected your revision of your draft.
- **Reference to your trials and triumphs in writing this paper**, including any unique or interesting research you did that you think I should be aware of (important interviews, archival work, etc.). Think of this as a part where you establish your ethos as a researcher.
- **Discussion of what you're most proud of in the paper AND what you wish you had had more time to work on.** This is where you evaluate your own work.
- **Discussion of how rhetoric factored into the writing of the paper.** Describe how you used rhetoric in your writing: depending on your project, you might discuss [rhetorical appeals](#) (pathos, logos, ethos), [kairos](#), [the five canons of rhetoric](#), and/or the rhetorical situation.

Some of these sections may be more developed than others, depending on your project. Your goal here is to give me an overview of your paper as a piece of research, writing, and rhetoric; however don't forget to use specific and concrete language and example in writing your memo. It is *strongly* recommended that you read over your original research proposal in preparing to write this reflection to give yourself a sense of how far you have come in terms of your topic, your argument, and your research while working on this project.

If you want, you may make an audio or video reflective memo instead of a written one. This should be approximately 3-5 minutes in length and should have a strong structure and cover all the same points as a written memo (i.e., don't just hit record and start to babble – have a plan, a main point, and develop your ideas using specific language and example). The tone may be informal – as if you were talking to me in my office. You can either upload this to coursework, to your portfolio (if the file size isn't too big), or to a private YouTube site; alternately, you could burn it on a disk and hand it in with your paper. *If you are handing in an audio/video reflective memo, you must send me an e-mail to let me know this and also to tell me how you will deliver it.*

EVALUATION CRITERIA

In brief, research papers are graded according to the following criteria:

- **TOPIC:** Interesting, nuanced; not clichéd or banal; appropriate for the assignment objectives and class theme
- **TITLE:** Catchy, well-written title that gives the reader a sense of topic and argument
- **THESIS STATEMENT:** Clear, precise, and well-defined; sophisticated in both statement and insight, connecting to a larger issue
- **ARGUMENT:** Underlying argument developed in the essay matches thesis statement; essay delivers on the “promise” of the thesis; avoids tangents and digressions; author’s argument is clear and sophisticated; it is showcased and drives the essay (rather than evidence driving the essay)
- **INTRODUCTION:** Shows attention to audience and hooking the reader; clearly establishes topic and argument
- **BACKGROUND & DEFINITION:** Provides effective background or theoretical framework to support the central argument; fully utilizes theoretical framework; defines important terms at the appropriate place
- **CONCLUSION:** Ties the paper together; resists relying exclusively on summary; demonstrates attention to crafting of language; works in conjunction with intro to bookend the argument
- **EVIDENCE:** Strong, effective use of specific forms of evidence to support the argument; uses both primary and secondary evidence. Synthesizes multiple arguments from different types of sources appropriate to topic – strong sense of the conversation about the topic & evidence of rigorous research
- **EVIDENCE- INTEGRATION & ANALYSIS:** Effective use of summary, paraphrase, and direct quotations to support claims; polished use of signal phrases and attributions; consistently and effectively comments on, adds to, qualifies, and critiques source material

- **EVIDENCE – ETHICAL USE:** Ethical use of source material; provides context and appropriate citation/documentation
- **VISUAL EVIDENCE:** If uses visuals, uses as evidence to support argument rather than as decoration; includes image source citations after works cited/bibliography
- **STRUCTURE – COHERENCE & FLUIDITY:** Well-constructed, purposeful coherent structure; arrangement of paragraphs leads the reader through argument effectively; good sense of forward momentum
- **STRUCTURE – COHESIVE/COHERENT PARAGRAPHS:** Each paragraph has a coherent, cohesive purpose
- **TRANSITIONS:** Fluid transitions between paragraphs and ideas; demonstrates conceptual relationship between paragraphs/ideas; develops, reinforces or builds on central claim; if uses subheads, uses them in conjunction with transitions rather than instead of and creates rhetorical, interesting subheads
- **ETHOS:** Clearly establishes the *ethos* of the author as a writer and researcher
- **STYLE:** Clear, consistent, and engaging; appropriate to topic and audience; avoids bias
- **CRAFTING:** Shows attention to crafting language and structure through word choice, sentence structure, rhythm, voice, pacing, and effective use of rhetorical appeals and strategies of development
- **DESIGN & DELIVERY:** Attention to aesthetics of design
- **CORRECTNESS:** Demonstrates mastery of appropriate conventions of academic discourse, format, grammar, punctuation, source citation, and language usage

Please note: If you do not turn in the drafts for your essay, your overall grade for the RBA will be taken down half a grade (i.e. from an A- to a B+/A-) for each missing draft. Final revised RBAs that are late without an approved extension will receive a grade deduction for each day that they are late (i.e. from an A- to a B+).

For a more comprehensive description of the grading criteria, please re-visit the [PWR Policies link](#) and scroll down to "Evaluation Criteria"; this is linked under the "Resources" link on our website.

This assignment is worth 35% of your overall grade for the class.

FURTHER RESOURCES

There are several ways you can find extra support in writing up your research into an essay:

- Look at the sample essays linked through the RBA assignment overview page on our website (look under the Assignments link on the horizontal menu bar) or at the Boothe Prize winning essays (available at <https://undergrad.stanford.edu/programs/pwr/publications-prizes-and-awards/boothe-prize-essays>) for examples of outstanding researched arguments.

- If you're feeling a little shaky about what constitutes plagiarism or appropriate use of sources, you should visit the [Research exercises](#) at Diana Hacker's *Bedford Handbook* site (click on “Go To Site”, then Research Exercises, then click on MLA) and run through exercises 54-1 and 54-2. You might also look at 54-3. (Note: you do not need to log in to complete these exercises – click “cancel” if prompted to log in.)
- Make an appointment to consult with a writing tutor in the Hume Center for Writing and Speaking (<http://sututor.stanford.edu>). Consult with Christine or check our website (under the Resources link on the top horizontal menu) for recommended tutors.
- Look at *Envision* for tips on writing research arguments (chapter 6), designing documents (chapter 8) and incorporating accurate documentation style (chapter 7).
- Contact me if you have any questions at alfano@stanford.edu