The Research-Based Argument Essay: Overview

Assignment: Overview
This assignment asks you to deliver your research argument in the form of a 3600+ word academic research paper (word count excludes reflective memo and works cited), utilizing at least 12 sources, with a balance between primary and secondary research. Both the second draft and the revision of the research-based argument should be prefaced by reflective memos.

Due:
- Introduction draft and Working Outline due: Wednesday, Nov. 13 (upload to Coursework RBA folder; no print out needed)
- Draft #1 due: Monday, November 18, by the start of class (bring 2 copies; also upload to Coursework RBA folder)
- Draft #2 due: Monday, December 3, by the start of class (bring 3 copies; also upload to Coursework RBA folder)
- Final revision due: Monday, December 9, by 4:30pm (by 4:30pm drop off a print out and other materials to my office – Sweet 320 - and also upload to Coursework). Must be 3600+ words. NOTE: Works cited/bibliography and cover memo words do not count toward word count.

Paper Format: 3600+ words (note: works cited/bibliography & reflective memo do not count toward word count); 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 rhetorical captions.

Submission Format: Electronic posting of all materials to your Coursework RBA folder, as they are due (this includes title pages, reflective memos, works cited as they are due). No pdfs for drafts, please. Print outs required for drafts for peer review and for the final revision for grading. Submit the final print out in your colored PWR folder (the one you were given with your Rhetorical Analysis) if you have it.

Grading:
This assignment is worth 45% of the overall class grade.

Assignment Goals:

This assignment has three interrelated goals:
1. To ask students to take on a sophisticated research project, working with both primary and secondary sources, on a subject related to gaming culture
2. To encourage students to develop skills in delivering complex research effectively in written form.
3. To help students develop skills in presenting a powerful and articulate argument about a topic, using evidence to substantiate their claims.

Assignment Goals:

All PWR 1 students are required to complete an extended piece of academically rigorous research-based writing, designed to reinforce the skills learned in PWR: research strategies; deliberate and effective use of rhetoric; clear and forceful argument; articulate and engaging writing style.
Your research-based argument essay should focus on an issue related to gaming culture, developed in your TiC, and should include a persuasive thesis that is 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 most cases, you will find it necessary to utilize more than 12 sources to make a persuasive argument. Source material should be cited appropriately, using MLA style for parenthetical documentation and your works cited.

**RBA: Process**

In our PWR course, the focus of your research project is not just on your final argument itself, but also on the process of writing and revising it, so that a series of draft stages are built into our class schedule.

Drafts will not be graded, but notable lack of effort or failure to complete the minimum requirements will result in the overall grade for the research paper being reduced by one half a grade (from an A- to a B+/A-). You must sign up for one mandatory conference during the drafting stage of this project, but you are encouraged to sign up for additional conferences and/or to make a writing center appointment to talk about your project.

See the separate assignment sheets for the different components of the RBA assignment, including

- Introduction drafts (due Wednesday, Nov 13)
- Outline (due Wednesday, Nov 13)
- Draft #1 (due Monday, Nov 18)
- Draft #2 (due Monday, Dec 3)
- RBA slide (due Monday, Dec 3)
- Final revision (due Monday, Dec 9)

**Evaluation Criteria**

In brief, your research-based argument essay will be graded according to the following ideal qualities:

- **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

This paper is worth 45% of your overall grade for the class.

### Further Resources

You might consider the following ways to find extra help in writing up your research into an essay:


- Sign up for extra conferences with me to discuss your progress through the drafting process.

- Make an appointment to consult with a tutor in the Hume Center ([http://sututor.stanford.edu](http://sututor.stanford.edu)). Remember: you are required to meet with a Hume tutor once during the quarter, so if you haven’t done so already, you should do so now! See the Website under “Assignments” for details about how to get credit for your Hume appointment.

- Look at *Envision* for tips on writing research arguments (chapter 6), designing documents (chapter 8) and incorporating accurate documentation style (chapter 7).

- For help on MLA style, see the MLA Style handout in the “Writing Resources” link on the top menu of the Rhetgaming website.

- Contact me if you have any questions (Alfano@stanford.edu and also on Twitter @rhetgaming).