ENGLISH 1302 RESEARCH ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS

Introduction
We will not write the research paper all at once; rather we will follow a sequential progress that includes my responses to you. In order to keep the process on track, timeliness is essential. It is imperative that you note the due date of each assignment as listed on the schedule. Assignments have termination dates after which you cannot turn them in. Again, check your schedule.

Overview
The aim of the extended research paper is to allow you to explore an issue or question related to a specific topic that interests you by researching secondary and primary sources to advance your own interpretation. Your final essay will be an 8-10 page paper, exclusive of the works cited page(s). (That means a minimum of 8 pages of writing, plus the works cited page(s).) Review the Essay Grading Criteria as you go along so that you keep your eye on what you’re working toward.

Consult with me during the process of choosing a topic to make sure that it will be viable and to get help finding suitable resources. In addition to my office hours, I am most available via email (kwood@epcc.edu), and you can email with questions. I will generally get back to you with a quick answer in a few hours. Remember, I do have other classes and responsibilities for the college.

The process will include the following assignments:

- Research Questions (Email)
- Source Citation Worksheets
- Annotated bibliography
  - Sample Annotated Bibliography
- Outline
- Essay Workshop
- Final Essay

We will write the paper step-by-step. The information below outlines the general overview of the paper, so read it to get an understanding of where you’re going with it. After that overview, the individual assignments are listed. You will need to review them for a basic understanding of each step, and will also need to come back to them and re-read the section as we begin to work on it.

Approach: Your paper does not have a chance to be substantive unless you have substantive sources. Find 7 to 10 VARIED (NOT all Internet sites, for example) sources - including professional journal articles and professional publications, Internet sources, and possibly (but not required) an interview. While you may use multiple pages from a specific website, remember that the website only counts as one source. For example, if you use information from the Center for Disease Control’s website, then that counts as one source, even if you use multiple pages from it. However, don’t forget that you’ll need to cite each page separately.

It is a balancing act to find sources that you can understand, that relate to your level of study in your discipline, and, at the same time, challenge you intellectually. In this paper, do not feel like you must solve a problem or necessarily reach a conclusion. What I am looking for is evidence that you can gather
a body of knowledge on a particular subject, narrow it down to a particular focus, and show that you can synthesize the information and make some intelligent, insightful observations about the subject. What I don’t want is just a regurgitation of information strung together. A significant part of the paper should be your interpretation of the information and how your knowledge about the subject has been enriched.

Your paper should contain these parts:

**Introduction:** Your introductory material should set up your topic for your audience. It can briefly summarize your findings on the subject—if the sources disagree about the value of or perspective on the subject, point out the areas of disagreement; provide a background or history of the issue; or discuss the current perceptions of the issue.

Your introduction should not meander around the point of your paper. It should be no longer than one paragraph. Your thesis should come at the end of your introductory material. State your thesis in the form of a sentence or two. **It should not be in the form of a question.** Your thesis should be a brief statement, in your own words, that points out the major conclusion that you discovered in your research. It’s basically the answer to the research question you started with. If you can’t articulate in a sentence or two—what your main point is—then you probably don’t have a good idea of what you will be writing about.

**Body of Paper:** The body of your paper should provide evidence to support your thesis in a logical, fully developed manner. For each new topic that supports your overall thesis, provide a topic sentence or two that is, in effect, the thesis for that sub-topic. You need to provide transition sentences to move your reader from one paragraph to the next. A writer of a research paper should synthesize the information gained from sources and weave them into a well-ordered discussion, using the sources as evidence to support key points. A paper which is just a string of quotes shows that the author made no attempt to come to grips with the subject and is relying on the sources to speak for her or him.

**Conclusion:** Your conclusion should make some wrap up statements about what you learned about your chosen topic and the possible impact of your findings on people or perhaps society in general. Also, address any issues that may still not be resolved. Don’t be reluctant to address any issues that aren’t easily resolved or have negative or ambiguous outcomes. I am not necessarily looking for a neatly wrapped up conclusion with no loose ends. I am looking for a conscientious, thoughtful look at your topic, and **sharing of the major significance of this issue.** You have to move beyond just stating the facts, and move into a discussion of what this shows, means or implies. In essence, discuss the importance of your findings. You can point to aspects of your topic that should still be considered or investigated as long as you explain why that continued investigation is necessary.

**Audience:** Your paper should be understood by a broader audience than scholars in the field—for example, your classmates. You will have to explain concepts and not expect your audience to understand in-house jargon. You are writing to a college-educated audience, so while you may need to explain or define specialized words, also acknowledge their wider basis of understanding. By anticipating your audience you can anticipate the kinds of questions that may arise.
Format: Use MLA format and documentation guidelines to format your essay.

Length – 8-10 double-spaced pages of text (not including graphics, appendices, or works cited page). Ten rambling pages is not better than 8 clear, fully developed pages.

Margins - 1-inch top, bottom, left, right

Pagination: Use a header to put page numbers in top right hand corner of each page, including the works cited page. Also include your last name.

Sources: Take notes on your sources and photocopy or print out original source material. I may ask to see them. For long articles or books, photocopy or print the first page, the pages you quote from, and the reference page (if there is one).

Use a minimum of 7 varied sources - for example, peer-reviewed journals, books, Internet sources, (no textbooks, or encyclopedias - unless they are specialized encyclopedias in your field of study and you are using them for definitions of concepts). Encyclopedia and similar sources should be in addition to the 7 minimum. Trade magazines or special interest group sources have built in biases, but can have some valuable information. However, if you were writing about the value of advertising on the Internet, a company whose product is Internet advertisements would probably not be an objective source, but might be a good source for showing what is being done with Internet advertising. Check the source of all information for reliability. Is the Internet site sanctioned by a reputable institution or organization? What biases of your own may you have to be aware of to produce a scholarly look at this subject?

Documentation: Follow the MLA Style Guide (latest version) for documenting the sources in your text and your Works Cited Page. If you are unsure about a particular source, bring it to me so that we can discuss it.

Use parenthetical citations (citation information in text between parentheses) for information that is someone's opinion and is not common knowledge.

It is poor form to begin a paragraph with a quotation - letting the source speak for you instead of incorporating the source into your text. Additionally, it is poor form to end a paragraph with a quote or paraphrase instead of interpreting the idea and putting it in context of your argument. DO NOT DO THIS!

All sources in your research paper are not only documented in the body of your paper, but must also be listed in the proper format on the works cited page. If it’s in your paper, it should be on your works cited page; if it’s on your works cited page, it should be in your paper.

Use quotes judiciously: Use them only when paraphrasing will make the statement unclear or a kernel of an idea is so perfectly stated that trying to paraphrase in your own words will ruin the impact of the statement. See the MLA Style Guides for how to handle long quotes. Consult your Writer’s Reference, and this source for more information: “Purdue OWL: MLA Formatting Quotations.”

Using Tables, Figures, and Examples: These should only be used if absolutely necessary in your essay. The better option is to put them in the appendix. If, however, you need to place one in your paper,
remember that it does not count toward the page length. Consult this source as a starting point, but also discuss it with me if you think you need these in your paper. “Purdue OWL: MLA Tables, Figures, and Examples.”

**Appendices:** Graphics or charts should **only** be used if they can clarify some concept in your paper. Don't use them just for a flashy effect or for "gee whiz" value. If you include large graphics or charts, include each on a separate appendix page and label each one A, B, and so on. Refer to such appendices in the text where you discuss that issue. Graphs, charts, and appendices are not included as pages of text. They must be in **addition** to the 5 to 7 pages. See “Purdue OWL: Tables, Appendices, Footnotes, and Endnotes” for more on this, and consult with me about doing this in your paper.

**Final advice** - try to relax and consult me when needed throughout the process - I'm here to help. Remember that you want to turn in the best essay you can to me, but also keep in mind the fact that you'll be able to revise the paper.

The rest of this document outlines the various assignments we will do to complete the paper. Make sure to re-read them as we begin each new step.
Choosing a Topic/Email Research Questions

Due date: ______________

You will begin by finding a topic that will give you a wide range of issues to explore. While there are numerous topics you can write about, there are some that are forbidden. I will NOT read essays on the following topics:

- Abortion
- Athlete Salaries
- Body Modification
- Capital Punishment
- Child Abuse
- Gun Control
- Happiness/Positive Thinking
- Immigration
- Media Influence on Violence
- Obesity
- Politics
- Religion/Religious Issues
- Same-Sex Marriage
- Social Media (This can play a role in your paper, just no straight-up social media papers)

Some topics may require some discussion of the issues above, but your paper should not focus on them. Discuss this with me if your topic veers toward these issues. If you have an idea that you think takes a very unique perspective on one of the topics above, ask me about it. The worst I could say is “no.”

Here is a list of topics to give you ideas. You can come up with a topic that is not on this list; this should just get you thinking. I really want you to choose something you want to know about. What’s something you’ve always wanted to learn more about, or something that some research would help you with?

- Advertising
- Appropriate Conduct/Manners
- Art or a Specific Artist
- Beauty
- Body image
- Career or Major
- Conformity/Rebellion
- Copyright/Universal Access
- Death and Dying
- Diversity at school or work
- Education
- Fashion
- Food
- Games
- Green Issues
- Health Care
- History—era, event, etc.
- Individual and Society
- Literary Era or Figure
- Masculinity/Femininity
- Music
- Parenting
- Parties
- Popular Culture
- Race/Ethnicity/Nationality
- Rites of Passage
- Sports
- Technology
- Teen/Adult/Elderly Culture
- TV/Film
- War
- Writing/Story genres (i.e.: crime, comedy, action, chick flicks, etc.)
- Workplace Ethics

Once you have identified a topic, you should begin thinking about a particular question or issue to research. What are some things you want to find out about this topic?

Develop two different but specific possible questions you would like to find out about your topic, or if you’re not sure, you can do a question for two different topics. The reason for developing two preliminary ideas is to give you an option in case one of your proposed topics proves to be too difficult in terms of scope, finding resources, etc.
Email me with those questions by the due date listed on the syllabus schedule. My email address is kwood@epcc.edu. Put your questions directly in the email text. DO NOT attach a document with the questions. I will not read and respond to that. I will only accept these late for two days. When you email this to me, make sure to identify which course you’re in (i.e.: M/W 5:30 or T/Th 11:30). I will not respond to emails that do not have a subject line. DO NOT ATTACH YOUR QUESTIONS; simply put them in the body or your email. See the samples.

If you do not phrase these as questions, they will be returned without comment. You will need to resubmit before the late period ends.

Source Citation Worksheets
Due date: _____________
For these you will use the form provided on the website (this is a direct link to download and save them). You need to find a minimum of 8 sources and fill out a worksheet for each source. See the schedule for due dates. They are due on the date listed at the beginning of class. I will grade them and return them. If you choose to revise them, you can do so when you turn in all final revisions.

See the samples on the 1302 Research webpage.

Annotated Bibliography
Due date: _____________
You will use the information from your Source Citation Sheets to compile your Annotated Bibliography.

An annotated bibliography is a preliminary list of sources for a research project that provides:

- A citation for the source
- A reference to the source’s credibility.
- A summary of the source, identifying the main point the author is making along with his or her reasons for supporting it.

An annotated bibliography is formatted differently than a basic paper, but the document should use the basic MLA format guidelines including heading, header, margins, page numbering, etc. It should be titled Annotated Bibliography. Make sure to look at one of the samples online.

The entries should be arranged in alphabetical order and each one should begin with the citation for the source. After that, provide the annotation. Upon ending that annotation, skip an extra line and provide the next citation and annotation. Continue until you’re done. The sample below illustrates this format. The annotations should be fully developed, and your final Annotated Bibliography will probably be somewhere between 5 to 7 pages long.

Read the sample on the next page
See Online Samples:
- The Answer to Organ Donation Shortages: Annotated Bibliography
- Us and Those Guys in the Skies: From Prehistory to the Final Eighty-Eight: Annotated Bibliography
Annotated Bibliography:

Title of Your Essay if You Have an Idea for It

Lastname, Firstname. Title of Book in Italics with Major Words Capitalized. Edition if other than the first.
PublicationCity, PublicationState: Name of Publishing House, Year of Publication. Medium.

Summary and discussion of credibility. Provide a detailed summary that would give anyone who hadn’t read the article a good feeling for the major issues it discusses and the author’s credibility.


In “The Essayification of Everything,” Christy Wampole, an Assistant Professor of French and Italian at Princeton University, whose doctoral focus was on both French and Italian Essayistic fiction, and author of numerous articles and reviews, discusses the current popularity of the essay and its proliferation on and off the web. In discussing its history and current state, she laments the state of the essay today and calls out a need for the essay’s return to its more philosophical roots. Wampole maintains that “the essay owes its longevity today mainly to this fact: the genre and its spirit provide an alternative to the dogmatic thinking that dominates much of social and political life in contemporary America.” In saying this, she points toward the fact that the essay does not require a yes or no conclusion; rather it allows writers to simply consider and ponder ideas and issues without having the burden of coming up with some big truth or final solution. As she looks at the essay, Wampole examines the history of it beginning with Montaigne his writings, the “Essais,’ which, at the time, meant merely...
‘Attempts.’” She maintains that even at their early roots, they were simply writings used to “try something out.”

She then compares Montaigne’s essays that seek to consider and ponder ideas to Sir Francis Bacon’s, which she describes as “more boxy and solemn prose” (Wampole).

Wampole then differentiates between the idea of essay as she discusses here “short nonfiction prose with a meditative subject at its center and a tendency away from certitude,” and what she says we mistake for an essay: “the kind of writing expected on the SAT, in seminar papers, dissertations, professional criticism or other scholarly writing; politically engaged texts or other forms of peremptory writing that insist upon their theses and leave no room for uncertainty; or other short prose forms in which the author’s subjectivity is purposely erased or disguised.” Finally, she concludes with a call for a return to the original intent:

We need a cogent response to the renewed dogmatism of today’s political and social landscape and our intuitive attraction to the essay could be pointing us toward this genre and its spirit as a provisional solution. Today’s essayistic tendency — a series of often superficial attempts relatively devoid of thought — doesn’t live up to this potential in its current iteration, but a more meditative and measured version à la Montaigne would nudge us toward a calm taking into account of life without the knee-jerk reflex to be unshakeably right. The essayification of everything means turning life itself into a protracted attempt.

(Wampole)

Remember to arrange your entries based on alphabetical order of the first thing in the citation except the words A, An, or The. If you have more than one author with the same last name, or multiple works by the same author, consult your Writer’s Reference—see the table of contents on the tab of the MLA chapter.

You need to have 8 sources in your Annotated Bibliography. Your Source Citation Worksheets provide the information you need. So, if you’ve done them well, this is really a matter of organization and format.
Outline
Due date: ______________

In class we will work on outlining your essay. Your final outline should be a full sentence outline that includes some quotes and references to your sources. Look at the samples on the website. It should also include a works cited page. Your outline should be about 6-10 pages.

General Outline (This is not what your outline should look like; it’s just a layout of how to organize your information.)

I. Your introduction paragraph should
   A. Introduce the audience to the issue being addressed though discussion of the overall topic, history, major issues, etc. Basically, get readers into the subject matter.
   B. Provide your thesis. (Now that you’ve read all of this research, what’s the answer to your question, and what’s the significance of understanding this? Write that out in one clear sentence. NO QUESTIONS—your paper is the answer.)

II. The body of your paper should
   A. Provide a clear topic sentence for each section of the body. What is the main point you’re making?
      1. Insert relevant research you want to use below each topic sentence. Make sure to include proper attribution and in-text citations.
      2. Interpret your evidence. What does it show or illustrate about the point you’re making at the moment, or how does it show something about your point the paper?
   B. Repeat the process in section II.A. above as needed for each point or subtopic in your essay.

III. The conclusion should
   A. Bring together all information and interpretation discussed, explaining how all of the parts come together to illustrate the bigger point made in the thesis. You should not simply summarize what you said in your essay. Now that you’ve gathered all of this research and you’ve thought about it, what’s the big deal? How does this all come together and what does it show, mean, or suggest? I suggest that you set everything else aside and draft this by just beginning with “after researching and reading about this, I think…” Just let yourself write, then once you’ve done that, come back to it and shape it up to college-level writing.

IV. Works Cited page
   A. A works cited page for all sources you have used in your outline. Your final paper must use at least 7 sources, but can use more. Remember that definitions don’t count.

Essay Workshop
Due date: ______________

You will bring a draft of your essay to class to share with your group. This should be typed and correctly formatted and represent a solid start on the essay. In essence, it should be near the final stage. This is a grade.

Final Essay
Due date: ______________
The following list outlines the criteria by which your final essay will be graded.
Use the conventions of standard written English (appropriate diction, no omitted words, grammar, punctuation, and spelling). The omission of running spell check and proofreading your essay will adversely affect your grade in a very significant way. **Not including a works cited page will result in a grade no higher than a 50.** The same is true of not including in-text citations.

**Essay Grading Criteria**

I grade based on the following questions. You should make sure that you can answer yes to these questions when you read your final draft of your essay.

- **Document design and requisites**
  - Is the essay correctly formatted?
  - Does the essay include a Works Cited page?
  - Is the essay developed to the required minimum length? (8 pages)

- **Introduction**
  - Does the introduction work to move the audience into the issue being addressed through discussion of the overall topic, history, major issues, etc?
  - Is the thesis clearly articulated at the end of the introduction in a concise declarative statement? (No questions—just the answers.)

- **Body**
  - Is there solid, college-level evidence to support the thesis?
  - Is the evidence clearly interpreted and explained in light of the thesis?
  - Is the evidence integrated into the writing, using signal phrases and correct in-text citations?
  - Is it organized in a coherent, logical manner?

- **Development**
  - Is the paper developed with a depth that represents college-level thinking?
  - If appropriate, does it examine both sides of the issue?

- **Conclusion**
  - Does the conclusion bring together all information and interpretation, explaining how all of the parts come together to illustrate the bigger point made in the thesis?

- **Overall Essay Focus**
  - Does the paper as a whole work together to explain and support the thesis throughout?

- **Works Cited Page**
  - Is the page titled correctly?
  - Are the entries formatted and arranged correctly?
  - Are the entries cited correctly?
  - Are sources used varied and appropriate for college level writing?
  - Are all sources listed used in the essay? Are all sources used in the essay listed?

- **Style and Grammar**
  - Is the grammar representative of college-level writing?
  - Do the style and voice reflect the tone of the academic conversation?
• Late points, and extra credit
  o Is the paper turned in on time?
  o Writing Center extra credit?