ESSAY FOUR // ARGUMENTATIVE RESEARCH PAPER

IMPORTANT DATES
- 4/24 (by noon): Email me your research proposal in the body of the email (not as an attachment). See below for the specific requirements.
- 5/11: Essay 4 sources and preliminary thesis due in class
- 5/18: Complete introductory paragraph (that ends with a thesis) and a topic sentence outline due in class
- 6/1: Two copies of a complete, typed draft due in class for workshop
- 6/3: Final Draft due in class
  - A complete essay packet will include: your source packet, your first draft, peer review, your final draft, and an electronic copy submitted to Turnitin.com by 11:59 pm on the due date.

For this essay, I ask you to take as your starting point one of the articles from our textbook, conduct additional research, and plan and write an argumentative research paper.

Many of you mentioned that you have written research papers before. Because research papers can be defined differently from class to class, it’s important to understand how we are conceiving of an argumentative research paper in this class. I find the explanation on Purdue’s Online Writing Lab to be particularly helpful in this regard:

**Research: What it is not.**
A research paper is not simply an informed summary of a topic by means of primary and secondary sources. It is neither a book report nor an opinion piece nor an expository essay consisting solely of one’s interpretation of a text nor an overview of a particular topic. Instead, it is a genre that requires one to spend time investigating and evaluating sources with the intent to offer interpretations of the texts, and not unconscious regurgitations of those sources. The goal of a research paper is not to inform the reader what others have to say about a topic, but to draw on what others have to say about a topic and engage the sources in order to thoughtfully offer a unique perspective on the issue at hand.

**Research: What it is.**
A research paper is the culmination and final product of an involved process of research, critical thinking, source evaluation, organization, and composition. It is, perhaps, helpful to think of the research paper as a living thing, which grows and changes as the student explores, interprets, and evaluates sources related to a specific topic. Primary and secondary sources are the heart of a research paper, and provide its nourishment; without the support of and interaction with these sources, the research paper would morph into a different genre of writing (e.g., an encyclopedic article). The research paper serves not only to further the field in which it is written, but also to provide the student with an exceptional opportunity to increase her knowledge in that field.

Your assignment in Essay 4, then, is not to merely inform, but to enter the conversation about your topic, not only offering an original perspective, but arguing – through research; source interpretation, evaluation, and integration; and effective reasoning – that your perspective is not only interesting, but that your interpretation is viable.

GETTING STARTED WITH YOUR RESEARCH PROPOSAL EMAIL
Choose one article to focus on from They Say/I Say. This article should cover a topic that you can sustain interest in for the length of this research paper. Whatever text you choose will also serve as your “motivating article.” This means that there should be an idea or claim in the article that you want to explore, challenge, extend, or investigate further.

Once you have chosen an article, refer to the list of motivating moves to help you focus your topic:
1. The truth isn’t what one would expect, or what it might appear to be on first reading.
2. There’s an interesting wrinkle in the matter, a complexity.
3. The standard opinion of this work (as great, or as dull or minor) needs challenging.
4. There’s a contradiction, or paradox, or tension here that needs some sorting out.
5. There’s an ambiguity here, something unclear that could mean two or more things.
6. There’s a mystery or puzzle here, a question that presents itself.
7. We can learn something interesting about this phenomenon by studying this smaller one.
8. There’s a published view of this that’s mistaken or needs qualifying.
10. This seemingly tangential or insignificant matter is actually interesting or important.

In your email to me, due on 4/24 at noon, you will be required to write a proposal, using complete sentences that form paragraphs, in which you identify:

A. your motivating article (including the author and title)
B. one (or more) of the motivating moves underlying your own project.
C. a tentative research question, phrased as an actual question
D. your current hypothesis – what do you think you will find?
E. why this topic is interesting to you – maybe you have a personal connection to it, or maybe you have studied this topic previously in another class?
F. why this topic might be of interest to others.

THE ESSAY

- You will need to include a summary of your motivating article early on in your essay.
- Your thesis should stem from a claim or argument that the motivating article makes.
- Each topic sentence should be clearly connected to your thesis statement.
- Each body paragraph should back up your thesis with research from your outside sources.
- You should include a section in which you address and REFUTE counterclaims.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

- Your essay needs to be a minimum of 2400 words. Any words on your Works Cited page do not count. Make sure to list the word count at the end of your essay. If an essay does not meet this minimum requirement, the highest grade it can earn is an F (Range: 0-59%).
- In addition to any articles you use from our textbook, you are required to use at least 6 other reputable sources, and at least one of these additional sources should come from a scholarly journal. All sources should be cited in the text and listed on the Works Cited page. If your essay does not meet this minimum requirement, the highest grade it can earn is a D. If your Works Cited page includes sources not cited in the body, or if the body of your essay includes sources not listed on the Works Cited page, the essay will earn an F.
- Proper MLA format, in-text citations, and a properly formatted Works Cited page are required. At this point in the semester, your in-text citations and Works Cited page should be perfect. (This is worth 8% of your final grade on this essay.) Failure to properly attribute sources will result in a failing grade.
- You will be required to turn in a source packet with your final draft. For any quote, paraphrase, or idea you cite in your paper (excluding those from our textbook), you should include a copy of the page on which it appears in the original source. Each of these copied pages should be clearly labeled with the author’s name at the top, and you should highlight the quoted, paraphrased, or summarized text and note the page of your paper on which it appears. (This is worth 2% of your final grade on this essay.)
- You should not use: I, me, my, mine, you, your, yours, we, our, ours; contractions; or informal language
- As always, you should make smart use of various They Say/I Say templates