

## **Project 2: The Research Essay**

While exploring your possible topic, you will generate an exploratory research “question” that you want your essay to answer. Next, you’ll develop a research proposal, followed by a research-in-progress report and an annotated bibliography. You will then take your paper through stages of drafting and revision, sharing the second with a group of your peers and with me during individual conferences. After the conference, you will work on a third draft. You will include your final draft in your ePortfolio at the end of the semester.

The purpose of the following three assignments is to help prepare you to confidently and effectively craft a well-researched and thoughtful essay on a topic that truly engages you.

### **Preparatory Assignment #1: Research Proposal (minimum of 300 words)**

You will write a research proposal designed to help you organize your ideas and intentions. This proposal will be based on your exploration of your topic and your initial research. You should reflect on how you became interested in your topic, how you came up with your research question, why you think it’s important, and how you plan to explore the question in your research (see pg 292 in *BBG*). **Due 10/3.**

### **Preparatory Assignment #2: Research-in-Progress Report (minimum of 500 words)**

Your research-in-progress report should include three sections: your “final” research question, a statement of what’s missing in your research at this point, and a draft of an annotated bibliography. **Due 10/19.**

### **Preparatory Assignment #3: Annotated Bibliography (minimum of 1,000 words)**

You will annotate ten potential sources, three of which must be academic, scholarly, and/or peer-reviewed sources, examining credibility, relevance, and potential incorporation and connection to your research question. You will review these ten sources of your paper, focusing on their content and discussing the relevance of each to your topic. Also mention how you might plan to use it within your essay (see pgs 297-300 in *BBG*). **Due 10/26.**

Your annotations for each of the ten sources should:

1. Begin with a correctly formatted citation (MLA)
2. Briefly summarize the source and its main ideas
3. Tell how the source relates to the research topic
4. Tell how the source relates/does not relate to your other sources

Optional: Tell what new/different information this source provides; explain weaknesses and/or strengths of the source; tell what about the source you find especially interesting

After completing the three preparatory assignments above, you should be able to confidently and effectively craft a polished academic research essay with a minimum of 3,000 polished words that includes no fewer than ten sources, three of which should be academic, scholarly, and/or peer-reviewed sources, parenthetical documentation as needed, and a correctly formatted Works Cited page (in MLA documentation style). Use Times New Roman 12-point font and double space your drafts.

**Draft 1 Due: 10/17**

**Draft 2 Due: 10/26**

**Draft 3 Due: 11/14**

The following information is for suggestion only. After your second draft, we'll discuss your personal style of writing and the organization of your topic during conferences, so don't worry too much about sticking to conventions.



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## **Exploratory Essays**

Exploratory essays ask questions and gather information that may answer these questions. The main point of the exploratory or inquiry essay is not to find definite answers, but to conduct inquiry into a topic, gather information, and share that information with readers. An exploratory essay is, in essence, a retrospective of your writing and thinking process as you work through a problem. You will have to be introspective and think about your thinking process. It also might describe when, how, and why you completed certain types of research.

### **Introductions for Exploratory Essays**

The introduction is the broad beginning of the paper that answers three important questions:

1. What is this?
2. Why am I reading it?
3. What do you want me to do?

You should answer these questions in the introduction by doing the following:

1. *Set the context* – provide general information about the main idea, explaining the situation so the reader can make sense of the topic and the questions you will ask
2. *State why the main idea is important* – tell the reader why they should care and keep reading. Your goal is to create a compelling, clear, and educational essay people will want to read and act upon
3. *State your research question* – compose a question or two that clearly communicate what you want to discover and why you are interested in the topic. An overview of the types of sources you explored might follow your research question.

If your inquiry paper is long, you may want to forecast how you explored your topic by outlining the structure of your paper, the sources you considered, and the information you found in these sources. Your forecast could read something like this: “In order to explore my topic and try to answer my research question, I began with news sources. I then conducted research in scholarly sources, such as peer-reviewed journals. Lastly, I conducted an interview with a primary source. All these sources gave me a better understanding of my topic, and even though I was not able to fully answer my research questions, I learned a lot.”

*You do not have to argue for a solution to the problem at this point.* The point of the exploratory essay is to ask an inquiry question and find out as much as you can to try to answer your question. Then write about your inquiry and findings. How you build the body paragraphs and the conclusion will depend directly on this recursive, introspective thinking and writing process.