

Assignment #6: Research Paper

EDR3B: Energy, Society, and Environmental Design | Spring 2016

Assignment Milestones and Due Dates

Draft Paper Topic Proposal, Tuesday March 29th - Thursday, March 31st

- **Submission format:** Paper copy due during student/instructor meetings; 1 page

Revised Paper Topic Proposal, Thursday, April 7th

- **Submission format:** Paper copy due in class; 2 pages

Note: these two due together

Annotated Bibliography, Thursday, April 7th

- **Submission format:** Paper copy due in class; 5+ sources

Annotated Outline, Thursday, April 14th

- **Submission format:** Paper copy due in class (**bring 4 copies**); 3-5 pages

First Full Draft (+Revised Bibliography), Thursday, April 21st

- **Submission format:** Paper copy due in class; 6 pages, plus bibliography

Final Paper DUE Monday, May 9th

- **Submission format:** Due to bCourses by 8pm:
 - Final draft (10 pages)
 - Annotated bibliography (7+ sources)
 - Research reflection (2 pages)
 - Copies of original documents
 - Research proposal
 - Original annotated outlines with comments
 - Original first draft with comments)
- **Evaluation:** This assignment is worth 25% of your grade

Assignment Description

A research paper is a specific type of writing defined by the Online Writing Lab at Purdue University (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu>) as: “the culmination and final product of an involved process of research, critical thinking, source evaluation, organization, and composition.” This definition illuminates the many activities in which you will engage to produce a research paper: you will identify and explore a range of sources, offer your own interpretations and evaluations of each source, and articulate original argument that serves not only to increase your own knowledge about a specific topic, but also to “further the field in which [the paper] is written.”¹ Importantly, Baker & Brizee remind us that this genre of writing is distinct from others in which you have engaged so far this semester:

“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

¹ Jack Raymond Baker & Allen Brizee. “Writing a Research Paper.” The Purdue Online Writing Lab. Accessed January 17, 2016 from <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/owlprint/658/>.

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.**"² (emphasis mine)

In other words, a research paper is a fantastic opportunity for you to apply many of the skills you have learned so far this semester to the creation of an original piece of thinking and writing.

Typically research papers take two forms, either of which is appropriate for this assignment: **argumentative** papers take a stance on a particular – sometimes controversial, but certainly debatable – issue and are intended to persuade; **analytical** papers, on the other hand, ask questions but do not take a specific stand, rather they thoughtfully explore and evaluate a topic. In your research paper you might aim to:

- **Argue in favor of or advocate a point:** “An argumentative research paper needs to support your stand on an issue. An argumentative research paper is analytical, but it uses information as evidence to support its point, much as a lawyer uses evidence to make their case.”³
- **Analyze a particular perspective:** “To analyze means to break a topic or concept down into its parts in order to inspect and understand it, and to restructure those parts in a way that makes sense to you. In an analytical research paper, you do research to become an expert on a topic so that you can restructure and present the parts of the topic from your own perspective.”⁴

What these two share is the **presence of a clear research question to which the author responds** (either in an argumentative or analytical fashion) **by offering examples, evidence, and thoughtful analyses of each.** In class we will discuss possible examples of both types of papers as well as how to come up with a research question.

Assignment Milestones

Paper Topic Proposal

- Your paper topic proposal should make the following clear to your reader:
 - The topic you plan to write about
 - Your research question
 - Your tentative thesis/argument (*note: this may very well change over time as you learn more about your topic – that’s ok*)
 - Why you are interested in this topic
 - Types of sources or evidence you might use
 - Any questions you’d like to discuss with your instructor
- **Resources:** To learn more about how to build a thesis, see this resource from the Berkeley Student Learning Center: <http://slc.berkeley.edu/node/252>.

² Baker & Brizee, “Writing a Research Paper.”

³ Empire State College Online Writing Center. “What is a Research Paper?” Accessed January 17, 2016 from <https://www.esc.edu/online-writing-center/resources/research/research-paper/>.

⁴ Ibid.

Annotated Bibliography

- An annotated bibliography is comprised of two essential components:
 - A list of sources, arranged alphabetically conforming to a specific bibliographic style (e.g., APA, Chicago, MLA; for more information about citation styles, see the Online Writing Lab: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu>)
 - Annotations, or written responses to/descriptions of each source. Use annotations to tell your reader: (1) why you think the source is relevant to the topic and (2) how reliable you think the source is and why. You might also use annotations for your own benefit, noting what you found of importance in the source so that you know which to revisit, and when, as you delve deeper into your research and writing.
- **Resource:** For more information about writing annotated bibliographies (and to see examples), please follow this link to the Purdue Online Writing Lab: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/>

Annotated Outline

- The purpose of this milestone is to help you begin organizing your thoughts in a linear, organized fashion. This can be difficult to do since we think in a non-linear way, yet are required to translate our ideas into an organized structure that makes it easy for readers to follow and understand.
- Your outline should convey to your reader:
 - How you plan to introduce the topic to your reader; in other words, the 'hook' you'll use to grab the reader's interest and/or introduce the topic at hand
 - Your research question and argument
 - The primary sections of your paper; in other words, your strategy for proving your point. Each section should include its own argument, list of sources and relevant evidence, and conclusions that support the broader argument
 - How you plan to conclude your paper
- Your outline will serve as a wonderful resource for you and your peers (and instructor) to be able to discuss your ideas, provide feedback about your argument and organization, and assess any gaps and/or challenges
- **Resource:** The Writing Center at Berkeley's Student Learning Center published a wonderful how-to guide for making outlines on their website; please visit: <http://slc.berkeley.edu/node/251>. You also might find it useful to review the purpose and structure of body paragraphs: <http://slc.berkeley.edu/node/256>.

Learning Outcomes

- **Identify** a topic of concern and **develop** a research question and argument in response
- **Summarize** and **critically evaluate** a range of sources relating to this topic and **apply** findings to own thesis
- **Defend** argument with evidence from a range of sources
- **Plan, organize, and compose** a thoughtful, engaging research paper integrating all of the above