

Issue Exploration Essay and Annotated Bibliography

There are three primary parts that make up the capstone writing assignment for Module 1:

- I. Research Question
- II. Issue Exploration Essay
- III. Annotated Bibliography

Some aspects of your invention work will be individual notebook assignments, while others will be part of group discussions and online peer review workshops. Rest assured that there will be many opportunities for you to receive feedback from both peers and instructors on each facet of this project.

As you are considering topics for this assignment, please remember that they need to go along with the consumer culture theme we have set for this course. This doesn't necessarily mean you have to write about a particular issue, rather, it means that your topic should be related in some way to current issues and form your own opinion (your thesis) as you dive into research. You might draw inspiration from the readings we do in class or from looking at issues and discussing civic engagement; something might interest/excite/anger/confuse you. **Any issue relating to media, purchasing product, labeling, consumption of natural resources, economics driven by consumption, even food!** Have some fun as you consider ideas! We're only an email away if you have any questions.

The idea here is for you to perform in-depth research on a topic that you really care about, something you have an opinion on and something you want to learn more about.

Part I: Research Question

The research project asks you to pick an important question or several related questions (questions which if answered would benefit the world in some way) and research different ways people with various perspectives may respond to the question(s). A topic isn't enough. You also need to ask questions that you want to try to answer. Have fun. Pick something you're genuinely interested in; after all, you'll be spending a lot of time researching and writing about this.

Here are just a few examples of what a research question may look like:

- What risks do we take as customers in email systems while hacking is prevalent?
- How are my purchasing choices a factor in political systems?
- How does my energy use promote specific fuel uses?
- Is violence committed with illegal guns more or less impactful than that committed with legally purchased guns?
- When I drink Starbucks' coffee, am I harming or helping developing countries?
- How do I avoid being duped by fake news?

Part II: Issue Exploration Essay

At this point you should have completed extensive research into your research question, exploring multiple perspectives and constructions of the issue. This research is represented in your Annotated Bibliography [**see Part III just below**]. The purpose of research and annotated

bibliographies in persuasive writing is to come to a fuller understanding of the rhetorical context and situation. That is, the purpose is **NOT** simply to find support for the views you already hold about an issue. Explore different perspectives and see what “they say” about your chosen research topic.

In 2-3 double-spaced pages, flesh out your own view on your issue in the context of what you have discovered about your research question in this unit. This will not be a full researched argument but rather a brief overview of your own view shaped by your research and the notebooks/discussions from Module 1. Still, you must compare and contrast your view with the research you have explored in your Annotated Bibliography. In doing this you should utilize your writing and thinking from the various assignments during this unit.

The issue exploration essay can take on various forms. Your specific approach should come out of your engagement with your particular debate. Here are four possible ways of approaching the Assignment:

1. Opponents/Allies—if there are several strong opposing views and/or you find yourself in the minority you might take up this option. Identify and counter opposing views with evidence and then flesh out your own view.
2. *They Say, I Say*—utilize the templates from *They Say, I Say* to describe and compare the different ways of seeing your issue. Make clear where your own view fits into these templates. Links to individual chapters are posted on the weekly pages on Modules in our Canvas site; you can visit a full-length copy of the entire text here: <http://tinyurl.com/zpgt2zn>.
3. Story of my research—if your own view has changed quite a bit during your exploration you might choose this option. Recount the journey of your research and exploration of the issue: how your views changed and were reshaped and how you arrived at your current view.
4. A combination of more than one of these approaches.

Essay Requirements:

1. 600-800 words (2-3 pages, double-spaced)
2. Carefully contextualize your views with and against the research you have found
3. Use attributive tags (Ex. As Johnson argues... OR In contrast to Johnson....) to situate your view amongst your sources

The Issue Exploration Essay should also follow current MLA or APA guidelines (typed and double spaced, 1” margins on all four sides). You should include in-text citations and a list of works cited at the end of the essay. The following links from the Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue will be helpful resources:

- MLA Style: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>
- APA Style: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/664/01/>

We will also briefly discuss MLA and APA formats in our real-time online chats and online discussion responses.

Part III: Annotated Bibliography

The Annotated Bibliography will focus on the sources you use as evidentiary support for your Issue Exploration Essay.

The main difference between this assignment and a regular list of sources is the inclusion of brief annotations for each source that you've used as support for your researched argument essay. This means that in addition to evaluating your use of proper MLA or APA format/citation, we will also consider your evaluation of each source and your rationale for choosing them.

The Annotated Bibliography portion of the argument assignment is designed to illustrate:

1. The breadth of your research for the issue exploration essay
2. Your ability to document sources using MLA or APA format (author, title, publication info, dates, site addresses, etc.)
3. Your ability to effectively and succinctly evaluate your research and your rationale for choosing the different sources (a paragraph which will follow the actual citation for each source)

For hints on creating your own annotated bibliography, I encourage you to spend some time with the following resource from the Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/>. We will also discuss this assignment in class during our real-time online workshops.

The Annotated Bibliography should include both citations (either MLA or APA style) and annotations for all of the sources you've referenced within the body of your argument essay (at least 3-4 sources, though you may elect to use more than this).

Hints for Brainstorming, Researching and Drafting

An academic argument is focused around a main idea (also called the claim or thesis statement of the paper). This main idea is supported by research, evidence that supports your argument.

In your argument essay, you should:

- Consider the “writing triad”: purpose, audience and genre
- Clearly state your point – have a thesis that lets readers know what “You Say”
- Back up your point with research – remember to read critically and document your sources both within the essay and on a list of works cited at the end of the essay (MLA or APA format)
- Acknowledge what “They Say” by addressing counterarguments – points of view which differ from your own

Hints for Composing and Revising¹

As you begin to compose your argument essay, remember to include the following details:

- A clear, concise thesis statement that occurs in the first paragraph of the essay
- Clear and logical transitions between the introduction, body, and conclusion
- Body paragraphs that include evidential support
- Evidential support (whether factual, logical, statistical, or anecdotal)
- A conclusion that readdresses the thesis in light of the evidence provided

¹ The following PDF from Austin Peay State University offers additional hints and guidelines for composing a persuasive/argumentative essay: http://www.apsu.edu/sites/apsu.edu/files/academic-support-center/Persuasive_Argumentative_Essay15.pdf