

Paper Four Assignment

Analyzing a Social Issue and Arguing for Change

Introduction

Most of us agree – our world’s got issues. Maybe you’re a pessimist or, if you’d prefer, a cynicist, and you think that our world has a number of issues and fixing them is almost a lost hope. Or maybe you’re an optimist, you like to see the good in people, and believe that we can change the world through our actions. In reality, most of us lie in the middle of this spectrum and see the world as a complicated place; there’s no clear-cut easy solution to our society’s problems, but change can be generated if we think and work together. For this paper, you are going to analyze a problem in society and argue for a way to change whatever issue you identify. This will be the most difficult and complex paper you have written (and will write) this semester; first of all, you are doing two things here: 1) analyzing an issue. and 2) arguing for specific action(s). You will have to decide how to organize your paper around these two goals. You will also need to figure out what issue you want to identify, which might take some careful consideration. I strongly suggest sticking to what you know – look for an issue that is *pertinent to you*, to your existence as a college student, to your identity as a young American, etc. The *more local* you can keep this, the easier it will be to keep yourself interested in and dedicated to the project.

Where to Start

We are going to start with some action research. Get out there and do some talking. Ask your friends, professors, parents, and random strangers what they think some of society’s biggest issues are. Be specific; if you want to look at racism, ask questions related to racism. If you want to examine college campuses or college students, ask questions related to that. Figure out what’s on people’s minds and imagine ways we might begin to address the issues they identify. How would you go about “fixing” our world? Write down or videotape (preferred) your findings and bring them to class.

Requirements

This paper must:

- Be 7-8 pages Times New Roman, double-spaced with 1-inch margins (according to MLA guidelines)
- Cite and incorporate, both in-text and on a works cited page, at least 2 outside *scholarly* sources obtained from the UM libraries (this does not count any interviews or surveys you may reference in your paper or any other pop culture resources you might use)
- Cite and incorporate, both in-text and on a works cited page, at least one action research source (interview or survey) that you conducted to gain information about the social issue you are examining.
- Analyze a problem/issue in society, looking at it from multiple angles and perspectives and acknowledging other related issues and arguments that may contribute to the problem or interpret it differently.
- Propose a potential “solution” to the problem in a way that does not oversimplify the issue at hand, examining in your proposal how the solution might help alleviate the problem and acknowledging its potential shortcomings.

Multimedia Component

This paper also has a multimedia component. In addition to writing the paper (above), you will be responsible for creating a multimedia composition that engages in “social action” or activism (I say activism cautiously; we will discuss the potential pitfalls of activist pieces in class). Your multimedia piece should seek to create *awareness* about the issue at hand and should be targeted at a broad audience (whereas the paper is targeted at a more scholarly audience). You may work with a partner on this if you have similar issues or issues that are somehow in conversation with one another. Possibilities include, but are not limited to:

- A video comprised of images, video recordings, music, statistics, etc...
- A webpage incorporating things like those above
- A blog that discusses the issue at hand and provides resources for those interested in your cause
- Music? Theater? The possibilities are limitless...

You will present your multimedia piece and give an overview of your papers in class on April 4th. If you are working with a partner, you and your partner will present together.

Grading Guidelines

It is important to note that not only does this paper have more peer reviews than any of the others, but it is also worth more points than any of our previous papers. This one is worth 150 points! As such, it is very important that you work to complicate your argument, analyze your issue in great depth, and find sources that will help you to make your argument clear. I will use the same rubric as usual for my grading of this assignment.

Due Dates

Please keep the following due dates in mind as we move forward with this assignment:

- Monday 3/7:** **Bring to class a list of issues gathered from people you know or people you interview that others identify as potential problems in our society or in your immediate community. If possible, videotape these interactions (this will be useful later!).**
- Wednesday 3/9:** **First draft due to Liz's Googledocs (must be 4 pages at least!)**
- Wednesday 3/16:** **Second draft due to Liz's Googledocs (must be full-length!)**
- Monday 3/28:** **Draft of multimedia piece due to group members and Liz's inbox (this is not on the syllabus – add it!)**
- Mon 4/4 & Wed 4/6:** **Final drafts due, presentations in class of multimedia pieces**

Be sure to keep up with the calendar during this paper; we will be moving pretty quickly and there will be a lot of things for you to read and bring to each class session.