

## **Research Project Unit: Examining Sources, Arguing Your Perspective**

### **Due Dates**

**Research Paper Topic Proposal:** Due April 22<sup>nd</sup>, Sunday, by midnight to Blackboard

**First Drafts:** Due in class for Workshop Week to Blackboard, May 4<sup>th</sup>, Friday

**Final Draft and Annotated Bibliography:** Due May 20<sup>th</sup>, Sunday, by midnight to Blackboard

### **Goals of Research Project**

In this research essay you will be required to focus on a subject of your own specific interest. You are given the freedom to pick what topic interests you the most. At the same time, your topic should lead to scholarly research that allows you explore cultural makeup in our world and ideologies that you might uncover from those constructs. You will need to do scholarly research using credible secondary resources along with an in-depth reading of your chosen primary source(s). Your thesis ought to center around the one key issue or idea you find persisting in the text and subtext of your primary source(s). Your research will therefore be more than just retrieving facts; it will often allow for the philosophical and subjective, allowing you to argue and analyze how you interpret your primary sources. This is not a book report and the way you connect your research to an ideological issue will allow for a more conversational tone and argument-based analysis.

I recommend choosing primary sources you can unpack and close-read with intellectual vigor. Focus on the details you find compelling rather than spreading yourself too thin with lots general ideas on those primary sources. You will want to think of 10 fully analyzed ideas that support one major claim rather than 10 different little claims on 10 different ideas. Additionally, a number of students have found success in creating binaries—comparing two representations of the same subject to one another. Thinking in terms of opposing pairs can be a helpful and creative way to organize your thoughts. I recommend this strategy of compare/contrast between two primary source topics.

### **Requirements for Research Paper Topic Proposal**

- **One page, double-spaced rationale for your research**
- **Clean, polished draft, with MLA heading**

The research paper will ask you to consider how a primary source represents something you find interesting. A primary source could include written documents, film, music, television, various types of media, and essentially anything that is depicting what you find to be a problematic or interesting example of a cultural object, group, ideology, etc. For example, *Lies My Teacher Told Me* is a book that discusses and argues how common American textbooks misrepresent historical facts and makes an argument for the effect of this misrepresentation on our educational system. On a much smaller scale, I would like you to think about primary sources you find yourself questioning and interested in. Coming up with a research topic can be one of the more difficult things to do. Stick to what you enjoy and what you want to know more about.

Right now think in terms of this model:

[this primary source/s] *represents* [this idea/group/cultural subject/object] *in a problematic or interesting way because it does* [insert your thoughts on the subject]

The topic for your research should first and foremost be something you want to learn more about. The proposal must be written as though you are looking towards a possible thesis. Remember that your thesis will inevitably change as you continue to think about the story and the sources. Your proposal should reveal the ideas you currently have on the topic you have chosen.

### **Objectives for Paper**

This research paper will allow you to do analysis on primary source(s) and then use secondary sources to place yourself in an academic discussion about the implications of your study. While there is a stronger emphasis on doing outside research with primary sources, I still want your analysis to engage in an academic conversation with previous scholars' ideas on the subject matter. You are examining primary sources and then doing extensive research about the topics within those primary sources. The extensive research you do will involve looking at other people's ideas about those primary sources. Those other ideas are your secondary sources.

Past papers have dealt with the following topics:

- How Disney films such as *The Jungle Book*, *Dumbo*, and *The Lion King*, represent racial stereotypes in a variety of ways.
- Looking at representations of violence and horror from 1980's "slasher" films to *American Horror Story* TV show.
- The differences and similarities between how American and British publishers visually represent the hero figure in the *Harry Potter* series.
- How the marketing strategy of IKEA represents its products as creating the domestic space in different ways than Wal-Mart
- How Fox News and CNN describe President Obama's speeches
- The evolution of the word "freedom" and its cultural connotations across nations and time\*
- Social etiquette across the globe: the differences in social cues from China to the U.S.
- Fashion and standards of beauty in Russian and British *Vogue* magazines
- University websites and how educational institutions advertise themselves
- Cuisine across China and what it means to towns and cities' identities
- Obesity in low-income households and McDonalds' as villain
- Popular Science and Inaccurate Data on the Internet

Note\*

These are topics, not thesis statements. Obviously you will be expected to write a thesis statement that makes a cohesive argument in which you argue all sides of a certain issue and get much more specific about your primary source.

## **Basic Requirements for First Draft Workshops\***

- MLA format (12-size font, Times New Roman, 1" margins, double-spaced)
- A minimum of five pages (keep in mind, the more you write, the more I can critique during conferences)
- Summary and discussion with at least two sources from your annotated bibliography
- Representative work of your analysis on primary source(s)
- A working thesis statement
- Helpful in-class critiques and edits for your fellow classmates

\*This first draft is Pass/Fail and intended for you to stay on task with your work

## Final Draft Research Project Requirements

- 10-12 pages, double spaced, Times New-Roman, size 12, MLA format, works cited page
- Analysis of Primary Source(s): data, first-hand research, interviews, articles, advertisements, films, TV shows, magazine ads, newspapers, etc. (the number of primary sources you will need varies given your topic)
- A **minimum** of 6 secondary resources (i.e., sources that discuss the subject of your own analysis/the primary sources) Keep in mind that these must be from scholarly peer-reviewed journals from ZJU-UIUC library database and academic publications
- Argument that puts yourself in the “they say, I say” context with/against your secondary sources
- Concise and accurate summaries of your secondary sources
- Use of both paraphrase and full quotes from sources
- Close-reading of (at least) three key examples of visual or verbal rhetoric in the primary source(s) with consideration to expanding or complicating how your secondary sources have read your text
- Original thesis that problematizes how to read the primary source(s)

## First Draft and Peer Reviews

Our class meetings will be largely devoted to your workshopping your own papers and helping other students edit their own. The peer reviews will be less formal than our formal essay one, but I would take them seriously since you will get less feedback on first drafts from your professor.

I would recommend you have another student in the class critique your paper on your own time. At this point you all have practiced doing peer reviews and since you know I will be treating your final product with careful attention to everything we have discussed throughout the semester, I think it would be smart to treat this final draft seriously.

*The first draft will all be averaged with your overall first draft grades for this research project.*

## **Requirements for the Annotated Bibliography**

- At least TWO primary sources: Remember a primary source is the subject your other secondary sources are discussing. You may have more than one but your proposal needs to justify your analysis of them.
- At least SIX secondary sources: Remember, secondary sources are simply discussing the topic and letting you enter their conversation when you annotate them.

I need your sources to reflect the topic you want to learn more about. The primary source(s) and all eight of your secondary sources must be cited and discussed for this assignment. The works should be in MLA format and this means you will need to refer to the *MLA format on Purdue OWL* for citation information. After each citation I require a paragraph to be written about each source. A paragraph is typically 4-6 sentences, though I will take more. If you have trouble coming up with what to discuss, consider these questions:

- Why am I using this source?
- What claims will this source support?
- How does this source relate to the other sources?
- Is this source credible?
- When was this source written?
- Does this source provide relevant information?
- What type of information does it provide?
- Who wrote this source?
- Where did I obtain this source?
- Does this source help to balance my argument?

### **Here is an example of a citation and annotation:**

Hotelling, Kirsten. ‘ ‘The I of each is to the I of each, a kind of fretful speech which sets

a limit on itself”: Marianne Moore’s Strategic Selfhood.’ *Modernism/modernity* - Volume 5,

Number 1, January 1998, pp. 75-96 – Article.

<http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy2.library.uiuc.edu/search/pia.cgi>.

Hotelling asserts that Moore’s “difficult” poetry are actually riddles which Moore purposefully sets to establish as “biting satire” while maintaining a feminist undertone, highlighting Moore’s humor rather than her austerity (79). Just as Mina Loy’s sexuality often overshadows her poetic structure, so does Moore’s systematic syllabics and attention to the object often subject her to being viewed as utterly impersonal.

Hotelling will help in my attempt to bridge the gap between the perceived Moore as that “old maid in the big black hat” with the more multifaceted personality that has been systematically distorted by the likes of Pound and Eliot (84