

### Progression 3: Research Essay

Due Sunday, December 4 at 11:59pm via Courseworks and emailed (solely to me) over Google Docs

Word limit: 2500-3000 w.

Your task in this progression is to write an extensive, well-researched critical essay on a **virtual reality exhibit** that presents an **interpretive problem**. Your exhibit can be a virtual reality film, game, or experience. I have provided a list of possible virtual reality exhibits on our Google Site, but you are more than welcome to choose something not on the list. Just run it by me!

This essay should **not be about evaluation** – about telling us whether the exhibit is good or bad, worth watching or not; assume that by analyzing it, you’re making a case for the **exhibit’s value** from the beginning. Like the Progression 1 essay, this essay must deepen our understanding of how the exhibit works, what it communicates, and why it matters. And like the Progression 2 essay, it needs to do so by incorporating multiple sources. The added level of difficulty here is that you must conduct your own research to uncover sources relevant to your project.

You must gather **7-9 sources** that will illuminate your exhibit; these should be a mix of informational and intellectual sources. You must choose a research focus that will help you decide what to look for, based on your own interests and the kind of research the exhibit seems to demand. You have two options:

1. The virtual reality exhibit speaks to a problem within a larger **cultural/historical** context. How does the exhibit evoke, comment on, and perhaps critique what is/was going on in the world at the time? This might involve looking into historical sources, news articles, op-eds, etc. In this case, you are using your virtual reality exhibit to explore a conversation beyond virtual reality, but still interpreting a problem rooted in the intersection of virtual reality and that conversation.
2. The virtual reality exhibit speaks to a problem within its **genre**. How does that exhibit embody, alter, and otherwise show an awareness of the conventions of virtual reality, art, or technology? This might involve looking into virtual reality history, essays by critics, academic articles, etc. In this case, you are using your virtual reality exhibit to explore an interpretive problem around virtual reality itself.

Your essay should continue to work on the goals from the first two assignments:

1. Identify an **interpretive problem** that this exhibit raises (either implicitly or explicitly); find and close read compelling moments of the exhibit that emblemize, address, or complicate this problem.
2. Make a strong **claim** that resolves this problem and use **evidence** from seven to nine sources.

3. Mediate the scholarly conversation by **introducing, citing and explaining** (“ICEing”) critical sources, summarizing and explaining key terms and relating them to each other when appropriate.
4. Establish a clear **motive**.
5. Document sources using the **MLA** in-text citation method.
6. Write clearly and precisely, avoiding clichés.