

Week 8

Comm 1133

Writing Strategies

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Warm-up

- Is there a link between playing video games and mental health? If so, what is it?
- Find the best answer you can, and write it in your own words.
- How do you know what you think you know?

Plan for today

- Research essay description
- Research file assignment
- Primer on the research process
 - Asking the right questions
 - Exploring a balance of views
 - Achieving adequate depth in your search
 - Evaluating your findings
- Getting more out of Google
- Library databases
- Portfolio exercise

Research essay

- Will be written in two drafts, each worth 10%
- 400-600 words
- Can be either an **argument** or an **explanation**
- Must incorporate at least 3 sources
- Must cite your sources properly, in APA style
- Must include a reference list
- Rubric is posted on Blackboard, under Course Documents

Research File Assignment

- NOT an essay.
- To be submitted BEFORE you write your first draft.
- Worth 20% of your final grade.
- Demonstrates all the research you've done prior to writing your essay

Research File Assignment

- Title page
- Research question
- 100-word summary of your core argument/ explanation
- Hard copies of your three sources, with key points highlighted or underlined
- Evaluations of each source (worksheets found under Course Documents)
- Reference list in APA style

Asking the right questions

- First, you need a broad topic.
- Start with anything you find interesting.
 - Music
 - Cognitive science
 - Philosophy

Asking the right questions

- Narrow the topic down
 - Music → the history of funk
 - Cognitive science → visual perception in humans
 - Philosophy → ancient greek philosophy

Asking the right questions

- Once you have a topic in mind, start asking questions about it
- Ask *lots* of questions before settling on one

Asking the right questions

- Violent crime on college campuses
 - How common is it?
 - What is causing it?
 - Naïve student attitudes?
 - Alcohol or drugs?
 - Poor security?
 - What is being done?
 - By police?
 - By college administrators?
 - Leniency toward certain offenders?
 - By students and parents?
 - Level of denial?
 - What more needs to be done?

Exploring a balance of views

- Don't settle for an answer just because it is...
 - Comforting
 - Convenient
- Look for the answer that is the most *true*
 - What do informed sources have to say about this topic?
 - On which points do sources agree?
 - On which points do sources disagree?
 - What is the relative balance of opinion?
 - <https://youtu.be/cjuGCJJUGsg?t=2m>

Exploring a balance of views

- How common is violent crime on college campuses?
 - What do college administrators say?
 - What does the media say?
 - What does the FBI say?
 - What do students and parents say?
 - What do recent studies show?
 - What do campus police say?
 - What do the crime victims say?

Achieving adequate depth

- Different sources of information represent different levels of detail and dependability

Popular press



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graph TD; A[Popular press] --> B[Trade & business publications]; B --> C[Specialized & government sources];
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Trade & business publications

Specialized & government sources

Evaluating your findings

- Look for common ground
- Consider all reasonable opinions
- Be sure the expert's knowledge is relevant in this context
- Expect uncertainty
- Expect subjectivity
- Expect special interests to produce their own experts to support their position

Getting more out of Google

- <http://www.hackcollege.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/google.gif>
- (interlude:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lillW-ovx0Y>)

Library databases

- <http://nclibraries.niagaracollege.ca/library>

Portfolio exercise

- Choose a topic that interests you. (If you're stuck, try listing out a number of topics, or try freewriting.)
- Come up with at least five questions about that topic.
- Circle the question you find the most interesting, controversial, or challenging.
 - This will be your tentative research question.
 - I'll approve it (or not) by Friday so you can get started on the Research File.
- If you have a computer/phone/tablet, you might want to do a bit of preliminary research right now to see whether your question is viable—this will keep you from having to start over and ask to have a *different* question approved.

Warm-up

- Which source of information is more trustworthy: a blog post written by an expert, or an article written for the CBC?
- What is a better way to judge expert opinion: take the middle point between all opinions present, or choose one of those opinions based on some other criteria?

Plan for today

- Evaluating sources
- Types of research (activity)
- Portfolio exercise

Usefulness/credibility of sources

- Publisher's credentials:
- What do you know about the publisher of the source you're using?
- Is it a major newspaper known for integrity in reporting, or is it a tabloid?
- Is the publisher a popular source, or is it sponsored by a professional/scholarly organization?

Usefulness/credibility of sources

- Author's credentials:
- Is the author an expert on the topic?
- Credentials may be presented in the article, book, or web site, or you can search the internet for more information on the author.

Usefulness/credibility of sources

- Date of publication:
- Recent sources are sometimes more useful than older ones, particularly in fields that change rapidly.
- However, the most authoritative works may be the older ones.

Usefulness/credibility of sources

- Accuracy of source:
- How thorough is the bibliography or list of works cited that accompanies the source?
- Can you find other sources that corroborate what your source is saying?

Usefulness/credibility of sources

- Cross-referencing:
- Is your source cited in other works?
- If you see your source cited by others, looking at how they cite it and what they say about it can provide additional clues to its credibility.

Usefulness/credibility of sources

- Stance of source:
- Identify the source's point of view or rhetorical stance, and scrutinize it carefully.
- Does the source present facts, or does it interpret or evaluate them?
 - If it presents facts, what is included and what is omitted, and why?

Taking notes while researching

- 1) record enough information to help you recall the major points of the source
- 2) put the information in the form in which you are most likely to incorporate it in your research project (e.g. if you're going to quote directly, then record the exact quotation)
- 3) keep a running list of citation information for each source; this will make the documentation process *way* easier.

Activity

- **Define**, give **two examples**, and explain the main **advantages** and **disadvantages** of each major type of research:
 - Primary research
 - Secondary research
 - Qualitative research
 - Quantitative research

Portfolio exercise

- What type(s) of research do you anticipate using for your research paper?
- Write a paragraph that explains how you will guard against bias while researching.