

Essay 4: Final Essay: Critical Response

A research-based essay that describes the debate surrounding a current and debatable issue.

The basics

Length:	1,500 to 2,100 words (not including Works Cited page)
Value:	25% of your final grade (includes successful completion of all of the steps)
Research:	At least 5 credible, recent sources found through the USC Upstate Library
Due dates:	Check the course calendar: http://bit.ly/101calendar
Format:	Use MLA Style

Description

Your final and most important writing assignment in this class requires you to describe a current and debatable issue or topic and at least three competing viewpoints regarding it, then support the position you find most reasonable. You will first choose a somewhat general topic, then a specific debatable issue that interests you and which you will research carefully. Your goal is to be able to describe fairly and reasonably at least three positions on that issue and their justification.

Multi-stage process

You will complete the following steps for this assignment. Failing to complete any of these steps will have a negative affect on your grade:

- Emailing me at least 3 topic ideas
- Writing and peer reviewing topic proposal on one approved (by me) topic
- Meeting in a one-on-one conference with me
- Writing and peer reviewing an annotated bibliography
- Participating in a draft workshop to work on your essay's introduction
- Participating in a draft workshop to work on a rough draft of your complete essay
- Participating in a draft workshop to work on a revised draft of your essay.

The final paper in English 101 will allow you to demonstrate all that you have learned in this course this semester, including the following:

- Using a multi-stage approach to writing: brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing;
- Critical reading: understanding texts but also being attuned to how the author shapes his or her ideas;
- Successfully quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing texts as appropriate;
- Locating and assessing relevant, credible sources;
- Generating and supporting your own ideas regarding a topic while also incorporating source material found through research.
- Using current MLA format appropriately.

MLA Format

Be sure to format your paper according to MLA guidelines: 1-inch margins, the font Times New Roman, 12-point type, double spaced text, indented first lines for every paragraph. In the upper lefthand corner of your first page, type your name, my name, the name of the course, and the date of

the draft. In the header of each page, in the upper righthand corner, include your last name and the page number.

Selecting a Topic for the Final Essay in English 101

Finding a Topic Worth Doing

What not to do

- Do *not* pick a topic just because you already know what you think about it.
- Do *not* pick a topic because you wrote an essay about it in high school.
- Do *not* pick a topic because you think it will be easy to write about; the “easiest” topics are actually those that you genuinely want to know more about and will enjoy researching and studying for a few weeks.
- You should avoid picking a topic that is no longer currently in the news but that is an example of a stereotypical “research paper topic”; and do not pick a topic that is so broad that you’re unlikely find much new information about it:
 - Examples of these kinds of topics include (but are not limited to) gun control, abortion, legalizing drugs, changing the drinking age, teaching evolution in schools, global warming, and same-sex marriage.

What to do

- Consider the things that you are most interested in and about which you would like to become an expert;
- Consider topics that are related to your major (if you have already declared one);
- Consider topics that are related to what you want to do for a living;
- Consider topics related to your hobbies.

These topics are a bad idea

Abortion	Euthanasia (Mercy killing)	Same-sex marriage
Abstinence programs	Fraternities / Sororities	School uniforms
Animal rights / animal testing	Evolution	Speed limit
Arctic and Antarctic ice loss	Gun control	Stem cell research
Athletes on strike	Immigration laws in the U.S.	Steroids / P.E.D.s in sports
Birth control	Legalizing marijuana / other drugs	Tort reform / Medical malpractice
Bullying	No Child Left Behind act	Vaccinating children
Climate change / Global warming	Obesity	War on drugs
Drinking age	Organic foods	War in Iraq
Driving age	Paying college athletes	War in Afghanistan
Eating disorders	Pornography	