English 112 - Spring Semester

Research Project – Argumentative

Assignment:

For this project, you will research a current controversial issue. You **must** take a definitive stand on your topic and argue pro or con. Be sure to refute the opposition as well as providing specific information and examples for your position. You may work alone or with one partner.

Requirements:

* Your topic is “open” as long as it is not the topic you researched last semester.
* You must use a minimum of 8 sources, 4 of which must come from databases.
* Evaluate websites for validity before you use them as sources.
* You must **take at least 4 pages** of notes in your **own words**; you may not simply Xerox or print information and highlight it (must be written in your own words).
* Use parenthetical in-text citations following APA format in your paper, website or script (consult your handbook or an online source like EasyBib).
* Direct quotations should be kept to a minimum – 2 maximum.
* Include a works cited page of sources you actually used in your assessment product, arranged according to standard APA format (8 sources minimum).
* Paper and website must be written in third person, objective point of view.
* **You must turn in the rubric with the project or 5 points will be deducted!**

**Assessment Choices:**

1. Write a 4-6 page research paper that is developed by argumentation.
2. Create a website that purports your stand on the issue and refutes the opposition.
3. Video: Develop a series of three public service announcements (2-3 minutes each or one longer video (8-10 min.) to be aired on Youtube about the topic (and submit the script).
4. Record a podcast of a radio talk show that explores your topic (and submit the script).

Grading:

This project involves major in-depth research on your chosen topic. The project will count as four test grades: two test grades for the product; one test grade for your research notes, and one test grade for the works cited page (APA format).

Dates: Rough Draft (paper, website, or script w/ in-text citations) Due – 4/23

Research Notes - April 25th

Final Assessment and works cited - April 25th

NO LATE PROJECTS WILL BE ACCEPTED. IF YOU ARE ABSENT ON THE DUE DATE, YOUR PROJECT MUST BE HAND DELIVERED TO ME OR TURNED IN EARLY.

Focusing a Research Topic

Focusing a research topic is narrowing a topic so that you can demonstrate a good understanding of it, including enough examples and important details, within the size limits of the project you are required to produce. You need to satisfy both yourself and your teacher that you know what you are talking about. If you pick a topic that is too big, you will not only have trouble selecting what to include from a huge selection of material available, you will probably leave out some critical information that will make it apparent (especially to your teacher) that you don't really know what you are talking about.

The process of focusing a topic takes practice, and it is challenging when you don't know too much about a topic. It will get easier as your knowledge base increases. **Remember that the research process is a *recursive* one which means that you may need to revisit your topic choice more than once if you find it doesn't work out.** Luckily there are some strategies and methods to help you through this critically important part of the process.

**Narrowing a general subject by naming subtopics**. Start with a general idea and explore possible subtopics.  Perhaps one item on the list can become the basis of your research paper. Samples:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| bullet | **Education**  violence in schools, drugs in schools, graduation requirements, a college of interest (history, admissions, course offerings, cost, etc.), how the US compares to other nations academically, the role of sports in schools, Head Start, foreign language instruction, vocational classes, school bond issues, gender bias in education, etc. |
| bullet | **Business**  mandatory retirement age, minorities in business, migrant workers, farming as a business, the flight of US business to foreign countries, the impact of NAFTA, investments, opening your own business, "hot" business prospects for future employment, etc. |
| bullet | **Medical ethics**  \*euthanasia-discuss use of synonymous terms such as mercy killing or doctor-assisted suicide.  Other suggestions:  cloning, animal experimentation, psychiatric commitments, brain death, living wills or advanced directives. |

**Narrowing a general subject by asking questions.**   Ask questions that address a specific issue or problem that you may wish to investigate. Samples:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| bullet | **Censorship**  Are movie ratings a form of censorship?  What censorship laws exist in Iowa?  Should pornography be censored?  Should cigarette manufacturers be allowed to sponsor sporting events on TV?  What are frequently censored books? |
| bullet | **War in Iraq**  What events led to the Iraqi War??  Should the US have become involved?  What was the role of women or should women be in combat?  What contribution was made by other nations?  (This could be done with other areas of foreign policy such as Bosnia, Somalia, etc.) |
| bullet | **Bilingualism**  Should English be declared our national language?  Should schools be expected to meet the needs of all bilingual students?  What problems do residence of Quebec face? |

**My focused topic:** (4/27)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**My thesis:** (4/29)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Name(s):

Grading Sheet: Research Paper

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Focus and Details: The topic and stance of the paper is clear. The content is persuasive and adequately supported with examples and details. The opposition is addressed and refuted. (30) |  |
| Organization: The introduction is attention-getting, and provides a well-written, engaging thesis. Information is relevant and presented in a logical order. The conclusion is strong. (20) |  |
| Voice: The author’s purpose of writing is clear,  and there is strong evidence of attention to audience. The author’s extensive knowledge and/or experience with the topic is/are evident and tone is persuasive but not overbearing. (15) |  |
| Word Choice and Sentence Structure: The author uses vivid words and phrases. The choice and placement of words seems accurate, natural, and not forced. The sentences are varied in accordance with the content. (15) |  |
| Grammar, Usage, & Mechanics: Clear, concise, and well written and edited with no errors, including correct use of quotations. (10) |  |
| APA Format: Paper follows correct APA format, including a cover page and parenthetical citations. All content stays on topic. (10) |  |

Grading Sheet: PSA Videos

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Script: Includes a well-written script (including APA parenthetical citations) of all spoken parts of actors as well as stage directions (25) |  |
| Format: Used professional video production and editing software such as Movie Maker (25) |  |
| Content: Videos are persuasive in nature and present three different, important points of topic. The opposition is addressed and refuted. Each video uses appropriate content or an attention-getting technique to make an impact on the viewer.  (20) |  |
| Focus: Videos stay on topic (10) |  |
| Speaking Skills: Rate, pitch, volume of speech are appropriate to hear and understand video. (10) |  |
| Professional: Characters in video act and dress for the part (no fits of giggles) (10) |  |

Name(s):

Grading Sheet: Website

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Content: The topic and stance of the website is clear. There are at least 4 links (in addition to Works Cited page) to related information or imbedded videos. The content is persuasive and adequately supported with examples and details. The opposition is addressed and refuted. APA Parenthetical citations have been used to cite information. (40) |  |
| Web Page Layout: Appearance of pages looks professional. Pages have title/subtitles and section headings. Text is broken into paragraphs and/or sections /text boxes on multiple pages and links from the main page are easy to navigate. Page contains only the first names of group members.  (25) |  |
| Graphics: A plethora of interesting images that have strong relation to topic are included; images have proper size, resolution, colors, and cropping. (15) |  |
| Grammar, Usage, & Mechanics: Clear, concise, and well written and edited with no errors. (10) |  |
| Professional: website is published and links to other pages work, all content stays on topic (10) |  |

Grading Sheet: Podcast

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| --- | --- |
| Script: Includes a well-written script (including APA parenthetical citations) of all speakers involved and stage directions. (25) |  |
| Format: Used audio production and editing software such as Audacity. (25) |  |
| Content: Radio program is persuasive in nature and adequately presents the different, important points of topic. The opposition is addressed and refuted. The program draws to closure through an appropriate conclusion.  (20) |  |
| Focus: Program stays on topic (10) |  |
| Speaking Skills: Rate, pitch, volume of speech are appropriate to hear and understand recording (10) |  |
| Professional: Recording includes background music, sounds, etc. when appropriate (no fits of giggles, long silent pauses, etc.). (10) |  |