Unit I: Researching a College Issue for a Specific Audience

**Part One: Choosing an Audience**

In this assignment, you’ll write a **4-page** essay on an issue that pertains to college life in some form or fashion (for example: addiction in college, college students’ involvement in political issues, etc.) Because discussion for the sake of discussion often leaves an essay hollow and meaningless, however, you’ll be aiming your research essay at one of three audiences:

* A panel or committee put together by KU’s student government

(This is your most formal option—this paper’s goals might include persuading your audience about the importance of this issue and/or telling the panel what steps they can take to solve the problem at KU.)

* An experimental or creative research journal aimed at a range of undergraduates

(This is your most creative option—here you might mix a personal narrative from your own experience with this issue with formal source usage or create a photo-essay to go with your research.)

* A research essay aimed toward incoming and largely uniformed college students

(This is both a creative and formal option—this audience needs and wants researched information that you, as a current college student, are uniquely qualified to give. However, these potential college students might get bored reading something without style or voice.)

**Part Two: Writing with Credible Sources**

Within the paper, you will need to paraphrase or incorporate quotes from at least 4-5 sources. (One of which must be academic, and one of which must be non-academic. What kind of sources the rest will be is up to you, though your audience should certainly help shape your decisions.)

Whether popular or academic, however, all your sources should come from sound and credible places. Together, we will come up with a list of qualities that constitute a credible source, and I’ll put this up on Blackboard for your own perusal under “Course Documents.”

Furthermore, you’ll also want to focus on *how* you incorporate sources in this essay, essentially using this material to enhance your paper rather than detract from it. Thus, you should think about how you transition in and out of source material (quote sandwiches), how much source material you use (you don’t want to overwhelm or underwhelm your paper with others’ voices), and for what purpose you use your quotes and paraphrases (to support your conclusions? To offer an example? To examine a counterargument?)

Requirements:

* 4 pages, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins, stapled
* Double-spaced
* 4-5 credible sources from academic journals, monographs, newspaper articles, books, encyclopedias, etc. (i.e. not facebook, twitter, etc.).
* At least one academic source
* At least one popular source
* Correct MLA formatting, in-text citations, and a works cited page, as shown in your Writing in Action handbook

I often get asked whether or not it’s okay to use the first-person “I” in this paper. There is no true yes or no to this question—it depends on your rhetorical situation (the genre, your audience, the essay’s purpose, etc.). In a creative space, it may be very appropriate and even encouraged to experiment with the first-person perspective. In a more formal rhetorical situation, the “I” may be appropriate in some instances, but it’s almost never the focus of the piece.

Part of being a successful rhetorician (and thus a successful writer) is assessing what’s right for the situation, rather than wholly shunning one technique or another.

Important dates:

Sept. 9: Bring in at least one source you’ll be using in this paper to class

Sept. 14 and Sept. 16: Mandatory Conferences—**2 pages required of Part 2**

Sept. 18: Peer Review—**3 pages required of Part 2, (not including the works cited page)**

**Due Monday, September 21st**

**Grading Criteria**

Meeting Requirements:

1. Is it at least 4 pages long? Is it Times New Roman 12 pt. font? Is it double-spaced? Does it have 1-inch margins?
2. Are there at least 4 sources?
3. Did you use at least one an academic source?
4. Did you use at least one popular source?
5. Correct MLA formatting, in-text citations, and a works cited page, as shown in your *Writing in Action* handbook

Audience Concerns:

-Was it readily apparent what audience you were writing for?

-Did your level of formality and your paper’s style meet the needs of your audience? Did your genre and purpose for writing fit this audience’s needs?

Research:

-Are all of your sources from credible places?

-Did your research suggest that you considered perspectives and evidence beyond the obvious? Did you support a claim that is already widely known and accepted or did your essay provide your readers with a new perspective or new/interesting evidence on the topic?

Source Rubric

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| Excellent | Transitions were used very consistently and provided clear and essential information about where this quote came from and why it was used, the writer articulated the purpose for sources within the paper, the sources were used to emphasize the writer’s voice and ethos, sources came from a range of clearly credible sources, the writer considered and dealt fairly with sources that disagreed with her or his point of view. |
| Above Average | Transitions were used consistently and helped ensure that readers knew where this quote came from and why it was used, readers had an easy time discerning the purpose that the writer had in mind for these sources, the sources supported the writer’s voice rather than distracted from it, and sources came from clearly credible places. |
| Average | Some transitions were used, but they may be inconsistent or unclear, readers could see some reason for why these particular sources were used, sources slightly overwhelmed or the piece, or perhaps weren’t used quite enough. |
| Poor | Transitions in and out of source material were abrupt and unexpected, there appeared to be no clear purpose for these sources; too much source material was used, or conversely, too little was used; information used came from disreputable places, or no sources were used at all. |

Remember to attach this grading criteria to the back of your paper!