

Synthesis Essay (20%)

Now that we have written in a few informal genres, chosen a topic and developed a research question, and practiced some rhetorical analysis, we are going to move toward a different kind of analysis, a different genre entirely. Over the next month, you will do extensive research into your topic, seeing what you can learn and how others are talking about it. For the Synthesis Essay, you will put that research into conversation, seeing how different sources relate to one another and interpreting the positions they take.

Based on your Annotation Worksheets and Short Writing Prompt #4, prepare a 6-7 page synthesis of your current sources. (Use at least six sources, at least three of which must be scholarly journal articles.) A synthesis asks you to weave different sources together and construct the conversation(s) around your chosen topic. The understanding you gain about the current academic conversation surrounding your topic will help you begin to answer your research questions, including what contribution you might make to this conversation in your final essay.

As you work, it might help you to think of yourself as organizing an orchestra. Where for a research essay (i.e., the Position Essay) you would be the lead instrument to a chorus of backup instruments (your sources), for the Synthesis Essay, you are one of many instruments in a symphony orchestra. While your ideas will come through, they should be based on the connections you see between your sources. In other words, you will identify and analyze how your sources relate to one another, rather than introducing a new position on the topic. That will come later. For now, use this opportunity to familiarize yourself with your sources and the larger conversation of which they are a part.

Important Dates:

- Tuesday, March 30th: First draft due **with annotations** due by midnight.
- Wednesday, March 31st: Peer review. Bring in a draft of at least 3 pages, double-space.
- Sunday, April 11th: Final draft **with annotations** due by midnight.

General Guidelines:

- Create a clear and interesting thesis that reflects the conversation between your sources, not your own position on the topic. Remember, we are still in the inquiring phase and this is not the Position Essay. Some questions you might answer as you write your thesis include: What do they have in common? How do they differ? What seems to be the major point of contention?
- Provide sufficient evidence and analysis to support your thesis. This essay is **not** another rhetorical analysis. Use *They Say I Say* and the feedback you receive to develop sophisticated analyses of your sources and the conversation between them.
- Come up with a clever title
- Use proper grammar and mechanics
- Use in-text citations and a Works Cited in updated MLA or APA format

Grading:

You will be graded on:

- Time and effort spent with a pen in hand or at your keyboard writing, revising, and polishing

- Attention to the conversations between your sources.
- Participation in the entire writing process, from brainstorming and early drafts to a final polished submission with responses to all peer and instructor comments

You will **not** be graded on:

- Any preconceived notions of the synthesis genre. As we have done throughout the semester in the Reflection Memos for the Short Writing Prompts, consider the genre conventions that you and your reader might expect, and then consider how you might choose to follow or break those conventions, depending on what you want to say and how.
- Perfect grammar and spelling. While I **do** expect you to proofread, we are all still learning, and you may still make some mistakes. Do your best and ask questions.