

For our final essay of the semester (go guys, you've almost made it) we will work on a researched essay on a topic of the writer's choice that falls within the general topic of popular culture. This essay is much like the multiple source essays we have completed – with an emphasis on choosing and synthesizing multiple, quality sources to back up a writer's argumentative stance. This assignment differs in that it is more involved and includes a greater number of sources and is more developed in length.

The best way to make a convincing argument is for a writer or speaker to choose a topic that interests and challenges them. With this in mind, I want to offer two broad approaches to this assignment with the hopes that you all will be able to find a topic within these categories that you wish to pursue.

**What should I write about?** – In a world of constantly changing technologies, it seems that Americans are daily flooded with print, video, Internet, and other images to sort out in an effort to piece together what is going on in our society on any given day. Another interesting aspect of the news has a tie to our last assignment (MSE #2). Corporations are increasingly responsible for the funding and at least partial control of many major media outlets (EX Disney owns ABC, etc. – look up more). Just as we discussed the impact large corporations had on local business in our last essay, many media critics say there is a real impact on the news we receive when it is controlled by large companies.

The “media”- which most often refers to newspapers, television, and radio news outlets – are often under fire in our society for being biased, overly concerned with profit, and moving too far to entertainment. This assignment will allow you to investigate an aspect of this debate and construct your own argument as to the state of the news in this country. Some possible questions to get you started are:

- Are there any unbiased news sources?
- How does corporate ownership affect the news we receive?
- Is there really a crisis with media?
- What change will be next for news? Will magazines and newspapers go away completely in favor of Internet news?
- Should the American media cover more issues in the world beyond our own soil?
- How reliable is Internet news? Is it too up-to-date or does access outweigh possible problems of verifying sources and stories?
- Who chooses what is news?
- What effects does “infotainment” (The Daily Show, vhl “news shows,” The Onion Web site) have on mainstream media? Is it positive or negative?

Since this project will require a good deal of your time, I want to offer a second option for the essay in case someone may not wish to write about the news. The other avenue writers may choose is some topic that falls under the category of Pop Culture. This could include movies, music, television shows, fashion trends as linked to magazines, movies, etc., Internet usage, etc. There are tons of ideas that would fit this category and writers need only submit a topic for my approval.

**Why everyone on same topic?** By focusing our efforts as a class on one sort of topic I am hoping that you will be able to get some insight from class discussion and peer group work when it comes to research, constructing your argument, and focusing on the appropriate audience. We will do another source compilation on our class Blackboard site to offer everyone a place to start with research and a place to share the cool information you are finding in your source hunting.

**What should my essay look like?** – Like our MSE assignments, this type of paper lends itself perfectly to the *searching for causes, responding to an argument, and taking a position* structures used in ENG 111. The goal of this assignment is to make an argument – utilizing outside sources – related to some phenomenon you have identified in news production and consumption in this country or in the larger sphere of popular culture. This **8-10 page essay** will include **at least six sources**. I want to continue to challenge you to look for academic sources so will limit your outside information to articles coming from journals, magazines, newspapers, film, and other sources. **Web sites will not be accepted as sources for this assignment unless they are approved by the instructor.** Some of you may be focusing on Web related issues, so I don't want to outlaw Web sources completely. See me with questions.

**Who am I writing to?** – Audience is hugely important in this essay – as in all writing – so consider carefully who you will address this piece to. Some suggestions for possible readers are media owners and operators (newspaper editors, news show directors, etc.), other media consumers like yourselves, and media critics (you may answer a charge you find in your research). The audience will be largely determined by the topic you choose. The point is to identify a specific audience as soon in the writing process as possible.

**Getting started** – To get a handle on what can be an overwhelming process of research and writing, we will start things off with a detailed topic proposal and you will each turn in an annotated bibliography of the sources you expect to use in your paper. I hope this will allow me and your classmates to give you some feedback during the actual writing process instead of waiting for revision time.

**What you need in your Researched Essay—**

*Introduction* – You may wish to begin with an example, a narrative, a review of the issue, or a history of the debate surrounding the issue. This is the place to set the stage for your argument.

*Argumentative thesis* – Your thesis must give readers a clear and focused understanding of the argument you are making and a roadmap as to how you will support your position in the body of your paper.

*Claims / Reasons* – This is where your outside research really comes into play – along with your own thoughts and opinions. Using specific examples, statistics, perhaps some quotes, maybe some interviews, and other materials from your sources, you will develop each key point in your thesis. **To successfully synthesize sources, make an effort to include at least two sources in explaining each claim or reason.** While writing has few hard and fast rules, this may be a useful guideline for this type of essay.

*Counterargument* – It is important for writers to acknowledge and respond to others' points of view and opinions. In this section consider possible objections that may be raised to your thesis.

*Correct citations* – Document anything that is not your own opinion or common knowledge and include a Works Cited page.

*Conclusion* – Your conclusion may take many forms including a look ahead for this topic, a sort of call to action for readers, or some final and compelling research you found.

**Topic proposals – due Monday, Mar. 21**

**Rough draft – due Monday, April 4**

**Final draft – due Friday, April 15**