

# FSTY 1311 Assignment 3: Controlled Research Paper

## (Worth 20% of your grade; due on November 1)

### Overview

The Annotated Bibliography assignment required you to read six articles on a common topic and carefully summarize and evaluate the ideas contained in those articles. In your Controlled Research Paper, you will extend that work by crafting a persuasive argument that interweaves your own ideas with the arguments of the six authors we have been studying. Your essay should defend an original, narrow thesis using sound logic, clear writing, and quotes and evidence from the annotated articles. Your finished essay should be 1,200–1,500 words and follow MLA formatting guidelines.

### Assignment Details

During the next few weeks, we will follow these steps to help you draft an effective essay:

**Step 1: Develop a thesis statement.** Before you begin writing your essay, you should decide what, exactly, you want to say. Your essay should not just summarize or compare the ideas of other writers; rather, it should advance your own ideas about this topic. As you generate ideas for your thesis statement, think carefully about what you could say that would make an original contribution to this ongoing conversation about technology, literacy, and culture. Your thesis statement should make a clear argument and should serve as the foundation for the rest of your essay.

**Step 2: Identify an audience for your essay.** Before you begin writing your essay, think about who might be interested in your argument. Are you writing to persuade other college students? University officials? Government leaders? Parents? Even if you don't address your audience directly in your essay, having an audience in mind as you write will help you stay focused.

**Step 3: Outline your essay.** A good essay doesn't leap forth from the human mind fully formed. Writing—especially academic writing—is a process, and you should treat it as such. Once you know *what* you want to say (your thesis) and *who* you want to say it to (your audience), turn your attention to *how* you want to say it. Outline the major points you want to make and think about how these ideas connect to your thesis and to one another. You might use brainstorming, listing, freewriting, looping, or one of the other techniques we have discussed in class. The important thing is that you establish some type of framework for your essay before you begin writing in earnest.

**Step 4: Situate your ideas within the ongoing conversation.** Your essay should not merely compare and contrast the ideas of various authors, then proclaim which author you think is right. Rather, your essay should advance your own argument by selectively using quotes and evidence from other authors. This does not mean writing an essay and then randomly slapping a quote into each paragraph. Situating your ideas takes effort, and when it's done well, the finished essay feels like a tightly woven tapestry. Your essay should cite at least four of the six sources in your annotated bibliography; with Dr. Warnick's permission, you may bring in one additional source of your choosing.

**Step 5: Revise, revise, revise.** Once you have drafted your essay, read through it with a critical eye, as if you disagreed with the essay's central argument. Look for flaws in reasoning, quotes taken out of context, and unsupported arguments—these problems are far more significant than misspelled words or poorly formatted citations. Revise your draft with your readers in mind, thinking about how you can persuade them to accept your claims. At this point, it will help to have an outside reader (or two, or three), so we will conduct a more thorough peer-review exercise than we have for previous assignments. After you receive feedback from your peers, revise the paper again, then proofread the document a final time to eliminate errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, MLA formatting, etc...

**Step 6. Submit the essay.** When your essay is complete, save it as “Full Name Research Paper,” upload it to your Google Docs account, and share it with [quinnwarnick@gmail.com](mailto:quinnwarnick@gmail.com). (Be sure to make me an “editor” of the document.) The final draft of your essay is due before class begins on Monday, November 1.

## Evaluation Criteria

Your essay will be evaluated using the following criteria:

### Content and Development

- Does the essay contain a clear, original thesis that builds upon ideas in the articles we have read?
- Does the writer support his/her claims with sound logic?
- Does the writer incorporate external sources, treating the ideas of other authors fairly?
- Does the essay contain 1,200–1,500 words and cite at least four articles?

### Organization

- Does the essay feature a clear, forward-moving line of reasoning?
- Do the ideas in the essay flow smoothly from one sentence to another and one paragraph to another?

### Style

- Is the prose concise, original, and engaging? (i.e., Does the essay avoid clichés and bland generalizations?)
- Does the essay use appropriate scholarly language to introduce external sources and characterize the authors' arguments?

### Grammatical Conventions and Mechanics

- Does the essay adhere to the conventions of standard written English?
- Do the citations follow 2009 MLA formatting guidelines?