

PAPER 3: RESEARCHED POSITION PAPER

English 1302: Rhetoric and Composition II



THE RHETORICAL SITUATION

For your Issue Proposal, you organized your preexisting knowledge on your issue and sketched a plan for research. You then compiled several sources and summarized their contents for your Annotated Bibliography. In your Mapping the Issue paper, you traced the controversy surrounding your issue by describing its background and summarizing three positions on it. All these assignments have been preparing you for this final paper, where you will advocate a position on your issue with a well-supported argument written for an audience that you select.

You will choose the audience and publication venue for this paper. The content will consist of your own argument that contributes to the conversation surrounding your issue.

READING, BRAINSTORMING, AND DRAFTING

- You should settle on an audience and publication venue early in your composing process because this will influence every aspect of your argument.

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Please note that in the most basic sense, “to publish” simply means “to make public,” so you have a wide range of options for your publication venue. For example, you might write a letter to an individual, group, or organization. You might post your work to a social media site, such as a discussion forum, a blog, or an online publishing platform. You might submit your work for publication in a venue with editorial staff, like a newspaper or magazine.

Your choice of publication venue depends on the audience you want to reach. If you want to contact specific individuals, then direct communication is probably your best option. If you want your work to be more widely available, especially to those in your social network, then a social media site might be your best choice. If you’re looking to reach the broadest possible readership, consider a publication venue with editorial staff and wide circulation.

Make sure you investigate the values and characteristics of your intended audience. Develop a clear picture of *whom* you’re writing for, and keep that picture in mind as you make rhetorical choices throughout your composing process.

- Once you have a clear audience in mind, you can begin to construct a thesis. Begin with a claim that readers might contest (no point in arguing for a claim that all your readers already believe). Sketch out reasons that support your claim. For each claim+reason structure, draw out its invisible warrant by completing the following template: “If it’s true that [insert reason here], then it must follow that [insert claim here].”

As you consider how many reasons to include in your thesis, keep in mind that your final draft will need to be a minimum

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of 1800 words (about 5½ to 6 double-spaced pages) and a maximum of 3,500 words (around 10 pages). Thus, you should aim for a thesis that will generate 1,800 fluff-free words but not require more than 3,500 words to adequately support.

- You should now have a framework for your argument, but before you start drafting, make sure you have enough evidence for all your reasons and warrants. Don't worry about providing evidence for reasons or warrants that represent beliefs your audience already holds. But for all your other reasons and warrants, make sure you can provide sufficient support through some combination of outside sources, your personal experiences, your first-hand observations, and/or your own powers of reasoning. If you find you just can't support a reason or warrant, modify that part of your argument until it becomes supportable.
- Now you're ready to start drafting. For each reason and warrant you need to prove, construct at least one paragraph of support that would persuade your audience to agree to it.

If you've constructed a thesis of sufficient scope, you should easily produce at least four pages of content in this section.

- Do some more brainstorming to come up with at least one naysayer who objects to some part of your argument. Draft at least one section in which you name and describe the naysayer (see pp. 86–88), represent their objections fairly (see pp. 90–91), make concessions to their objections if possible (see pp. 92–93), and answer their objections (see pp. 91–94).

You should produce at least a page of content in which you respond to naysayers.

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PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

As you prepare a draft that you'll share with readers, begin with an introduction (which need not be limited to a single paragraph) that accomplishes three goals:

- Acknowledges what “they say” (see Ch. 1)
- Provides an “I say” (see Ch. 4)
- Answers the “so what?” and “who cares?” questions (see Ch. 7)

If you are disagreeing with a claim that has been made, agreeing but with a difference, or agreeing and disagreeing simultaneously (see Ch. 4), your “they say” will be the claim to which you're responding. If your claim is not clearly responding to a prior claim, your “they say” should summarize the conversation surrounding your issue.

Your “I say” will be your thesis statement, in which you state your claim and reasons.

The answer to the “who cares?” question is the audience you are trying to reach. To answer the “so what?” question, explain to your audience why your argument matters.

Once you have an introduction in place, it's up to you decide how to shape and organize your argument.

CHOOSING AN APPROPRIATE STYLE

You want to write in a style that is appropriate for your publication venue, so consult models. If you're writing directly to an individual or organization, look up examples of formal letters. If you're posting to an online publishing platform, study the work of other contributors. If you're writing for a publication with editorial staff, read previously published articles.

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Make sure you construct coherent paragraphs that include topic sentences and supporting sentences that stay on topic.

Cite sources according to the conventions of your publication venue. In most cases, you should introduce a source the first time you reference it and just mention the author's last name in any subsequent references. If hyperlinks are customary for your venue, include them the first time you reference a source. If you're writing for a scholarly journal that uses a formal citation system (e.g., MLA, APA, *Chicago*, etc.), follow the appropriate guidelines.

Please note that you must submit a Works Cited page, regardless of your publication venue, so that I can consult your sources.

Proofread carefully to ensure that your paper reads the way you want it to and that you've corrected unintentional errors. The Purdue OWL website (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>) is a terrific resource for information on standard writing conventions.

SPECS

Your paper should be a minimum of 1,800 words and a maximum of 3,500 words, double-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font, with one-inch margins all the way around.

Your first submission is due at the beginning of class on _____, and you should think of it as a final draft—something you would be willing to submit for a grade. If your first submission does not address everything listed in this assignment sheet, I will return it to you and count it as late. Both your first and final submissions must be turned in on time; you will be docked a full letter grade for each day either is late.

Peer reviews are due _____.

Final drafts are due _____.

HOLISTIC GRADING CRITERIA FOR THE RESEARCHED POSITION PAPER

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GRADING CRITERIA: C

The UTA Catalog defines a C as “fair,” which means *average*. Since this is a 1000-level Common Core class, a C paper is what a UTA freshman who is writing at an average level typically produces when they give a strong effort.

To earn a C, your RPP should first indicate the larger conversation to which you’re responding (“they say”) before providing a thesis that includes your claim and reasons (“I say”). You should answer the “so what?” and “who cares?” questions, provide adequate evidence to support your reasons and warrants, answer the objections of a naysayer, and incorporate outside sources effectively. Show that you have responded actively and thoughtfully to peer and instructor feedback on your first submission. The style of your paper should not impede my understanding of your paper.

GRADING CRITERIA: B

The UTA Catalog defines a B as “good,” which means *above average*. A B paper is what a UTA freshman who is writing at an above-average level typically earns when they give a strong

Holistic Grading Criteria for the Researched Position Paper

effort (certainly a student writing at an average level can earn a B with exceptional effort).

To earn a B, first make sure your paper meets all the criteria required to earn a C. Beyond that, you should represent what “they say” more completely and provide more developed answers to the “so what?” and “who cares?” questions by making a compelling case that your argument should matter to your audience. You should construct a complex thesis, provide ample support for all your reasons and warrants, and represent strong objections from a naysayer that you answer convincingly. You should revise thoroughly, responding to feedback with great comprehensiveness. Finally, a B paper demonstrates strong command of word choice, voice, style, and grammatical conventions.

GRADING CRITERIA: A

The UTA Catalog defines an A as “excellent,” so an A paper is what a UTA freshman who is writing at an excellent level (80th percentile or above) might produce if they gave maximum effort. (Again, students writing at an average or above-average level may also earn As with extraordinary effort and sustained hard work.)

To earn an A, first make sure your paper meets the criteria required to earn a C and a B. You should tackle your issue in an original and challenging way, constructing a thesis that is conceptually rich and answering the “so what?” and “who cares?” questions in great depth and with keen insight into the significance of your issue for your intended audience. Your paper should synthesize evidence from diverse sources and in a way that provides overwhelming support for all your

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reasons and warrants. You should fully represent the objections of trenchant naysayers, make careful concessions, and answer objections in a manner that might satisfy even extreme opponents. Finally, your paper should be lucid, concise, and easy to follow; it should also demonstrate your command of style, voice, mechanics, and usage.

GRADING CRITERIA: D OR F

If you receive a D on your paper, carefully consider the criteria listed above for a C. I give Ds to papers when writers, while demonstrating a general understanding of the topic and concepts, have not fulfilled all the requirements listed on the assignment sheet or have failed to respond to all my comments on their first submission. If you misunderstand the assignment; show little understanding of the required rhetorical concepts; or ignore the technical requirements of topic, length, or format, your paper may receive an F.