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Project 3: *He Said, She Said, I Say*: The researched argument essay *Worth 30% of your final grade*

Overview

What are the pressing questions that members of your field are researching and discussing? How are people working to advance the conversation around these questions? What research are they drawing on and what research has yet to be done? What can you contribute?

In this project you will build upon the knowledge you gained from the Project 2 Discipline Awareness wiki guides about how people in your field share new ideas with one another. You will identify a contemporary debate relevant to your academic discipline, use research to gain expertise on the issue, and write a persuasive essay expressing the unique perspective you can contribute to your field's discourse.

Introduction to *The New York Times* "Room for Debate" Series

Each week, the critically acclaimed newspaper *The New York Times* publishes new entries in its running series "Room for Debate." Here's how it works: the editors of the series pose a question relating to a contemporary debate. Then, they ask outside experts with varying perspectives to respond with a brief and persuasive argument. The result is a forum with a diverse set of opinion pieces written by experts who approach the question from different angles. They take a range of positions falling along the "Yes, No, Okay-But" spectrum of responses that our textbook authors Graff and Birkenstein discuss in *They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter In Academic Writing*.

The Scenario

The New York Times editors have been publishing the "Room for Debate" series for many years with great success. They have observed that it attracts many readers and high praise. While the forums are geared towards general readers, they also attract the attention of specialists who are involved in related fields and have some expertise. Often these knowledgeable readers get done reading and are hungry for even more. They express both excitement that *The New York Times* is covering a topic relevant to their field, and also an interest for further articles that are longer, in-depth, and meaningfully advancing the conversation in their field.

That's where you come in. *The New York Times* editors have decided to expand the "Room for Debate" series by publishing a few thorough and lengthy essays responding to the debate questions. Rather than target general readers, they intend to target participants in the related academic fields (for example researchers, practitioners, or

emerging scholars like yourselves). They have put out a call for essays in response to their debate questions, and will choose to publish the submission that most compellingly advances the debate for an audience of experts and participants in the related field.

Your Task

Because you are a promising emerging scholar in your field, the editors at *The New York Times* have requested that you submit an essay for publication. You may choose from any of the debate questions previously published in the “Room for Debate” series that remain relevant in your academic discipline today, and you may choose to revise and narrow the question. Your essay should:

- Clearly frame the question you are responding to in the essay so that someone who has, say, stumbled on your work online without seeing the directions will still be able to follow your argument and understand the larger discussion you are entering. Your question should be narrowly defined and focused.
- Give relevant background information and context, so that your readers become informed enough to understand the debate you are wading into, and the critical perspectives to which you are responding. This requires you to be aware of what your primary audience needs to understand as readers who have expertise in the field but may not be experts of the particulars of this debate. Keep in mind that your purpose is not simply to inform your audience, but to persuade them. This means you need to identify what information is necessary to allow those in your field to understand the broader debate, and your specific contribution to it. Be cautious not to allow summary to turn your essay into one big “data dump.”
- Make a clear and narrow argument in response to your research question, and try to convince your readers with compelling and well-developed supporting arguments. Make sure to express your central argument in a clear thesis statement that you consistently develop and focus in your essay.
- Use research to support your claims and bring many relevant “voices” into conversation with each other.
- Move beyond broad generalizations to contribute a unique perspective that delves into the complex nuances of the debate.
- Make sure to answer the “So what?” question in your writing. Convince your audience that the issue you’re responding to is significant, and that your perspective is valuable for those involved in your field to consider.

Keep in mind that the *Times* editors will be looking for work that uses compelling logic, a sophisticated command of research sources, and advanced critical thinking to

persuade readers. They also want an essay that is clearly written so that it's possible for members of your field, who have expertise but may not be apprised of this debate's specifics, to understand. Lastly, they want an essay that is enjoyable to read. They're fine with writers using the first person pronoun "I" as long as the writer maintains an appropriate tone and maintains credibility. It's also okay to use devices like narrative, or storytelling, for framing an issue and gaining the reader's attention.

Basic Requirements for the Final Draft:

Length 1,250-1,500 words (excluding your works cited list and "Lessons Learned" paragraph).

Formatting: Format your document according to the style guide most commonly used in your academic discipline. If it seems your discipline uses more than one citation style, you should consult your department's resources at Mason and defer to what your department uses. If this wasn't something you researched in Project 2, then make sure to dedicate some time to determining what style guide(s) your field uses.

Sources: Cite at least 5 sources that members of your academic field would find credible and reliable

- At least two of these sources must be scholarly, peer-reviewed sources which you have accessed through the GMU library databases.
- The remainder of your sources may be popular, trade, or scholarly, but they must be considered reliable and credible to members of your academic field.
- You may, but are not required to, use one graphic source or image, like a chart, map, photo, or anything else graphic. However, this source must also be appropriately cited according to your discipline's style guide, just as you would any other source. You must also integrate the content into the writing.
- You may, but are not required to, use relevant scholarly theory as a lens for analysis.

Citations: You must cite your sources with appropriate in-text citations and a works cited list at the end of your essay according to the style guide most commonly used in your academic discipline. See the note about about style guides.

Dates, Deadlines, and Grades

This project is worth 30% of your final grade. More details are available on the wiki. Your grade breaks down as follows:

Step in the Writing Process	Due Date	How to Submit Your Work	% of Project Grade
Exploratory Draft with a working thesis min. 250 words	11/4	I'll check this for completion in class, but you can write it however and wherever you want	3%

Interior Design Draft for peer review min. 1,000 words, with in-text citations and a works-cited page. Bring 2 printed copies to class.	11/11	Bring 2 printed copies to class.	10%
Participation in Peer Review For Project 3, you can only earn credit if you bring a draft. Those who attend without a draft will receive no credit for participation.	11/13	Bring printed copies of your peer review response letters for everyone in your group, and marked up copies of your peer's drafts.	5%
Final Draft Min. 1,250 words, not including the works cited page	11/25	Upload to the wiki by 10 PM as a .doc or .docx file.	80%
Lessons Learned Paragraph Min. 150 words	11/25	Include in the same document as your final draft, after the citations list and below a clear heading.	2%