

ESSAY 3: ARGUMENTATIVE SYNTHESIS ESSAY

ENGL 1102

Length: 3-4 pages minimum (1000-1200 words)

Due: 5/8 by 11:59pm in CourseDen only

Purpose

In this assignment, you will gain experience with independent research and develop information literacy skills. You will use research to formulate and support an original argument on a topic of your choice that's related to our course focus. Your argument will synthesize source material and make an original contribution to the critical conversation (i.e., after researching different discussions surrounding your chosen topic, where do you find yourself?).

Task

Once you have identified sources related to your topic (which should be related to some aspect of our focus this semester), you will synthesize the information gathered to (a) narrow down your topic to a specific argument and (b) serve as support for an original argument and illustrate its relevance in a critical conversation. (2-3 sources required).

Below are some guiding questions/prompts to help you get started. You may use one of these, adapt one, or meet with me to discuss an idea all your own.

- Considering one to two of our course texts, what do you think is important or significant about contemporary culture's relationship to nature? How important is it to understand nature—as a source of food, as a counter to social anxiety, or as a powerful force with which we share space and resources? Why do these considerations matter?
- Or, while keeping our course texts in mind, consider how we interact with animals, each other, and with the land? What is at stake if we ignore current calls for sustainability, for example? Or how does our focus on technology and progress interfere with or inform or complicate our relationship to nature?
- Or, return to the critical conversation you introduced as part of your first essay—about consumerism, perhaps, or the prevalence of domestic abuse in our current climate, or maybe the need to recognize and effectively address trauma that's connected to toxic family members or others, or the role that privilege plays in our culture, etc. Fully interrogate your topic as the primary focus of your third essay, moving away from the focus on Chris McCandless's story—though an article about him can be one of your sources—thoroughly researching a topic that interests you.

Possible themes/options, more generally:

Nature/Wellness

Man vs. Nature

Mass Consumption/Consumerism

Pros/Cons of Environmental/Animal Activism

Socioeconomic Privilege

Defining Documentary

Significance of Nature in the Technology Age

Criteria for Success

- 1. Introducing the Conversation:** In the introductory paragraph, you will present a brief overview of the critical conversation you've selected to participate in. You should begin by introducing the general topic and then narrowing your focus by introducing and summarizing the main arguments of your source materials. Finally, conclude your introduction with an argumentative thesis statement that articulates the position your essay holds in the critical conversation.
- 2. Thesis Statement:** Your thesis should articulate a specific argument that engages critically and intellectually with the sources you've presented in the introduction. You want to offer your own interpretation or perspective, informed by your sources.
- 3. Supporting Argument/Body:** Each content paragraph should include three components: (1) a topic sentence, (2) evidence, and (3) analysis. This essay should demonstrate your own ability to identify and research a critical conversation and to join it. Avoid personal anecdotes or summarization.
- 4. Conclusion:** Re-emphasize and expand upon your own argument. Reflect on why this topic is important beyond the scope of your own essay. Why should your reader care? What is at stake?

MLA Format: Be sure to use the Purdue OWL website in formatting both your in-text citations and works cited. Be sure to cite every reference to your source, including any material summarized or paraphrased.