

Homework #17

Investigative essay (aka Feature Article) 8-10 p. double-spaced (2500-3000 words)

WRITE an essay or magazine-style article that investigates an aspect of science, medicine, or technology of your choosing. This essay should not merely inform and explain, but should aim to answer a question that motivates the essay.

It should situate the topic in a context and make it clear to readers why the topic matters.

Readers will expect to hear your own thoughts on your topic. Note: You do this partly by the way you arrange your discussion, what you emphasize, what you ask readers to “note,” and how you link ideas in transitions (e.g., “While this poses a challenge, most researchers seem to believe that the challenge is well worth solving. Says . . . , “quote,” etc.).

Your paper may be either exploratory or persuasive but it must have a conclusion—an answer to the question you pose or imply in your introduction. Note: your answer does not need to be a yes or no, thumbs up or down, kind of answer. It may re-frame the issue, and/or pose new questions, as a result of the reading, writing and thinking you have done, as a way of moving the discussion of this topic forward.

Requirements:

- At least 6 sources, at least 2 of which must be books, and one must be a journal article. (Most papers will use in the range of 8-12 sources)
- A title & 3-4 section headings
- In the first draft, all sources must be noted in MLA-style parentheses and a complete Works Cited list must accompany the draft.

Workshopping the Investigative essay/Feature article

We will spend 2 days workshopping this essay.

Print and read the essays before you come to class. Make notes on the ms. Consider especially:

- The overall shape and trajectory of the draft:
 - Does the proportion of the parts feel right? And the pacing?
 - Is it clear what the main idea or take-away of this piece is?
 - Does the draft feel unified? What might the writer do to unify it even more?
 - Does something seem to be left out?
- Do the Title and Introduction do a good job forecasting what this draft is really about? Do they make you want to read on?
- Is technical material clearly explained? Is it motivated and staged well, so that it doesn't come at us in chunks that are hard to digest?
- Notice when and how sources are acknowledged in the text itself. Does the writer use sources in a way that adds to his credibility?
- Can you see the writer in the draft? I.e., do the writer's voice, selection and shaping of material, connections between points and reflections & questions make it clear that the writer has a point of view (in the case of an essay, an idea) that is his own? In other words, does it seem throughout that this draft isn't merely a summary of information?

Workshopping for Next Session

- You'll workshop in small groups, which I'll configure and post before 4/18.
- You'll prepare for the workshop by reading group members' drafts and responding online before class (assignment to be posted as Assignment # 18)
- Bring to class copies of group-mates essays, & your notes and comments

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