

Engl 96IQ, Fall 2009

Research Essay Assignment

Proposal and annotated bibliography: due 10/22 (note: changed from 10/20)

First paragraph and paragraph-outline: due 11/5

Final draft: due 11/19

Your final essay is a multi-part research project, including a proposal and bibliography, a rough draft, and a final draft. The essay itself is fairly short – just 1000 words – so the emphasis can be on the quality, not the quantity, of the writing. The topic of the essay is, of course, a board game – anyone that you would like to choose (including one that we will not cover or have not yet covered in class), except that it cannot be the same one as you are doing an oral presentation on. As you've seen in your readings for this class, games offer an interesting way to explore all sorts of facets of society: cultural, social, economic, and so on. Your job will be to discuss the game of your choice in some way that connects it with the society in which it originated or one in which it is commonly played. You cannot spend time in discussing actual game play or game theory related to your choice – your essay must deal with its cultural or social setting and associations. As a result, contemporary games like Monopoly, Risk, and Scrabble probably would not be good choices, but you will have to determine what is a good choice, and what could be the focus of a good essay, yourself.

Proposal. To get you started right on your essay, you are required to submit a one-page proposal that will explain your idea for the topic, and what sort of research you intend to do on it. It is possible that, having done the research, you may wish to revise your proposal. But, even at this early stage, the proposal must contain a statement of a persuasive thesis – that is, not just the general topic you are planning to research and discuss, but a specific point of which you are planning to convince your reader in the essay.

Annotated bibliography. Along with your proposal, you will report on some of your preliminary research in the form of an annotated bibliography. Your bibliography must follow either APA or MLA format, and contain at least five books and five peer-reviewed articles from the online library databases. While you cannot use them for the annotated bibliography, web pages, newspaper articles, and other sources may be used for your essay; you should, however, be careful about accepting their information as true, especially if you cannot confirm it with other sources. After each entry in your bibliography, you must include an annotation – a short, two- or three-sentence explanation of what information you have found or expect to find in the source, and how you will use it in your essay.

First paragraph and paragraph-outline. Having completed your research, it will be time to compose the first draft of your essay, and here we are going to work especially hard on the opening paragraph and development of argumentation in your essay. Remember that the essay must have an argumentative thesis – some idea that you are trying to persuade your reader to accept. This means, of course, that the idea must be complex or questionable enough to make the research necessary; it cannot be so obvious that the reader would accept it without question. All this must be reflected in your first paragraph: a sharp focus on your topic, and a clear statement of your thesis. Then, outline the rest of your essay, paragraph by paragraph, identifying with a topic sentence the subject of each paragraph, and what sorts of support or arguments will be provided, and what your analysis will show.

Final draft. After you receive the corrected first paragraph and paragraph-outline back, you'll have ten days to revise it and submit your final draft. You may find that problems with your outline require additional research or rethinking your thesis. You will certainly want to revise your final draft to strengthen your arguments and correct any technical problems that have been marked. The final draft will count 50% of the final grade on this assignment; each of the earlier parts will count 25%. All parts of this assignment will be submitted on Blackboard; your final draft will also be submitted to turnitin.com.