English 1B Spring 2016 **Problems/Solutions Research Project**

**Overview:** In keeping with our course theme of **Global Citizenship**, this research problem will

give you a chance to see how American problems and opportunities are tied into a global network of causes and effects. This assignment will also give you a chance to investigate a **solution to a specific problem** and show a **specific audience** how that solution could lead to a better world in the future. The emphasis is on **innovation and persuasion**. It is emphatically NOT just a “data dump.”

**Related Assignments:** The project will involve several related assignments. The major ones will be a **research proposal + annotated bibliography**, a **researched argument**, and an **oral presentation**. These will each be discussed in more depth on their own assignment sheets. This collective assignment sheet is meant to show how they are all related and to give you a central space for procedural steps and deadlines.

**Topics:** Research projects work best when the topic is of genuine interest to the researcher. On the other hand, students learn more when they research a topic they don’t already know a lot about. So the goal here is to pick a topic that piques your interest but that is also fairly new to you. Below are some suggestions for groups of topics, and we will generate a more extensive list of topics in class. Come prepared to suggest topics that have something to do with problems and solutions and that relate to our broader themes of sustainability, creativity, or global citizenship.

**Areas of Focus/Collaboration**

The key in studying innovation is to see how your chosen category draws on ideas and experts in seemingly unrelated fields. For example, studying the Greenbelt Movement for which Wangari Maathai won the Nobel Peace prize can show you how her innovations in forestry produced advancements in human rights, democracy, and community development, while helping to reverse desertification and other problems associated with climate change. And Dr. Maathai’s Ph.D. was in veterinary medicine! She was definitely a woman who could think outside of the box. Below are some suggestions for areas of focus you might choose.

* **Global innovations/ collaborations in science and/or technology** (examples: wave power in Scotland, biofuels from algae or spent fryer oil, self-driving cars, green roofs, the international space station)
* **New trends in global business** (examples: microloans, social entrepreneurs)
* **Innovations in global education** (examples: Khan academy, the Gap Year, service learning, Thiel Fellowships to skip college)
* **Global innovations in agriculture and/or the management of natural resources** (examples: vertical farms, the Green Belt movement, Gaviotas)
* **The arts in service of a better world** (examples: Kids with Cameras, 826 Valencia Street, Venezuela’s El Sistema, Ireland’s Icon Factory)

**First Step: Choose and pitch a topic with a brief topic proposal: DUE:**

Look over the list of topics and spend some time on the Web finding out more about any that seem intriguing. Spend enough time to find a topic that *genuinely interests you*, as you will have to spend a fair amount of time with it. Then write a *brief* topic proposal (just a few sentences) for me that includes the following:

* Topic and focus: Narrow it down to an issue that can be usefully dealt with in 3-4 pages (e.g. not just “Solutions to the effects of climate change” but “Kenya’s Greenbelt Movement: implications for other countries” or “The relationship between the Greenbelt Movement and social justice, in Kenya and elsewhere.”
* Thesis question: It is too soon to make an arguable claim before you’ve done your research, so phrase your inquiry it as a question. (e.g. “Could the methods of Kenya’s Greenbelt Movement achieve similar results in Haiti?”)
* Audience: Decide which particular audience you want to address (besides your instructor), as this will affect everything you do, even which sources you seek. (e.g. the Haiti focus for the Greenbelt topic could direct you to a reforestation non-profit that does this kind of work, or to a Haitian public official who could commission a more in-depth study of the idea.

**Second Step:** **Working bibliography DUE:**

Generate a list of research questions that will help you focus the inquiry. Research your topic and find at least 10 sources for your working bibliography**.** You will annotate one of the sources.

**Third Step**: **Research Proposal +** **Annotated bibliography** **DUE:**

By this point you can provide a fuller proposal, informed by research and supported by 5 annotated sources—the most relevant you have found so far. There will be a separate handout for details about content and format. Most of the space will be used to summarize and evaluate your sources. (1400 words in all).

**Fourth Step**: **Rough draft of Researched Argument DUE:**

Attack that list of research questions. Read, take notes, research some more, repeat. Draft the essay that makes an argument about your topic to your chosen audience. Remember, it isn’t a “data dump” but an *argument*—an effort to persuade a particular audience. It should be **full length** (1400 words) and typed in MLA format to receive credit. You must cite at least 5 sources with at least two opposing viewpoints. Bring 2 copies of the **rough draft** to the peer review workshop and be prepared to give someone else advice on theirs, as well.

**Fifth Step: Final Draft of Researched Argument DUE:**

Get whatever other advice on the draft that you would like, perhaps visit my office hours, the Writing Center. Considering all advice, and revise accordingly. Submit the **final draft** to Turnitin.com; then print draft, submit hard copy in class (along with the rough draft, and peer review sheet.)

**Final Step: Oral Multi-Modal Presentation** **DUE:**

At the end of the semester, you will present your findings either individually or (preferably) in groups of related topics. Visual aids such as a Power point presentation, maybe with video segments, are part of the assignment. You will also submit a written version of your “script,” which will be graded separately. Plan on 500 words or so for the written version and 5-10 minutes for each person in the group.