

Paper 1 – Issue Proposal

AP English III

The Rhetorical Situation

In order for argument to occur, there must first be an “issue,” which simply means an unsettled question that matters to a community. This year you’ll be conducting research on an issue that you select, and since you’ll be reading and writing extensively on this issue throughout the year, it’s essential that you choose one that truly interests you. As you consider potential issues, you may want to do some more background reading (you’ve already read a non-fiction book) to ensure that you are truly interested in the issue and that you can find enough sources to support sustained research. **Please note:** all the major assignments in the year-long research project build on one another, so once you select an issue, you may not change it.

For this paper, you will take stock of what you already know about the issue you select, organize and develop your thoughts, and sketch a plan for your research. Your audience will be your classmates and me.

Invention (i.e., discovering what you’re going to say in this paper)

1. You must first make sure the issue you’ve selected is arguable. Apply the “Twelve Tests of an Arguable Issue” from the pdf file of the same name on my website. If you cannot answer “yes” to all twelve questions, change or modify your issue until you can.

2. Your classmates and I will want to know more about the issue and your relationship to it, so brainstorm/freewrite/draft answers to the following questions:

- How would you introduce this issue to an audience who knows nothing about it?
- What do you know about the issue already?
- How did you acquire your knowledge about the issue?
- Why do you find this issue compelling?

3. Your classmates and I will also be interested in what you *don’t* know (or are at least unsure about) regarding the issue. Brainstorm/freewrite/draft answers to the following questions:

- What are the main questions you want to pursue/answer over the course of the year? (Obviously these questions may change as you learn/think more about the issue.)
- How would you answer these questions right now and why? (Your answers may change significantly as you research the issue.)
- What more do you need to learn about the issue, and where might you go to find more information?

4. Finally, your classmates and I will be curious to know what audiences you have in mind as you look ahead to future assignments. Brainstorm/freewrite/draft answers to the following questions:

- What audiences would be interested in your ideas on the issue?

- What types of scholars, stakeholders, decisions makers, and pundits are interested in/affected by the issue?
- What sorts of people are likely to be your opponents? Your allies?

Arrangement (i.e., organizing what you're going to say in this paper)

You'll want to organize your paper in the manner you think will prove most effective with your classmates and me, but here are some general guidelines:

- Heed the lesson of Ch. 1 in *They Say/I Say*: “To give your writing the most important thing of all—namely, a point—a writer needs to indicate clearly not only his or her thesis, but also what larger conversation that thesis is responding to” (18). In this case, the conversation you're responding to is the one surrounding the issue you've selected. Indicate at the beginning of your paper that you're writing in response to that conversation, then state a thesis that previews what you'll be discussing in your paper and why it is appropriate for a semester of sustained research.
- Also mind the lesson of Ch. 7 in *They Say/I Say*: “Regardless of how interesting a topic may be to you as a writer, readers always need to know what is at stake in a text and why they should care. . . . Rather than assume that audiences will know why their claims matter, all writers need to answer the ‘so what?’ and ‘who cares?’ questions up front” (88-89). **Don't assume that your classmates and I will understand why your issue matters—make us understand by explaining why your issue is important and why we should care about it.**
- However you arrange the body of your paper, make sure you answer **fully and in detail** all the questions in the Invention section of this prompt.

Style (i.e., choosing the appropriate language for your paper)

One reason I'm asking you to write to your classmates and me is to break you of the habit of writing all your papers to some vague, generalized audience and/or attempting to make all your papers approximate some objective ideal. If you approach this paper in that way, your style will be ineffective because it won't be tailored to your specific audience. When reading your paper, it should be obvious to your classmates and me that you're writing to us specifically.

Heed the lesson of Ch. 9 in *They Say/I Say* and mix standard written English with “the kinds of expressions and turns of phrase that you use every day when conversing with family and friends” (115). The more important lesson of that chapter is “that your judgments about the appropriate language for the situation should always take into account your likely audience and your purpose in writing” (121). Since you're writing to your classmates and me, you should write in an informal style that is distinctly your own, but do make sure you're communicating clearly.

All readers appreciate coherent, unified paragraphs, so your paragraphs should include a topic sentence that clearly states the main idea of the paragraph and supporting sentences that cluster around the main idea without detours.

Proofread carefully; avoid errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and mechanics.

Other Requirements

Your paper should be **3-5 pages**—anything shorter or longer will be considered a failure to adhere to one of the assignment’s basic requirements. It should be **double-spaced, typed in Times New Roman font, with 12-point character size and one-inch margins all the way around.**

Your first submission is due at the beginning of class on **Monday 11/5**, and you should think of it as a final draft—something that is ready for your classmates and me to read. If your first submission does not meet every requirement of this assignment sheet, I will return it to you and count it as late. Both your first and final submissions must be turned in on time—you will be docked a full letter grade for each day either is late.

Peer reviews are due **Thursday 11/8**.

Final drafts are due **Wednesday 11/28**.

Evaluation Criteria

Final Draft:

- Includes a snappy title that catches the reader’s attention and indicates the topic and argument.
- Identifies an arguable/contestable issue appropriate to the assignment.
- Indicates that the essay responds to the conversation about that issue.
- Includes a contestable, specific, detailed claim about why the issue is appropriate for a semester of sustained research.
- Provides well-developed reasons about your relationship to the issue (what you know, what you don’t know, what audiences you are considering, and how you will find the information you need) that support the claim.
- Answers the “so what” and “who cares” question by explaining why the research topic is significant and to whom.
- Supports reasons with thoughtful, well-developed examples anecdotes, ideas, and questions.
- Comes across as a credible writer, and appeals to the values and emotions of the audience.
- Develops a seamless, coherent, and well-organized argument.
- Sentences are lively, engaging, and relatively error free.
- If outside sources are used, they are used effectively and integrated smoothly to help substantiate or support points.
- If outside sources are used, there is proper attribution to each source cited via in-text parenthetical citation and a correctly formatted Works Cited page.
- MLA Style (Works Cited necessary if outside sources are used) in 12pt. Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins.

Writing Process:

- Submitted complete drafts on time. Drafting process shows evidence of revision of content and style.
- Provided adequate help to peers during peer review.