

Essay #3 Prompt

Topic: Extended Annotated Bibliography Essay



Prompt

Using 5-7 relevant and reliable sources, write an essay that:

1. **Poses a research question** about a current controversial issue in popular culture,
2. **Summarizes** a series of sources explaining how each relates to the research question, and
3. **Concludes with your stance** on the issue.

**Some notes about this assignment:*

- You can choose any current and controversial topic represented in popular culture that you'd like. You're going to be reading and writing about this for the next 2 essays, so choose something that you're interested in and that you'll find plenty of reliable sources on. (See the section below for examples)
- This essay is very prescriptive, so pay close attention to the "paragraph details" section while you're working on the essay.



Choosing a Topic

For these paired essays, you will choose a pop culture moment and explore the various responses to it.

The issue you choose must be both **current and controversial** (meaning that reasonable people currently disagree in meaningful ways about the issue's cause, its impact, or its solution). For Essay #4, **your argument will focus on an analysis of one or more representations of the issue in the media** (TV, film, music, social media) so you will also need some sources that explain your case study (pop culture example) for this essay.

Think of Essay #3 as an opportunity to gather all the information you will need to build your case in Essay #4. All the work you do now will make your next essay

that much easier!

While you will be using a cultural moment as a case study, your paper will move beyond its representation in popular culture to address how it reflects current attitudes, beliefs, and or notions of this issue; this will be the basis for your argument for Essay #4 and what you will focus on researching for Essay #3.

Because you'll be writing 2 essays on this one topic, **it's especially important to choose a good topic.**

A good topic is one that's:

1. **Controversial,**
 - People argue about it.
2. **Current,**
 - It's not already solved or forgotten about--people have talked about it in the news recently.
3. **Specific,**
 - Narrow broad topics in on a specific recent event and question that directly relates to that event.
4. **Researchable,**
 - There are plenty of relevant and reliable sources on this topic--no conspiracy theories, topics that aren't written about much, etc.
5. **Somewhat interesting to you.**
 - You have so many options, in every field or area of interest.
 - Take some time to consider your options and choose something that sounds at least somewhat interesting.

Tips for Finding Topics:

- Go to a reputable news site and skim the headlines
- Review the "Opinion" section of newspaper sites

There have been so many things going on lately! There are plenty of topics to choose.

Examples of things you could write about (but really there are SO many options):

- Climate change activists throwing soup on Van Gogh's Sunflowers painting to protest fossil fuels
- Kanye's decision to purchase Parler
- Backlash against student loan forgiveness (you could choose a meme or political cartoon)
- Tik Tok trend of calling out "weaponized incompetence"
- "The Slap" at the Oscars involving Will Smith and Chris Rock
- The "Imagine" video that a group of celebrities released at the start of lockdown
- The investigation of Facebook's promotion of Tik Tok trends that turned out to be false (slap a teacher challenge)
- Coverage of the Ketanji Brown Jackson confirmation hearings
- Taylor Swift's decision to re-release her albums
- The strike in the MLB
- The US women's soccer team lawsuit
- One of the pro-labor movements happening right now (Starbucks, Amazon)
- The film *Don't Look Up* and its representation of climate-related issues.
- Representations of drug use in shows like *Euphoria* or *Dope Sick*



Sources

Finding **great sources** is one of the **main goals** of Essay #3, so **pay close attention to this section.**

For this essay, you're going to need:

1. **At least one source** that provides ample **background information** on your popular culture event/case study.
 - Though you may need 2 or even 3 background sources depending on how in-depth they are and how complicated the event/case study is.
2. **2-4 sources** that **explain** or **defend various perspectives** on the issue.
 - Make sure that you have at least 2 sources that discuss perspectives that are different from one another.

All of the sources should be:

1. Very relevant to your topic and research question.

- At least several pages of the source should focus on the topic (and research question).

2. Somewhat in-depth (at least 5-10 pages).

- Otherwise, you may have a difficult time writing an entire paragraph on the source.

3. Very reliable.

- In the coming weeks, we'll go over how to evaluate the reliability of sources and which sources are reliable enough to use and which aren't.

Source requirements:**1. You must use at least 5-7 reliable sources.**

1. You must use **at least one academic journal article** or peer reviewed journal article.
 - *Use the "academic journal article/peer reviewed journal article" filter in the advanced search of the library databases to find this source type.*
 - *I know that there will not be an academic source on your pop culture topic if it happened very recently, but there definitely will be ones about the issues connected to it. For example, there will not be an academic journal article on Smith's slap at the Oscars, but there will be many sources on the surrounding issues such as society's treatment of Black women's hair and bodies or alopecia in general.*
2. The rest of your sources may be from the **library databases and/or** from search engines like **Google**.
 - Just make sure that **all** of your sources are **very reliable**.

2. You should have the following sources in your essay (same requirements as those listed above):

1. **At least one source** that provides ample **background on the issue**.
2. **2-4 sources** that **explain** or **defend various perspectives** on the issue.

**Paragraph Details**

This essay is very prescriptive and follows an atypical format, so pay close attention to what's being asked for in each paragraph.

Click on each of the following expanders to read more details about what to include in each part of the essay.

Introduction Paragraph

The introduction should:

- 1. Include introductory ideas (about 4-6 sentences)** that introduce your essay topic and explain why you chose this topic. **You should discuss:**
 - What is the topic?
 - What has been happening regarding this topic lately?
 - How is the topic controversial? (What do people disagree about?)
 - Why did you choose this topic? (What are you wondering?)
- 2. End with your research question.**
 - Do not state a stance at the end of the introduction. End with your research question.
 - Your research question should be relevant, clear, and be an "issue question" (i.e., the answer should be an argument, not information).

Summarizing the Sources (5-7 paragraphs)

You should include **5-7 paragraphs** that each focus on **introducing one source, summarizing** the source, and identifying and analyzing **relevant information** from the source.

Each summarizing the source paragraph should:

- 1. Introduce the source:**
 - Tell us the title, author, where it was published, and when it was published.
- 2. Explain how reliable you think the source is.**
 - Point out the aspects of the source that make it reliable and that damage its credibility and explain your evaluation.

- Note that no source is *perfectly* reliable, but all of your sources should be *very* reliable. If you have a source you're not sure is reliable enough, choose a different source.
- 3. Summarize the main ideas in the source.**
- Provide a 1-3 sentence summary of the source.
 - What does it discuss? What are its main points? What are the supporting ideas it discusses?
 - Give us an overview.
 - Make sure the summaries are in your own words and that each sentence is cited.
- 4. Point out ideas in the source that help answer your research question or provide necessary background information.**
- Identify points, reasons, evidence, and details from the source that help support the research question.
 - Summarize, paraphrase, or use blended quotes to include the evidence, and make sure to cite each sentence.
- 5. Analyze the evidence for us.**
- After the points, reasons, evidence, and details from the source, explain how that evidence helps answer the research question and how it relates to other ideas or perspectives.
 - Explain why this particular evidence or source might be important or useful to understanding this issue better.

Your Argument (instead of conclusion) (1-2 paragraphs)

(Note that you will not be including a traditional conclusion in this essay. These last 1-2 paragraphs are basically your conclusion.)

The final 1-2 paragraphs of your essay should **state your argument** about the event/case study after having read all of these sources.

These paragraphs are your chance to reflect on what you read, consider your own perspective on the issue, and start to identify your support for your claims. This will be really valuable as we begin the next essay that will focus on your argument about how this popular culture example represents larger issues in American culture.

As you're trying to figure out what your argument is, keep in mind that **you should not take a stance on the issue itself**. Instead, your essay argues that the event/case study you've chosen reflects larger issues within American society and identifies what those attitudes and beliefs are.

So if you chose, the example of Will Smith slapping Chris Rock at the Oscars, you would NOT argue whether or to Smith should have done so. Instead, you will argue which issues surfaced as a result of the incident and why that matters (conventions of comedy, society's treatment of black women's hair/bodies, assault, depression, childhood trauma, "Oscars so white" context, etc).

We will talk about this a lot more in Essay #4, but what's nice about this type of argument is that you do not reveal your personal opinion about the issue. Instead, you are more of a journalist who is arguing that the event/case study is significant and represents larger cultural issues.

These paragraphs should include:

1. Your argument.

- How *you* would answer the research question based on the readings that you've summarized above.

2. Your reasons that support this stance.

- Describe your reasons,
- Explain how they help support your stance, and
- Explain why they're valid and important reasons.

3. Evidence from the sources you summarized that help support your stance and **analysis of that evidence**.

- Point to evidence from the paragraphs above that help support your stance.
- Remind us of the evidence and which source it came from.
- Explain how it helps support your perspective.

4. Fair representations of alternative views on the issue and your responses to them.

- Based on what you read and your own inferences, explain common and important views that differ from yours.

- Make sure to present opposing views fairly--summarize their best arguments and use a neutral tone.
 - Then, respond to the views. You can disagree and include your reasons, agree and disagree (maybe it's that way in some cases, etc.), or concede to part of the argument.
- 5. Explain what else you'd need to look up or think about if you were writing an entire argument research paper on this topic.**
- Are you missing any information?
 - Are there other types of sources that would be really helpful?
 - Are there any ideas that you have to think about more?

Works Cited Page

Add your works cited page as the last page of your essay.

As a reminder:

- *Works cited pages list the **publication information** (e.g., author, title, etc.) for each source that you used in your essay.*
- *Here's [more information about and an example of a works cited page](https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wm-writingskillslab/chapter/the-conventions-of-a-references-page/)*
[_>\(https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wm-writingskillslab/chapter/the-conventions-of-a-references-page/\)_](https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wm-writingskillslab/chapter/the-conventions-of-a-references-page/)



Writing A Research Question

We will complete a prewriting activity to help you form your question, but I've included the process here so that everything can be found on this prompt page.

- Based on what you've been learning so far, what **research question** do you think you'd like to focus Essay #3 on?
- Your research question might look something like this: How does Will Smith's behavior at the Oscars reveal attitudes about free speech, society's treatment of Black women's hair, and representations of masculinity in American culture?

- **Here's a template:** How does (YOUR CASE STUDY) reveal attitudes about ISSUE #1, ISSUE #2, and ISSUE #3?

A Reminder about Your Research Question for Essay #3:

As you may remember, the **introduction paragraph of Essay #3** should **end with a research question** instead of a thesis. That's because in Essay #3, **we're going to try to suspend our judgment on the issue**--we're not going to include our opinions until we've read and really thought about all the information in the sources.

Because you will be writing your opinion at the end of the essay and will focus Essay #4 (an argument essay) on this topic, **it's important for you to have a really strong, argumentative research question.**

Qualities of a Good Research Question:

1. It's an **open-ended** question (not a "yes or no" question),
2. The scope of the question is somewhat **narrow** and the **issues are clearly connected to the case study** (so that you could write a 5-page essay on it),
3. The question **does not include any bias** (the question and tone are neutral and don't lead people to respond a certain way), (Ex. here is an example of a question with bias: How does Smiths brutal and unexpected attack on Rock....)
4. The question has **not already been definitively answered**, and
5. The question could be **answered in multiple ways** and with multiple **arguments**.



Requirements

Length requirement:

1. **At least 5-8 full pages.**
 - In other words, the conclusion of the essay should reach **the bottom of the 5th page when properly formatted according to MLA**, and the essay should not be longer than 8 full pages please.
2. **Plus a works cited page** (not counted in page or word count).

Source requirements:

1. You must use at least **5-7 reliable sources**.
 1. You must use **at least one academic journal article** or peer reviewed journal article.
 - *Use the "academic journal article/peer reviewed journal article" filter in the advanced search of the library databases to find this source type.*
 - *I know that there will not be an academic source on your pop culture topic if it happened very recently, but there definitely will be ones about the issues connected to it. For example, there will not be an academic journal article on Smith's slap at the Oscars, but there will be many sources on the surrounding issues such as society's treatment of Black women's hair and bodies or alopecia in general.*
 2. The rest of your sources may be from the **library databases and/or** from search engines like **Google**.
 - Just make sure that **all** of your sources are **very reliable**.
2. **You should have the following sources in your essay:**
 1. **At least one source** that provides ample **background on the issue**.
 - Though you may need 2 or even 3 background sources depending on how in-depth they are and how complicated the issue is.
 2. **2-4 sources** that **explain** or **defend various perspectives** on the issue.
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Format Requirements:

1. **MLA document format**  (https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_general_format.html) (1" margins, Times New Roman 12-point font, block header, running header, double-spaced, etc.).
2. MLA formatted **in-text citations**.  (<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wm-writingskillslab/chapter/the-conventions-of-citations-and-references/>)

3. MLA formatted [works cited page](https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wm-writingskillslab/chapter/the-conventions-of-a-references-page/)  [\(https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wm-writingskillslab/chapter/the-conventions-of-a-references-page/\)](https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wm-writingskillslab/chapter/the-conventions-of-a-references-page/).



Key Due Dates

Here are the main assignments and due dates for this essay:

Week	Major Assignments
Week 9	Read the prompt and choose a topic .
Week 10	Find and evaluate your sources
Week 11	Planning and outlining your essay
Week 12	Draft and edit the essay. The final draft is due on Thursday, November 10th.



Questions about the Prompt?

If you have **questions** about the prompt, **send me a message** through **Canvas Inbox** or **Pronto!** 😊

Please know:

- *You are never bothering me.*
- *I love hearing from you, and I love questions.*
- *I always want you to feel like you know exactly what to do.*
- *Since you're not sitting in front of me, I can't see that confused look on your face, so YOU have to email ME.* 😊
- *Asking a question is a public service: If you have a question, others have that same question, so by asking it, you're helping everyone. Thank you in advance!*



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