**Literary Research Project Process for Essay 3 [ENG 1121] Total Hours for Success: 11 - 16**

**Step 1: Start with an interesting idea or scene** Time: 1 hour

Method: Read assignment details, text, notes, lists, class discussion. Select option.

Pitfalls: too big or too small. The idea must be able to support research meaning that students need to find a peer reviewed journal articles about the topic.

**Step 2: Read about and learn the basics of the idea/topic**  Time: 1-2 hour

Method: First, be familiar with the main text. Have you taken adequate notes on the characters and plot points? What are the major ideas/concepts connected to the story? Who are some people associated with the ideas/concepts? What historical research might be needed? Why are you interested in this topic? The answers to these questions should result in at least three pages of typed notes.

Make sure to record all vital information in your Annotated Bibliography. Keep accurate records of the titles of sources (and author names, dates, pages, publishers, etc.)

Pitfalls: not spending adequate time on this vital step.

**Step 3: Develop “HOW” Research Questions—beginning thesis** Time: 2 – 4 hours

These questions will lead to a provisional thesis. Make sure to include two sides to these questions.

Method:

1. Using one or two or more peer reviewed articles, outline one or two controversies or arguments concerning the idea. Make sure to describe the important people and their views in your notes. For example, what does a certain scholar think about the concept of double consciousness? Then put these two scholars in opposition: While Smith thinks X, Jones think Y. Which side do you support? Make that clear when rewriting the thesis sentence. In addition, one could find an argument within one article: While Smith is right to explore Master Zong and Ganchin as the main characters in “A Good Fall,” she should have added Cindy because this character is central the ethical question “what type of person do I want to be?”.

2. (optional) Fit the controversies or arguments into major subject fields such as health science, sociology, environmental science, real estate, labor, entertainment, economics, architecture, engineering. Often controversies do not fit neatly into one category; be prepared to list more than one subject field. This step will help when it comes to paragraph organization.

3. Make sure to record all quality research information in the Annotated Bibliography.

Pitfalls:

1. mismatching arguments to subject fields—this will be harmful to the essay when attempting to find evidence and counterclaim.

2. Selecting articles that are not interesting to you—or are not powerful or detailed enough.

**Step 4: Find more resources to answer the research questions** Time: 1-2 hours

This step creates claims and counterclaims to your argument.

Method:

1. Use names, places, events from newspapers or encyclopedias when using the research indexes such as Academic Search Complete.

2. Use subject fields as keywords to make index searches more refined and relevant. The search is very important and students must be prepared the change the search terms.

3. find book chapter and articles and then inspect the footnotes, endnotes, works cited in order to track down other resources.

4. Make sure to record vital information in the Annotated Bibliography

Pitfalls: Skim each resource to make sure it is relevant. Read for the article annotations and the author’s thesis. Ask questions: is this article/book/chapter too old? Is it biased? Is the publication high quality or low quality? [Is it a university press or eHow?]

Pitfalls: Finding more than two sources is vital to a successful essay.

**Step 5: Outline or Map Sources** Time: 2-3 hours

Method:

1. What is the main argument? Position 1 – sources

Position 2 – sources

Position 3 – sources

What is your argument? Who do you agree with (see positions above)? Sources? How do the

positions and claim relate? Make sure to balance claims against counterclaims.

2. Organization: Which position is the weakest? Strongest? The strongest typically goes last. Students must decide the most logical organization. For example, is chronology or theme the best way to lay out the arguments and positions?

Pitfalls: Try more than one type of organization. Don’t be afraid to sketch out the outline using a variety of colors and structures. Make sure to ask: how are the arguments and positions connected?

**Step 6: Thesis Creation and Drafting** Time: 3–5 hours

Method:

\* Work on the thesis for at least 30 minutes. Do not rush this step. Review the controversies surrounding the arguments—and your own position. Make sure to review several examples. Use the thesis formula.

1. The first page must contain four pieces of information. What is the option under review? What are the major positions that this essay explores? What is the student’s thesis? What is the student’s method—which scenes and characters will the student explore?

2. Background: The student must not dwell on the entire history the argument or idea. Two sentences maximum is allowed for background/summary.

3. Each paragraph must begin with a clear and strong topic sentence. Example: “Of the three main positions connected to the argument to build the Brooklyn-Queens Connector, the weakest is weather resilience and storm protection.”

4. After writing a strong topic sentence, student may consider the value of freewriting the rest of the paragraph in order to get the main ideas into place. Editing can come later. [Paragraphs not perfection]

Pitfalls: Do not wait until the last minute to begin writing.

**Step 7: Revision, Editing, Proofreading** Time: 1-2 hours

Method: peer review groups; writing lab, family, friends, software

Pitfalls: This step is often the difference between an A paper and a B paper.