

ENGLISH 1109
Reading and Writing about Science

Date due: October 5 2017

Dr Jan Curtis: Ext 1417

Length: Approximately 1000 words

This is a short research assignment. The purpose of this exercise is to develop a persuasive essay by taking a point of view and supporting it. Focus on your thesis statement, essay organization, paragraph development and coherence. Choose one of the following topics that you find interesting and turn it into a research problem. Take into account two sources that reveal current thinking on the topic.

- Time travel is or is not possible
- Life exists elsewhere in the universe
- Effect of technology on the brain, for example “technology is making us stupid”
- Effect of mindfulness of meditation on the brain
- Why a Vegan diet is healthy

Once you have identified your topic, your task is to establish a point of view. This process of selection requires a distinction between broad topics and sharply focused research issues. An issue-based essay gives you the chance to engage in an interesting debate about intriguing questions and problems. The purpose of this essay is not merely to inform or to define but to argue for the significance or long-range implications of the issue you have identified. Background information, definition and information must serve the higher purpose of your thesis. Topic-based essays, unlike issue-based papers, may be informative and enlightening, but often do not go beyond summarizing or paraphrasing existing knowledge. They tend to answer the question *what is it?* In this assignment, you are being asked to choose a topic and turn it into a research question.

Refining a research topic is not easy. Find the angle you want to consider. You can begin by asking a question related to one of the topics. Transform the general topic into a focused and meaningful thesis. Once you have figured out your central question and defined your thesis, your task is to support your thesis by evaluating the evidence you have gathered in your reading. Familiarize yourself with some of the relevant published literature in order to understand the topic and the issues involved. There is a wealth of material on the above topics because of their social and scientific importance and the enthusiasm they generate. The challenge for you is to learn about the topic, and some of the debates and arguments surrounding the topic. In the discussion cite at least two scholarly sources. Sources must be available through CBU.

In the introduction clarify the context of the research question and state your central idea. Try not to hide the main focus or save it for later in the paper. That is fine for a suspense novel but not an academic paper. Develop your thesis by providing appropriate evidence. What are your sources? Always cite your sources and avoid general websites such as Wikipedia and ask.com. They do not count as academic sources. Study guides, general encyclopaedias, and private web

sites are not scholarly sources either. Try to avoid weasel words such as *it is thought that, many scientists say, people think that, people believe this, obviously, on a regular basis, we as humans, in conclusion* and so on.

In the conclusion stay focused on the thesis set up in the introduction. You may want to summarize the implications and limitations of the evidence and perhaps give a future perspective on the work. Whatever emphasis you choose, remember to base your discussion on evidence not opinion, belief or wishful thinking. Critical evaluation of the evidence gives your work authority.

In the evaluation of the essay, I shall take the following into account:

- Topic selection
- Thesis statement
- Research and development
- Focus and clarity
- Effective organization
- Grammar and mechanics

Please follow the MLA or APA method of documenting research papers.