Essay Eight: A (Not So) Lonely Quest

**Prompt**

In “A Lonely Quest for Facts on Genetically Modified Crops,” Amy Harmon guides us through Greggor Ilagan’s process of discovery as he decides how he will vote on a bill that would ban genetically modified crops in Hawaii. Although the paper does contain an implicit argument about GMOs, its focus is on the search for information. Ilagan begins with a certain set of beliefs and assumptions, but he decides to research a complex issue and sift through a barrage of information, misinformation, reports, opinions, and sources in order to work his way toward a conclusion.

In this **4-6 page** essay, you, too, will focus on a search for information. In essays six and seven, you’ve written about a complex issue that has multiple perspectives. With this final paper, you will bring together what you’ve practiced throughout the quarter by accurately and fairly summarizing and analyzing the various perspectives you’ve encountered in your investigation, and demonstrating **intertextuality** by engaging with the ideas of other. You will also use this essay to practice the process of developing a **claim** that responds directly to research.

Essay Eight should take your reader through the research/critical thinking process that led you to your claim. Unlike some of the essays you’ve written for this class, there is not an exact organization that you must follow for this paper; however, there are a few things you should include. Make sure that you explain any background you have with this subject, what you thought about the subject at the beginning of this process, any important information/sources you encountered, and, especially, how you used those sources to come to a conclusion about this issue. Finally, there is one explicit instruction regarding organization: your claim should not appear until at least page three. Take your reader through the exploration of sources, first!

**Goals**

* Use a purposeful organization. This can mean using transitions, signal words/phrases, chronology, and other strategies to guide your reader through your ideas.
* Demonstrate an understanding of various perspectives/arguments surrounding this issue.
* Develop a clear and nuanced claim/argument about the issue you’re exploring.
* Clearly demonstrate the reasoning and information that leads you to this claim.
* Demonstrate thoughtful attention to grammar and style choices.

In addition to your 4-6 page essay, you must write 1-2 paragraphs reflecting on your rhetorical choices as the author of this essay. Consider the following questions:

* Why did you organize the essay this way?
* What grammar and style choices did you make, and why? (Think of one or two examples.)
* How did you attempt to engage your audience in this paper?

**First draft due 11/23; revised draft due IN CLASS on 11/30; final draft due 12/3**

**Essay Seven: Stakes and Stakeholders**

1. **3. To produce complex, analytic, persuasive arguments that matter in academic contexts.**
* The argument is appropriately complex, based in a claim that emerges from and explores a line of inquiry.
* The stakes of the argument, why what is being argued matters, are articulated and persuasive.
* The argument involves analysis, which is the close scrutiny and examination of evidence and assumptions in support of a larger set of ideas.
* The argument is persuasive, taking into consideration counterclaims and multiple points of view as it generates its own perspective and position.
* The argument utilizes a clear organizational strategy and effective transitions that develop its line of inquiry.

Thus far, you have initiated a line of inquiry by establishing a question and reading various articles that are relevant to that question. For Essay Seven, you will focus on the second and fourth bullet points: stakes and perspectives, or “stakes and stakeholders.” In short, you will have to answer the following questions about your topic: who cares, and why do they care?

This short essay comes in a couple of parts. For the first 250-300 words, you will be writing from your own perspective. Consider your background with the topic—what led you to choose it for your research project? What values are you bringing to this argument? Do you have any previous experience in this issue? Do you have any opinions about it? What are your main concerns?

The second part, also 250-300 words, will be from the perspective of a different stakeholder. After brainstorming a list of stakeholders for class, choose one of those stakeholders and write about your chosen issue from their perspective. Remember, this doesn’t have to be a stakeholder with an idea that’s the opposite of what you think, but it does have to be from a point of view that’s different from your own. What does this stakeholder value? What are they concerned about? What do they want that’s different from what you want? Why does this topic matter to them?

**Essay Goals**

* Carefully consider the stakes of your topic and who might be interested in it.
* Demonstrate flexible thinking.
* Consider how you can appeal to the values, beliefs, and ideas of a potential audience.
* Reflect on what the stakes of your topic are *for you*.

**Requirements**

* 500-600 words
* Times New Roman size 12 font
* Double-spaced, 1 inch margins
* Include a heading with your name, my name, the course name, and the date. Do not include a title page.

Essay Six: Asking a Question and Joining the Conversation

Academic arguments—and, truly, any argument of substance—are grounded in facts and research. A good argument is one that begins with a question, not one that begins with an opinion; you realize that you *don’t know*the best answer to something, and so you do research, gather information, look to history, consult experts, and form your argument about what the best answer is based on all of that work.

When you craft an academic argument, you’re joining an already-existing conversation. This means that you have the benefit of building on all the work and thought and argument that has already occurred, and you can add your contribution, your insights, your understandings, to the conversation. In order to do this productively and successfully, you must understand the field—what others have said—and you must understand your argument in relation to what others have said. (The last few sentences, as you’ve probably gathered, have just partially described **intertextuality.**) Just as it would be foolish to jump into a conversation without listening to what others are talking about, it’s important to read what others are writing about a subject before you join in. (There are rare instances where you’ll come upon a subject that no one has written on, but those are only somewhat more common than unicorns.)

For this essay, you will have 500 words to establish:

* A question you want to explore
* Why you want to explore this question
* The gist of what 3 or 4 sources have said about this subject

Requirements:

* 500 words, +/- 10%
* Times New Roman size 12 font
* Double-spaced, 1 inch margins
* Include a heading with your name, my name, the course name, and the date. Do not include a title page.
* A works cited page that includes, in any formatting standard: the author’s name, the title, the publication (i.e.,*The New York Times*), and the date published.

Essay Goals:

* Establish a research question that will allow you to form an argument once you’ve gathered enough information.
* Fairly, accurately, and **briefly** summarize three or four readings on your chosen subject matter.
* Consider ways that your sources connect and diverge (more intertextuality).
* Consider what further information you need to answer your question.

**Essay Five**

**Que sais-je?**

For the first half of the quarter, we’ve focused almost exclusively on handling the texts we encounter. However, you bring a myriad of experience and interests to every text you encounter, and your response to a text depends on all of that background. Understanding this enables you to interrogate your own reactions, question what’s driving your arguments, and change your ideas when you learn something new. Therefore, for this next essay, you’ll take a step back and focus on the background that you carry with you when you read.

At the very beginning of the quarter, we spoke briefly about Michel de Montaigne, the “Father of the Essay.” Montaigne’s purpose in writing his essay collections was, in part, to respond to the following question: “What do I know?” The results included more than 100 essays with titles like these:

Of Smells

Of Liberty of Conscience

Of Sadness and Sorrow

Of Thumbs

Not to Counterfeit Being Sick

Of Virtue

That We Taste Nothing Pure

Of Three Good Women

Whether the Governor Himself Go Out to Parley

(In case you’re interested, you can read the *very* short essay “Of Thumbs” by following this link:[http://essays.quotidiana.org/montaigne/thumbs/ (Links to an external site.)](http://essays.quotidiana.org/montaigne/thumbs/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank). It’ll give you a good idea of what Montaigne is like. I do recommend it.)

In these highly specific essays, Montaigne reflects on what he knows about these subjects, what he’s read about them, what he thinks about them, and what he *doesn’t* know about them—what he wonders, what confuses him, what he wants to know, where he’s encountered contradictions, etc.

In Essay Five, you will be tackling a similar task, responding to the same question: what do you know? Like Montaigne, you will be writing the entire essay on one, specific thing (so you won’t be writing a list of all the facts you know J). Now that you’ve thoroughly read and discussed a variety of texts for this class—Amy Tan, Zadie Smith, Gene Demby, Key and Peele, and Mark Bowden (of “Dumb Kids’ Class”), Roz Chast (“The I.M.s of Romeo and Juliet”), Shakespeare (excerpts from *Othello* and *Macbeth*), Christopher Marlowe (the first day, *Doctor Faustus* excerpt), and Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russel Durst (our textbook!)—consider the connections you can make to any of these pieces. Be as specific as possible; for example, if I were writing this essay, I would write a response to the question, “What do I know about…the witches Macbeth encounters in the play,” or perhaps, “What do I know about…the necessity of losing my temper.”

One of the biggest themes that that I noticed in nearly everyone’s fourth essay was the importance of including examples and evidence. The specificity of this assignment is intended to encourage the use of such details.

This essay, like Essay Four, is also a metacognitive exercise, this time in organization. You will be submitting two drafts. The first draft will be a free write, one that we’ll work on in class on Wednesday. On Thursday, we will be focusing on organization and transitions, using these first drafts. When you submit Essay Five on **Saturday (NOT FRIDAY)**, you must include both your first draft and your second, organized draft.

**Essay Goals**

* Stay specific! Focus on exploring what you know about one particular thing.
* Use examples, evidence, and supporting details.
* Practice using freewriting and outlining to pre-write your essay and craft a strategic, logical organization.

**Requirements**

* One free-write draft of 350 words (+/- 10%)
* One organized draft of 350-500 words (+/- 10%)
* Times New Roman size 12 font
* Double-spaced, 1 inch margins
* Include a heading with your name, my name, the course name, and the date. Do not include a title page.

**Due: SATURDAY, 10/31, 11:59 PM**

Essay Four: Revision Plan

Research has shown that metacognition—that is, thinking about your thinking—is one of the most important elements of writing. Therefore, you next essay will be a metacognitive exercise. Now that you’ve written and received feedback on three essays for this class, choose one that you think you’d like to revise for your final portfolio. Reflecting on the feedback you’ve received on all of your essays thus far, the things we’ve focused on as a whole class, and your own experiences in writing, create 1-2 page revision plan (350-500 words) that will serve as a guide for your next draft of the essay.

This revision plan should respond to the following questions:

1. What, in your own words, does the prompt call for? Did you accomplish everything the prompt called for? If not, what do you need to do?
2. What is your purpose in writing this essay? (In other words, what do you want your imagined audience—and me—to think by the end of reading it?)
3. Based on the feedback you received, what did you do well in this essay? How can you take what you’ve done well in this draft and continue to do that/expand on that in your next draft? How can you take that and use it in future essays?
4. Based on the feedback you received, what do you need to focus on improving in your next draft? What specific steps can you take to do so?
5. After re-reading your draft, and based on your experience writing it and your past experience with writing, what do you think you did well? What would you change?

Requirements:

* 350-500 words, +/- 10%
* Times New Roman size 12 font
* Double-spaced, 1 inch margins
* Include a heading with your name, my name, the course name, and the date. Do not include a title page.

**Due Friday, 10/23, at 11:59 PM on Canvas**

Essay Three: Summary and Rhetorical Analysis

For your third essay, you will choose two of the texts we’ve studied in this class so far to rhetorically analyze. As you may have noticed, these texts all address language and code-switching in some way, but they all have different approaches. Your options include Amy Tan’s “Mother Tongue,” Zadie Smith’s “Speaking in Tongues,” the NPR article “How Code-Switching Explains the World,” and the Anger Translator video(s) from Key and Peele. Consider the genre, audience, and rhetoric of the two pieces you choose, and write a one-page analysis that addresses the main ideas of each piece, its rhetorical features, and the effects of those features.

**Essay Goals**

* Demonstrate your ability to analyze the rhetorical choices made by various authors and the effects of those choices.
* Identify and compare the main ideas of the pieces you choose to write about.
* Include relevant details and quotations to support your ideas, and use either signal phrases or parenthetical citations to cite those details and quotations.
* Use modifiers to add detail to your sentences.

**Requirements**

* 300 words, +/- 10%
* Times New Roman size 12 font
* Double-spaced, 1 inch margins
* Include a heading with your name, my name, the course name, and the date. Do not include a title page.

Essay Two: Summary and Annotation

**Prompt**

This essay will focus on the “they say” aspect of expository writing. So far, you’ve practiced writing a precis for each reading. Now, you will use those skills to write a more detailed summary. After reading Amy Tan’s “Mother Tongue,” you will write one page (about 250 words) in which you summarize Tan’s essay. I encourage you to use your notes from the whole group close reading and our discussion on Tan. Remember, a good summary will identify the most important ideas, paraphrase information from the original text, and credit the original author. You should also submit your annotations of the essay, either written in the margins of Tan’s piece (you can scan it, upload a photo, or hand it to me in class) or on a separate sheet of paper.

**Essay Goals**

* Demonstrate a fair and accurate understanding of Tan’s main ideas.
* Include relevant details to support your summary.
* Demonstrate your ability to usefully annotate.
* Consider how to use different kinds of punctuations to show how your ideas connect.
* Smoothly integrate a quote from Tan.

**Requirements**

* 250 words, +/- 10%
* Times New Roman size 12 font
* Double-spaced, 1 inch margins
* Include a heading with your name, my name, the course name, and the date. Do not include a title page.

**Due: Friday, 10/9, 11:59 PM**

**Submit on Canvas**

Essay One: A Memorable Experience with Writing

Your first essay for this class is a narrative piece. In about one page (about 250 words), provide an account of a notable experience you’ve had with writing. This could be an experience you enjoyed, or one you hated; it might be memorable because of what you wrote, or because of the subject matter, or because of the circumstances surrounding the experience. You might consider past essays you’ve written, emails you’ve sent, poems or stories you’ve composed, blog posts, text messages, songs, or Facebook status updates. As long as you wrote it, it’s a valid writing experience for this assignment.

Make sure to include:

* What you wrote about
* How you wrote it (essay, poem, text, etc.)
* Your intended audience (who read it)
* Why this experience was memorable

Requirements:

* 250 words, +/- 10% (ask me what this means if I don’t mention it in class!)
* Times New Roman size 12 font
* Double-spaced, 1 inch margins
* Include a heading with your name, my name, the course name, and the date. Do not include a title page.

Writing Goals:

* Focus on being as specific as possible.
* Provide plenty of relevant details.
* Use “I,” even if you’re not used to doing so in essays.
* Read your paper aloud before submitting it.

**Due: Friday, 10/2, 11:59 PM**

**Submit on Canvas**