

# Major Assignment 1 Research Packet

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## Table of Contents:

1. Major Assignment 1 prompt
2. Research & Writing Process Timeline
3. Informational handout on research questions
4. Assignment D: Research Question worksheet
5. Assignment F: Research Log
6. Annotated bibliography handout
7. Short Assignment 3: Annotated Bibliography prompt
8. Assignment E prompt
9. Short Assignment 4: Research Narrative prompt

## Major Assignment 1: Academic Argument

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### Your task:

Write an academic argument of 5-7 pages that emerges from a process of inquiry and draws evidence from three (or more) sources. The topic of your paper should be related to the themes that we've been discussing so far this quarter (copyright, plagiarism, appropriation, the creative commons, etc.).

If "The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism" is a relevant source for your project, you are welcome to use it as one of your sources, but you are not required to cite this essay.

### Some "moves" to consider:

This assignment is open-ended so you can explore a line of inquiry that has stakes for you. At the same time, it might be helpful to consider what major "move" your argument will make. Here are a few moves that would be appropriate to this assignment:

- **Analyze an artifact.** Choose a document, piece of art, location, etc. and use appropriate sources to show how this artifact is operating.
- **Analyze an event.** Locate an event related to Lethem's argument (such as a plagiarism scandal) and analyze what happened and how it was discussed.
- **Add to Lethem's argument.** Find a related topic that Lethem doesn't discuss, and use sources to show the importance of adding this topic to a consideration of copyright, the creative commons, etc.
- **Argue with Lethem.** Choose an aspect of Lethem's argument that you disagree with, and use other sources to counter Lethem's argument.
- **Make a claim of definition.** Choose a key word from Lethem's essay and use sources to make an argument about how this word is or should be defined.
- **Make a claim of value.** Choose a controversial issue raised by Lethem and use sources to weigh in on this issue.
- **Make a claim of policy.** Use sources to recommend that a certain existing practice (related to copyright, artistic production, etc.) be changed in some way.

### Research & writing process:

We will spend the next few weeks of class building towards Major Assignment 1. Although each person in class will be following an individual line of inquiry, we'll do activities and assignments as a class over the next few weeks to support your research. A timeline for this process can be found on the following page of this pamphlet.

5-7 pages. Due to the Dropbox by 1:00pm on Tuesday, July 19.

## Major Assignment 1: Research & writing process timeline

We'll brainstorm together in class on 6/29

**1. Brainstorm.** The easiest way to develop an argument that has stakes for your readers is to choose a topic that matters to you. We'll start our research process by brainstorming ideas that you might like to pursue.

Assignment D  
Due in class on 6/30

**2. Develop and workshop a research question.** Once you've chosen a topic, you'll formulate a research question and workshop it.

Class will be in Odegaard 102 on 7/5 and 7/6

**3. Choose appropriate research strategies.** We'll attend a workshop with Odegaard librarian Amanda Hornby. Amanda will help you determine what types of sources will be appropriate for addressing your research question, and introduce you to library resources for finding those sources.

Assignment F  
Due in class on 7/21

**4. Research and record your research.** Once you have a research plan, we'll spend a day in the library finding sources. You'll keep track of your research using a research log.

Conferences will be held during week 3

**5. Attend a conference.** As you conduct your research, you'll meet with me for a conference to discuss how your line of inquiry is developing and what kind of argument seems to be emerging from these sources.

SA 3  
Due to Dropbox on 7/11

**6. Write an annotated bibliography (SA 3).** Once you've narrowed down your research to a handful of relevant sources, you'll write an annotated bibliography that will summarize and critically assess these sources.

Assignment E  
Bring 5 copies on 7/12

**7. Workshop your introduction.** You'll begin writing your paper by drafting an introduction that includes your claim, and we'll peer review this.

MP 1  
Due to Dropbox on 7/19

**8. Draft Major Assignment 1.** All of the above steps will prepare you to write a 5-7 page academic argument.

SA 4  
Due to Dropbox on 7/21

**9. Reflect on your research process (SA 4).** After you've finished drafting your paper, you'll reflect on how your ideas developed and changed as you moved through the research and writing process.

# Research Questions

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There are several advantages to framing your research topic as a question:

**1. Questions require answers.** A topic is hard to cover completely because it typically encompasses too many related issues, and researching a topic often leads to a report rather than an argument. A question, however, has an answer, even if that answer is ambiguous or controversial.

**2. Questions give you a way of evaluating the evidence.** A clearly stated question helps you decide which information will be useful. A broad topic may tempt you to stash away information that may be helpful, but you're not sure how. A question also makes it easier to know when you have enough information to stop your research and draft an answer.

**3. A clear open-ended question calls for real research and thinking.** Asking a question with no direct answer makes research and writing more meaningful to both you and your audience. Assuming that your research may solve significant problems or expand the knowledge base of a discipline involves you in more meaningful activity of community and scholarship.

With this in mind, the question that motivates your Major Assignment 1 needs to have three qualities:

**Researchable.** Your question needs to be something that can be addressed using multiple sources. Often a question that is not researchable can be made researchable by broadening it, narrowing it, or rephrasing it.

**Open-ended.** Your question shouldn't have a single answer, since a question with a single answer will not be able to produce an argument. True inquiry begins with a question that interests you and that you don't yet have an answer for.

**Appropriately narrow.** You'll need to narrow down your topic so that you can thoroughly address it in 5-7 pages. Of course, it's also possible to make the question so narrow that there's very little to say about it. In this case, you'll need to open up the question more.

**Narrow by time:** from 1900-1950, since 1980, today, etc.

**Narrow by context:** country, city, economic system, political system, language, etc.

**Narrow by population:** nationality, ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality, educational level, occupation, etc.

**Narrow by viewpoint:** Social, legal, medical, ethical, biological, psychological, economic, political, philosophical, etc.

*Adapted from the UW Libraries*

## D: Issues/Questions Worksheet

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### How to use this worksheet:

Because you will probably need to add, delete, erase, and start again as you work through the process of turning a topic into a researchable, open-ended, narrow question, I'd like you to answer the questions below on a separate sheet of paper. You can type or write by hand, but the important part is to document the thinking and re-thinking you do.

Please turn in all of your work—including false starts and discarded ideas—when you come to class on Thursday. (I will glance at it to get a sense of your topic and make sure you're on the right track, but this worksheet won't be graded.)

Your worksheet should end with a researchable, open-ended, appropriately narrow question that you can discuss with your peers. We'll be workshoping your research question in Thursday's class, so please also come prepared to discuss your topic, including your ideas and your questions or concerns.

### Questions:

- What ideas from Lethem's essay interest you the most, and why? (Please write a few sentences to answer this question.)
- List some possible topics related to the ideas described above.
- Now, choose one topic and describe your interest in this topic ("I am interested in \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_").
- What aspects of this topic are open to dispute? List or explain these.
- Formulate your topic as a question.
- Is this question researchable? If not, try to rephrase, or return to an earlier part of this worksheet and try again.
- Is this question open-ended? If not, try to rephrase, or return to an earlier part of this worksheet and try again.
- Is this question narrow enough to tackle in 5-7 pages? If not, brainstorm some ways of limiting the question and try again.

Answers to these questions are due in class on Thursday, June 30.

## F: Research Log

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### Why use a research log?

Many student researchers, because they are overwhelmed by the complexities of the research process and the amount of available information, simply use the first few sources that they find (often using Google).

A more productive way of researching involves casting a wide net, recording relevant sources whether or not you are sure you will cite them in your paper. This way you will be able to find them again, select which ones are most appropriate, and properly cite them.

### Your task

Along with this packet, you should have received a research log worksheet that has space for recording sources that you consult. **Your task is to record at least eight sources that, at least initially, seem appropriate and relevant to your project.** (If they aren't, you should include that information in your description.)

If, after recording eight sources, you still haven't found four that you think you could use in a paper, please keep researching and recording until you have.

Your completed Research Log is due in class on Thursday, July 21 (so you can use it as evidence for SA 4), but it will need to be completed before you can do SA 3: Annotated Bibliography.

## Annotated Bibliographies and Citation

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### Bibliographic information and citation style:

**A bibliography is a list of sources that you've used for researching a topic.** You're probably already familiar with the idea of a bibliography if you've had to write a "works cited" page at the end of a paper. It's important to include all of the bibliographic information about your source so that someone else could find that source if they wanted to consult it.

**In the discipline of English, bibliographies are often done in MLA citation style.** The purple MLA citation sheet from the UW libraries includes basic information about how to cite using MLA, and you can find more resources on our course website.

As a class, we'll practice by citing Letham's essay in MLA format in the space below:

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### Annotated bibliography purpose and conventions:

An annotated bibliography entry can serve as a way for you to document and begin engaging with your sources. It can also be a way of sharing your research with others who are working on a similar topic.

An annotated bibliography always includes a summary of the source, and it can also offer an assessment of the source and/or a reflection on how the source fits into your research. Annotations can be a few sentences to a page long, depending on the purpose for the bibliography. For this assignment, you'll first summarize and then reflect:

**Summarize:** Explain what type of source this is (book, journal, website, periodical, artwork, flyer, etc.), what topics it covers, and what arguments it makes. Your summary will vary depending on the type of source you're summarizing.

**Reflect:** Once you've summarized and assessed a source, you'll reflect on how it fits into your research. Some questions to consider include: Was this source helpful to you? How does it help you shape your argument? How can you use this source in your research project? Has it changed how you think about your topic? Do you agree or disagree with its main argument?

## Short Assignment 3: Annotated Bibliography

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### Your task:

Compile an annotated bibliography of four sources from your research log that you think will be most useful in writing Major Assignment 1.

Each entry should be 150-200 words long, in MLA style, and should involve a paragraph of summary and a paragraph of assessment and reflection. (See "Annotated Bibliographies and Citation" for details.)

Four entries, 150-200 words each. Due to the Dropbox by 1:00 pm on Monday, July 11.

## E: Introduction for Peer Review

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### Your task:

Draft the introduction to your Major Assignment 1, including context and a complex claim that conveys the main argument your paper will make. **Bring five copies to class for peer review, with your student number printed at the top rather than your name.**

### Your task:

Because the introduction to an academic argument paper should contain the context and overview of the entire argument, we'll peer review the introductions for MA 1 as a way of peer reviewing the paper's main ideas.

In our last workshop on research questions, we focused on conversation and collaborative brainstorming. For this workshop, we'll be submitting papers blindly—without names. This will challenge you as a writer to draft an introduction that has all the necessary information that would allow a reader to understand it even if you weren't present to explain it.

One paragraph (approximately one page). Five copies due in class on Tuesday, July 12.

## Short Assignment 4: Research Narrative

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Your task:

**Write a 3-4 page research narrative that analyzes your research process**, beginning with the initial brainstorming and ending with the draft of MA 1. The goal of this paper is metacognition and self-analysis, so you should focus on a few key insights or important parts of the research process. You don't need to describe every step of the process in detail.

Your Research Log will be submitted in class on the same day your Research Narrative is due, so you can refer to your Research Log as evidence for your

Some questions you might answer include:

- How did your topic change over the course of your research?
- What research strategies did you use? Which of them worked best, and why?
- How did this research experience compare with your past research experiences?
- How did you make the leap from research to writing?

3-4 double spaced pages. Due to the Dropbox by 1:00 pm on Thursday, July 21.