ASSIGNMENT SHEET

Essay #2: The Informative Essay

In your first essay for this course, you wrote about experiences from your own life, and the lasting impact that those experiences have on you today. Your next major writing project in this class asks you to combine personal experience obtained through observation and interviews, also known as primary research, with credible secondary sources such as those found in print or online.

Your subject should be an observable natural or social phenomenon. It's up to you to decide why the thing you choose to write about is significant. Don't be frightened by the concept of "phenomenon." For the purpose of this assignment we will use the term to mean "an observable event or occurrence which may be investigated through first and second-hand research." An issue such as pollution is too broad for this assignment, so think smaller. Often the most significant occurrences in nature and society are unassuming and go unnoticed by most people. In nature, it could be an invasive species in your local environment, signs of global warming, why leaves change colors, a spider web, or something recent such as the effects of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. In society, it can be texting, skating, the investigation of different habits (such as exercise or playing video games), and hosts of other activities people engage in. Make sure you pick a topic that you will feel comfortable sharing with your peers in class and online.

Your **purpose** for this assignment is to inform your readers about your particular topic through a combination of your own first-hand observations and interviews (primary research), and background information provided by outside sources (secondary research).

Your **audience** for this assignment is your classmates and your instructors. With this in mind, your research should present new and surprising information. If you're writing about a commonly unknown phenomenon, this shouldn't be a problem. However, if you decide to write about a well-known topic such as global warming or acid rain, your topic should include more recent or surprising information.

Unlike some informative essays that you may have had to write in the past, this is not to be an encyclopedic list of facts. If someone needed a complete overview of your topic, for example, they could just find that information on Wikipedia. Your audience, however, is not in a "need-to-know" situation; they are merely uninformed and curious. You should work with their curiosity to inform them and broaden their view of your topic. Also, keep in mind that this essay is informative, not argumentative. You are not arguing a local issue; you are simply surprising your readers with focused information. If you do encounter an arguable issue in your research, you can keep it for your final argumentative essay, however.

When developing your topic, ask yourself questions such as:
-What new and interesting things about nature or society can I show my readers?
-What interests *me* about this phenomenon?
-What might others not know and possibly find interesting or surprising?
-What common (and possibly incorrect) views do others hold about my topic?
-What interesting or surprising claim (thesis) might I make about this my topic?
-How much background information will my audience need?

Form:

A scientific report differs from other styles of informative essay in that it is divided into the following sections: Introduction, Method, Results, Discussion, References, and Appendices. These categories are clearly marked by the aforementioned headings.

1. INTRODUCTION: Explains the phenomenon to be investigated. Why is this event or occurrence interesting? How are you empirically testing your issue? Have you found any sources where this phenomenon was tested before? What do you expect to find? (i.e. What is your hypothesis?)

2. METHOD: In this section you will describe how the study was done. Did you use questionnaires? Personal interviews? Did you go out and do field observations? Here you will clearly document each step of your research. It is an important aspect of a scientific paper that your research can be replicated in order to be considered valid.

3. RESULTS: This section explains the results of your observations. Any charts or graphs you produce about your research may be included here if they are small. Long tables of data should be attached at the end in an appendix.

4. DISCUSSION: Here you will analyze your results and draw conclusions. Did anything surprise you? What are the causes and consequences of your findings? Where could further research be done in the future?

5. REFERENCES: This is your list of primary and secondary sources, cited in APA format. For more information on APA formatting see *Allyn and Bacon* pages 783-784. Your sources must be in alphabetical order and include all necessary information for future researchers to locate your source.

6. APPENDIX: (at the end of the paper) This database includes all of your research materials, such as questionnaires, personal interview transcripts, or large tables of data. Any other data you collected should be attached here.

Research requirements:
-For social phenomena: Two interviews (which can be done together), and observation for context
-For natural phenomena: Detailed observations and an interview, if possible
-At least two secondary sources from the FIU Library (this includes material accessed via the Library's online databases). After you've used two FIU-Library-based sources, you can use other secondary sources, such as those found on the Internet.

Essay Requirements:
Your final draft should be 1500-2000 words. As always, your essay should be typed and double-spaced in 12-point, Times New Roman font. Your essay should also include a works cited page and should adhere to correct MLA style, which we will discuss throughout this unit.
Your works cited page does not count toward the 1500-word minimum word count for this essay.

Grading criteria:
A good response to this assignment will do most or all of the following:
-Focus on the rhetorical purpose of expanding the reader's knowledge by presenting new and possibly surprising information
-Use conventions of both open- and closed-form prose as they apply within the genre of scientific research.
-Supply evidence derived from observation, interviews, and secondary research
-Incorporate evidence logically through a combination of quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing
-Use specific, concrete language and pay attention to word choice
-Be clearly and logically organized around a specific thesis or main idea
-Employ style and tone appropriate to the material being covered
-Be grammatically and mechanically correct
-Cite sources correctly both within the text and in a works cited page
-Show evidence of an effective writing process that includes invention, drafting, revision, and proofreading