Overview

1600+ words, MLA format, 4+ sources

First, reflect on your own education and learn something about what it is America is teaching in public high schools. Then, choose an event, skill, or content area you think should be taught in public high schools that is not currently taught (or a change in the way schools are currently run/taught) AND identify what cultural problem will be addressed by teaching this in schools. You will then write a research-based, argumentative essay. Your essay will address both the cultural problem and how your proposed change will address it.

The Process

1. **Start with some inquiry.** Go to the content area on d2l for the Re-Education essay and explore. These links are meant to be resources for your exploration and discovery. Some of us have a very clear idea of what we wish we would have learned in high school but did not, but others of us aren’t quite sure what was missing, so these links are simply a place to start. Some are humorous and approach the topic from a satirical point of view, and others are more serious. Let your curiosity be your guide and give yourself time to explore.
   - Please share what you find. There is a discussion board for you to share resources and links with each other on your search. Everyone should post at least two things you find that are of interest to you and/or may be of interest to your peers as things lacking in high schools currently. I will visit the discussion board and might borrow from it to bolster my resource list in future semesters. Don’t just cut and paste links—describe what you found and tell us why it is interesting. (Due dates for this on calendar.)

2. Once you select a topic we’ll begin to **collect and synthesize academic & credible sources.** We will go through the entire research process step-by-step in class, we’ll learn about the library’s many resources, and you will workshop your sources and works cited page in small groups during class time. There will be additional resources for finding credible sources in the d2l content area after we discuss them in class, so you are not alone in this process.

3. Then, you will outline, write, and revise your essay and works cited, using MLA citation style to cite your sources. A **correctly formatted Works Cited page** is worth 75 total homework points in addition to the essay’s 100 essay points and will be workshopped and graded separately. The Works Cited points are dispersed 25 for the rough draft and 50 for the final draft. The structure of the overall essay will vary per topic, but about 2/5 of essay should establish the cultural problem and 3/5 of the essay should show how what you propose will address this problem.

4. **Final drafts of essays,** after working through all of the steps per the course calendar, will be saved as doc/docx/pdf files and uploaded to the “Research Essay: Re-Education” Dropbox folder by the due date. These essays should be **1600 word+ in MLA format with complete works cited page as the last page of the essay.** Further criteria and advice are listed below.
Choosing a Topic

Your topic might be general at first, but your research paper needs a focused topic and argument. For instance, your topic might begin generally as sex education, but your working thesis statement for your essay might evolve into something more specific.

General premise: It is a basic human right to understand the biology and physiology of one’s own body. Sex education is important.

Specific thesis statement: It is the job of public schools to offer comprehensive and scientifically factual sex education to all teens age 10 and above, as it’s their responsibility to remove morality, judgment and shame from this curriculum.

Not only is this thesis specific & arguable, which is what you want in a research essay, but it lends itself to be supported by the kinds of data one will find when looking in the online research databases.

Process and Requirements

1. Pick a subject you are curious about, because you will spend a lot of time with it.

2. Your ideas might very well evolve as you move through the research, so keep an open mind as you explore various sources. I don’t recommend changing your topic in the middle of the process, but you can certainly change your stance or argument on your topic during your writing process.

3. Check your topic with Cherri early in the process to make sure you’re on a productive path. This is key for your success. It’s always okay to email her your thesis statement and query questions. Let me help you at the beginning of the process to save you hours of researching in the wrong direction.

4. Your research should be scholarly/academic/credible. Make time go to the library. I can’t stress this enough! I highly recommend you meet with one of the research librarians or ask questions of them via email (or ARCs chat function). Students almost always report positive experiences when they consult the librarians in person.

5. You must reference scholarly/academic/credible sources and provide accurate citations to pass this assignment. (The main reasons students fail this essay: too much summary; no argument; not enough academic/peer reviewed research. If your topic doesn’t have any academic/peer research, find a new topic.)

The essay should reference at least four distinct sources; at least two of these need to be scholarly articles from academic, peer reviewed journals; and the bulk of your argument should be based on those academic sources. You will access these in the library databases (even if you first learned of them on google scholar). If you do not have at least two scholarly articles, your essay is not passing. However, you do not need more than seven total sources for this essay.

Any additional sources you use can be from: scholarly articles, online articles, books, websites w/ depth and credibility, movies, interviews, etc. (Sites like ehow...
and about.com and articles.com, and wikis etc. do not count as sources for our purposes here, nor do sites like livestrong and webMD or sites with a clear bias towards non-science like Focus on the Family, etc. You can certainly go to these sites at the beginning of your research, for ideas and terminology, but you need to move beyond them to credible, primary, and scholarly sources through the research process.)

6. Google scholar is a great starting place, but since you are likely not a subscriber to the journals publishing the articles you find on google scholar, you can’t access the article through it and will thus get stuck at a paywall. Take the citation you get from google scholar and find that article in the library databases.

7. How do you know if a source is credible? Evaluate it. Remember, the burden to prove something true or false on the internet is always on the reader; you can fact check and verify any information you find. Learn more about credibility and source evaluation in the d2l content module. This handy checklist for determining the credibility of sources, which is also linked in the module and the website, is the place to start, but it is not the only step in the process. There are many more links on cherriporter.com/resources.html.

8. Essays must contain a clear, arguable thesis, and well-documented, organized support. Draft, peer workshop, and revise your essay multiple times for the best product.

9. MLA formatting, MLA in-text citations, and an MLA works cited page required. Points will be subtracted for failing to use MLA conventions. Don’t use Easybib or Citation machine to do your works cited because it almost always contains errors. If you must use a web engine to format for you, I recommend Noodle Tools or KnightCite. Whichever engine you choose, you must double check the final results before printing. There is more than one MLA style guide posted to cherriporter.com/resources.html for your reference.

10. Please avoid abstractions like "less hate" or "more love," “be nice,” etc. These might make a positive change in the future or be good things to learn about in school, but they are not specific and quantifiable. Keep this essay focused on a topic that you actually can support with science and research published in creditable sources.

11. Banned topics include bullying and anything to do with obesity prevention. If you want to write about nutrition, mental health, fitness, etc., you absolutely can, but your reasons need to be more diverse than putting an end to bullying or fighting obesity.

12. All of the links on the website and d2l ARE YOUR TEXTBOOK. If you are confused or frustrated about what to do during this process it is likely you’re not doing the background reading required of you. This essay will take time and patience.