

# MMW Transfer Student Survival Guide

The following WILL happen during the course of the quarter:

You will be sitting in section, furiously taking notes (of course) and your TA will explain a part of the writing assignment by saying : “Remember! The next part of the writing assignment is due two weeks from now in section. You’ve all seen this before, so make sure you remember everything, and good luck!” The wheels will begin to turn in your head until it becomes apparent that that was, in fact, the explanation of the assignment. You have missed something. It feels like no one else has. Welcome to life as a transfer student.

Don’t panic – you now have this packet. You can turn to these pages and figure out what you’re expected to do and how you can do it well. The goal of this packet is to give you a detailed explanation of what each particular writing assignment is and how to complete it properly, as well as an explanation of the specific vocabulary that pops up in MMW lectures, sections, and writing assignments. The students who took MMW 1-3 last year have already absorbed this information, but, don’t worry, that doesn’t mean that they have retained it all. We promise – nothing is too complicated, and everything can and will get done!

*(revised 10/01/07)*

## I. THE WRITING ASSIGNMENT

In MMW 4 you will develop an 8–10 page research paper on the topic outlined in the **Writing Assignment**. However, the process of writing this paper will be split into three stages: The Research Question and Annotated Bibliography (RQAB), the Prospectus, and the Final Paper. Each of these parts of the assignment is explained below. There are three **MUST-SEE** items that you should know about as you work through all stages of the assignment, and all of them are on the MMW website, along with the Writing Assignment itself and all sorts of other useful information:

[http://provost.ucsd.edu/roosevelt/mmw\\_core\\_courses/index.shtml](http://provost.ucsd.edu/roosevelt/mmw_core_courses/index.shtml)

### Model Assignments

As you set about working on each stage of the writing assignment, the model assignments provide you with a good, clear example of each assignment – with all of the proper information, formatting, etc. **Make absolutely sure that you look at the Model Assignment before you begin.** It is also a good idea to look again before you turn in your assignment. Ask yourself - “Does my assignment look reasonably close to this model?”

### Grading Checklists

Also posted on the website will be a “Grading Checklist” for each assignment. This is **the exact form that your TAs will use in grading your assignment.** It provides an excellent checklist for you to go over and make sure that your assignment contains all of the specific components that it must in order to be complete.

Grading is done in two ways – part of it is qualitative (the TA’s evaluation of the quality and clarity of your work), but all TAs also have a set of “**standard deductions,**” which are automatic grade penalties for assignments that do not have all of the required elements (everything on the checklists and described in the assignment) or that have errors in formatting, improper citation, etc., according to the rules laid out in the **Style Sheet** (see below). This means that if your paper is of excellent quality but does not have all of the required parts, has formatting errors, etc., the ceiling (the highest grade you could possibly receive) will automatically drop. Therefore, the easiest way to ensure the highest grade possible is simply to read the checklists and meet the requirements of the Style Sheet.

### Style Sheet

The Style Sheet is very important, as it explains the formatting and stylistic requirements that every assignment for MMW must meet. These requirements include proper heading, spacing, font, works cited format, and other elements. It also explains the late paper policy. If you do not follow the Style Sheet correctly, your grade will be lowered – no exceptions.

## Research Question and Annotated Bibliography (RQAB)

The RQAB assignment has two essential parts – the first is the development of your research question, and the second is the annotated bibliography.

1) The research question is the specific question that your paper will address. The writing assignment determines the parameters for the question, and the TA should discuss and explain it in section. Your paper must answer a research question that is approved by your TA. The criteria for approval are listed in detail on the Grading Checklist. You need a question that meets the specifics of the prompt and is narrow enough in scope to be managed in an 8-10 page paper. The question must be one that could be answered in more than one way; the core of your paper will be an argument supporting one of those answers.

MMW distinguishes four types or levels of questions:

- Level 1: Questions that can be answered with knowledge you have right now.  
*e.g. - When did Columbus make his first journey to the new world?*
- Level 2: Questions that can be answered definitively with scholarly research.  
*When and how did the Roman Catholic Church determine that the pope is infallible on matters of faith and morals?*
- Level 3: Open-ended questions to which an answer can be proposed based on scholarly research, but that cannot be answered definitively.**  
*What factors most significantly caused the massacres of non-Christians during the establishment of the Crusader States in Palestine at the end of the 11th century?*
- Level 4: Questions that cannot be addressed with scholarly research, either because of a lack of evidence or because they ask something that cannot be answered by citing evidence.  
*Was Cortes an incarnation of the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl?*

Appropriate research questions for MMW papers are **level 3 questions**. These are *questions for which arguments supported by evidence can be made for a particular answer, but to which there is no single correct answer*. What you will be attempting to find in your research is a scholarly debate which advances evidence and arguments for various responses to your research question, from which you will shape your **thesis** and **counterargument** (see “Prospectus” below).

In your RQAB assignment you should explain in a paragraph or two what the topic for your paper will be, including what time period and geographic area you think you will be focusing on, and you should state explicitly what your research question is.

2) The second part of the RQAB assignment is the annotated bibliography(AB). The AB provides a full and correct bibliographic entry for each of your six sources (5 secondary, including one article from a scholarly journal, and one primary source) according to proper MLA format. For the MLA guidelines see the section in Ann Raimés’, *Keys for Writers (KW)* and the **Sample Research Question and Annotated Bibliography** on the MMW website. The AB also provides a 1-2 paragraph section in which you evaluate each source in the context of your

particular topic and research question. This should include a **summary of information provided by the source, a description of arguments made by the author that could contribute to forming responses to your research question, and an explanation of why the source seems as if it will be useful in the forming of your thesis or counterargument and the writing of your prospectus and paper.**

### Sources

What you are looking for in evaluating sources is the quality of information presented on the topic and its suitability to your particular question. You want information and arguments from scholars that will lead to **debate** over the answer to your research question. **Books published by scholarly presses are best (University of Oxford Press, University of Chicago Press, etc.), and, usually, the more recent the publication the better.** Most scholarly journals are published by academic societies, such as the American Political Science Association or the American Historical Association, or by a university. If you need help finding sources, especially journal articles, ask a librarian or attend a library orientation at CLICS.

*\*NOTE: CLICS Library also has a special MMW website:*

<http://clics.ucsd.edu/instruction/mmw/index.html>

*This website has information on how to find sources specifically for MMW writing assignments and how to navigate the various search services that the library system offers.*

### Question Approval

It is extremely rare that you will receive full approval of your research question when you first propose it. It is likely that you will need to continue to refine your question, change its focus, or perhaps even change your entire topic, before it meets the specific requirements of the prompt and is the kind of question that will produce a paper of 8-10 pages. Your graded RQAB should provide the jumping-off point for that refining process. The next official chance you will have to re-submit your question will be the prospectus, but if you are unsure about how to proceed you should discuss the issues with your TA in section, in office hours, or (if encouraged by your TA) by e-mail while you work on your prospectus. The sooner you get your question approved, the sooner you can confidently proceed on to the next phase: doing the focused research necessary to answer your question and formulating your answer (your **thesis**), developing your **counterargument**, and organizing your evidence.

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### Prospectus and Final Paper

The prospectus is the probably the most important, and often the most difficult, portion of the writing assignment. Its purpose is to begin organizing your research into the proper format, to begin formulating your thesis, counterargument, and rebuttal, and to begin planning how you will be using your sources to supply evidence along the way.

The prospectus is essentially a plan for your final paper and contains, in paragraph form, all of the elements of the paper. Indeed, the **Grading Checklist** for the prospectus is identical to that of the final paper. The **Writing Guidelines** (below) should be kept in mind as you work on both, but first there are some issues specific to the transition from RQAB to prospectus that you should be aware of:

### **Prospectus Worksheet**

If you are having difficulty planning your prospectus there is a **Prospectus Worksheet** specifically designed to help you. This worksheet is a very clear, “Mad Libs” style template to help you understand what information your prospectus should present.

### **Counterargument/Alternative Hypothesis**

A **counterargument** is an argument that supports an answer to your question different from the one you will make an argument for. As such, it attempts to refute your thesis—i.e. your answer to the question. An “**alternative hypothesis**” (you may also hear this term used) is simply an alternative answer to your research question. For MMW4 you will be presenting a counterargument, which means that (if it is not obvious) you must explain why and how the counterargument you present contradicts, or conflicts with, your own thesis. The thesis that you present will be your opinion as to the best answer to your research question, and the **counterargument** will present another valid opinion supported by evidence. The counterargument is not just another possible answer; it is one that someone has or could make a reasonably strong argument for. The counterargument shows that you have considered opinions other than your own in the process of answering your question, and it engages scholars whose opinions may differ from your own.

### **Rebuttal**

Because you are presenting another viable answer to your thesis in your paper, you must also include a rebuttal that explains how and why your thesis is superior to the counterargument that you have presented. In your prospectus you should explain specifically what you think your counterargument and rebuttal will be.

### **Works Cited Page and Sources**

For the prospectus and paper you must **convert your annotated bibliography into a Works Cited Page**. Your Works Cited Page lists the proper bibliographical information (according to MLA guidelines) for all of the sources that are cited in your prospectus (and, later, in your paper). In order to count as sources and be included in your Works Cited Page you must **cite** each of your 6 sources somewhere in your prospectus (or paper). Again, the proper format is outlined in the *Keys for Writers* and there is a **Sample Works Cited Page** available on the MMW website.

**Note:** The requirements for sources used in the prospectus and paper are the same as those cited in the Annotated Bibliography (see above), but as you will have developed your Research Question you may use sources different from the ones you cited earlier. This is to be expected. You do NOT have to complete an annotated bibliography for new sources that were not in your RQAB.

### **Explanation of Significance**

MMW also requires that you explain the significance of your argument - *how it modifies or contributes to current thinking on the topic*. This does NOT mean that you have to offer an explanation of why it is important to write about your given topic (“it is important to write about the fall of Rome because it is important, and it still impacts our lives today”)... it is taken as a given that your topic is worth investigating, and a defense of it is either patronizingly obvious or plays the part of the “lady that doth protest too much.” What you need to explain is how your paper – whether it be by its unique angle of approaching the topic, the combination of sources and scholars that you have analyzed, the way you have used or interpreted the evidence, the creativity of your particular argument, etc. – makes a significant contribution to scholarship on the topic. Be confident! This does not have to be particularly long or involved (usually it is only a few sentences), but it is your chance to stake your claim as a scholar who has done good research!

## II. PAPER WRITING GUIDELINES

One of the common difficulties transfer students have is adjusting to the specific way in which the MMW program is asking them to write. The following is a list of guidelines for the construction of a scholarly essay, **based specifically on what we in MMW are asking you to do**. It is intended as a basic guide for planning, organizing, and formatting your writing. Some of the information may seem extremely basic, but this is because MMW is asking you to write in a very specific way which may be different than the way(s) that you have been taught in high school or in other college and university courses.

The goal of the MMW writing program is to teach students to think and write critically and to be able to construct a scholarly essay of the highest quality – something that is accessible and understandable to scholars in almost any academic setting. Your goal in writing it is to make an *argument* - convince the reader, with data and scholarly support, that your thesis is the best possible answer to the research question that you are investigating. The format may seem formulaic, but this is because it is necessary for people in a wide variety of disciplines to have a set of common expectations when they engage in scholarly dialogue and debate.

### Overall paper organization

The two most common schemes for organizing papers are:

#### Scheme A

Intro. [Historical background, explanation of controversy/ research question, statement of thesis and counterargument]  
Counterargument  
Rebuttal  
Argument\*  
Conclusion (including Explanation of Significance)

#### Scheme B

Intro. [Historical background, explanation of controversy/ research question, statement of thesis and counterargument]  
Argument\*  
Counterargument  
Rebuttal  
Conclusion (including Explanation of Significance)

*Note: Of course, these schemes are only models and may not suit every paper. Also, obviously, the different sections will not be given equal length or development.*

\*It may be helpful, if you have a relatively complicated thesis and argument or one that attempts to synthesize a number of different kinds of evidence, to include a paragraph before your “Argument” section that outlines those steps and explains how they all add up, a sort of mini-introduction specifically to your argument. (i.e. a summary of all of the “claims” that constitute your argument, all of which will be dealt with in individual paragraphs/sections of your argument section itself). This paragraph also serves as a natural transition between your Rebuttal and Argument (Scheme A) or your Introduction and Argument (Scheme B).

## Outlining Your Argument

Once you have a question and a thesis, you should try to map out exactly how your essay is going to progress. You have a thesis and a lot of related data, but how to present it all? You need to determine what step-by-step claims you need to prove in order to build an argument for your thesis as a whole. Your thesis is an argument in favor of a particular answer to your research question, but that argument should have several logical steps, and it may require you to provide evidence that several different things were all happening in conjunction. Logic is your friend. You want to organize your data around small, manageable claims that can be individually supported by evidence and that work together to make the argument for your thesis as a whole. Each of these claims should be developed in its own paragraph, with the topic sentence of the paragraph being a statement of the claim.

Thesis.

Claim 1 +

Claim 2 +

Claim 3, etc.

You need to make sure that you have included all parts of your thesis and that you have arranged the parts in a logical order. This will make transitions from paragraph to paragraph easy for you and clear to your reader. It will also provide the structure for the body of your paper as a whole. Your **topic sentences** should introduce the claim that each paragraph will deal with and should explain the relationship of that claim to your overall thesis argument if it is not clear.

*\*Note: You should be able to pull out your topic sentences and get a reasonable summary of your entire paper (it is not a bad idea actually to do this as a test).*

## Writing Main Paragraphs

If your overall organization is clear and sensible, each paragraph should be devoted to providing and explaining evidence. Break down and explain each claim, and supply the proper evidence (facts, quotations, interpretation of sources etc.) to support each claim. Make sure all evidence is directly related to your claim and that you fully explain the connection (i.e. why or how the quotation or data that you cite support the validity of your claim). It is okay to proceed according to a formulaic method of organization for your writing, i.e.:

Claim 1/ Topic sentence.

Introduce evidence 1.

Give evidence 1.

Explain how evidence 1 proves claim 1.

Introduce evidence 2.

Give evidence 2.

Explain how evidence 2 proves claim 1.

(Rinse, Repeat.)

This approach makes a clear paragraph – evidence clearly related to and organized around your claim, which itself contributes to proving your thesis. For each paragraph, change claim and evidence; repeat the process through to the conclusion of the paper. The most common problem that students have with evidence is that evidence (a quotation, a set of facts, etc) is cited but not explained. The other common problem is that they throw in extraneous evidence. The model above should help you avoid both of those issues.

## Counterargument and Rebuttal

Counterargument:

1. Introduce the counterargument and explain why or how it counters your thesis argument.
2. Provide evidence and explanation for the validity of the counterargument, just as you do for your own argument.

The stronger your counterargument appears, the stronger your argument will be when you rebut it. Do not be afraid to introduce the counterargument directly. i.e.: “It could be argued that...,” or “An alternative argument about [the topic] is that...,” or “[Scholar x] suggests a different answer to the question...”

Rebuttal:

1. Directly address your counterargument, and explain how it is flawed or problematic.
2. Give evidence as to why it is flawed, and explain why the evidence proves your claim. (This explanation will often take the form of a critique of the evidence used to support the counterargument.)
3. Explain why your thesis argument is better and why it fixes the “problems,” that the counterargument has.

Your rebuttal does not necessarily have to show that the counterargument is “wrong” – you can make the case that your argument is superior despite the fact that the counterargument has merit. **Arguments for rebuttal could include: that your research has considered different evidence that leads to a different and better answer to the question than the counterargument; that your argument relies on the work of better scholars than the counterargument does; that you combine or synthesize a number of viewpoints, while the counterargument represents only one view; that you approach the data from a different viewpoint etc.**

*\*\*Other ideas and tips for organizing paragraphs or arguments are on pp. 27-36 and pp. 51-70 of the Keys for Writers, which provides models.*

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## Other General Writing Tips and Common Errors

### Citations/Quotations:

- In text parenthetical citations should have the first word from your Works Cited entry (usually the author’s last name) and the page or line number(s). No commas, no “pg.,” no “lines.” Parenthetical citation should go outside the “\_,” but inside the period that ends the sentence or comma that ends the clause. So, a proper sentence and citation format would be:

Introduction to “...the quotation” (Euripides 120).

*\*Citations are discussed beginning on p. 151 of the KW*

- Remember that a quotation from a play or book is different from one from the introduction or notes if the introduction or notes are not written by the author of the book. This is common for works of literature. They get separate entries in the Works Cited page and are cited differently.

So, a proper citation credit from Woodruff's introduction to *Bacchae* would be: (Woodruff xii), not (Euripides xii). Works Cited info starts on p. 155 in the *KW*.

- When citing a lecture or section give the date in the citation where you would normally put the page or line number. I.e.: (Chodorow 10/1/2005). Remember to provide a full Works Cited entry for the lecture as well.

- When quoting less than four lines of poetry show line breaks with a / , e.g.:

The chorus confirms the correctness of Dionysus' actions, advising the people of Thebes to "[s]trike up the dance for Bacchus, / raise a cheer for the downfall / of serpent-spawn Pentheus" (Euripides 1153-5).

- When quoting a longer selection of poetry use the indented format normal for long passages but maintain the format of the original citation. If you are using six lines of the original, it should be six lines in your paper, without slashes but rather with each line as a separate line.

- **IMPORTANT:** In general, you should **quote less and paraphrase more** and summarize **less and explain more**. Sources must be cited regardless of whether you are quoting (pp. 137-143 of the *KW*), paraphrasing (135-137), or summarizing (134-135) the source. In other words, you can use part of a work as evidence without actually having to quote it directly, but you must cite where in the work the information or idea comes from that you are summarizing or the words that you are paraphrasing occur. To use quotations effectively they need to be introduced and explained, not summarized.

\* *SEE pp. 137-145 in KW on how to incorporate quotations into the grammar of your essay. Almost everyone has a problem with this. Direct quotations must be edited or cut so as to fit in seamlessly with the grammar of your own prose. This often includes changing pronouns or tense, and you must mark changed words or letters with brackets.*

### **Other:**

- Italicize or underline titles of books and works of literature

- Write using the **literary present tense**. This means that when you write an essay about a work use the present tense when talking about events in the work or when paraphrasing what the work says. In other words, when talking about *Bacchae* you would write:

“Pentheus tries to lock up the Maenads for participating in the Bacchic festival.”  
NOT

“Pentheus tried to lock up the Maenads for participating in the Bacchic festival.”

Similarly, you would write “Scholar X argues that...,” as opposed to “Scholar X argued that...”

\**see pp. 386-392 of the KW for more information on writing tense.*

## **FOLLOW THE STYLE SHEET**

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***If you have other questions or difficulties, don't hesitate to ask your TA! Also, keep your ears and eyes open for information on Transfer Writing Workshops for each assignment, and tutoring help when due date for the paper approaches.***

