The writing assignments in MMW 12 are designed to improve your writing skills and to promote your ability to engage with, understand, and make the course material your own. To this end, the structured, formal essays you write in MMW will be academic arguments that do the following:

- **Ask an open-ended, arguable question** about a significant issue or problem that can be answered by scholarship, but is open to interpretation and different views.
- **State an arguable thesis** that answers the question and presents an argument about why this answer is best.
- **Explore the significance** of your thesis by explaining how it clarifies or illuminates the topic.
- **Support** the thesis with **evidence** taken from lecture, section discussions, and readings, and make it clear how the evidence connects to the thesis.
- **Establish the historical and cultural contexts** of texts you use.
- **Consider the merits of at least one plausible counterargument** (an alternative interpretation of one or more pieces of evidence or a different characterization of the issue). Present the reasons that support the counterargument, and then offer your **rebuttal**: your reasons for believing that your own interpretation is better. (You don’t have to claim that your interpretation is “right” or “true”; you just have to persuade your readers that it is the strongest among competing views.)
- **Provide a title** that gives the reader direction and also provokes their interest. If often helps to write a provisional title and revise it after completing the essay. Sometimes it helps to write an evocative title and a subtitle that specifies the paper’s argument, or vice versa.
- **Follow the conventions of MLA format** for citing all ideas, information, and words that come from any outside source.

In MMW 12, we help build your skills in writing these academic arguments by taking you step by step through a series of assignments that become gradually more challenging. The hardest part is asking a good question (one that’s supportable with the material you have and specific enough that you can answer it in depth but open enough that it’s arguable); therefore, for the first assignment, we give you the question. Then in the next assignment, you ask your own question, but we keep the field of inquiry limited to a primary text. In the final assignment, you ask your own question, but the field of potential topics is broadened to a text, event, institution, or phenomenon produced by one of the cultures studied in the course, as specified by the assignment.

In MMW 12, we also help keep the work manageable by limiting the sources you can use. You can only use the assigned readings, lecture notes, and section discussions for MMW 12 essays. (You will do outside research in all your other MMW courses.) For all three assignments, you are to analyze course materials and write the paper without consulting any outside sources—not even to gather background information. If you do consult
outside sources, you will get an F on the assignment. If you use outside sources but do not cite them, you risk being charged with academic misconduct and receiving more severe penalties. If you feel you cannot do the assignment without consulting outside sources for background information, consult with your TA.

The goal is for you to engage with the material in your writing. To do so, you will need to study and annotate the texts you are using, spend time thinking and writing about the ideas, get feedback on drafts from others, and write at least 2 drafts. Give yourself time to cultivate the ideas and to revise.

For guidance on reading and writing academic arguments for MMW (and other courses), please consult A Writer’s Reference pp. 3-21, 28-32, 71-88, 89-113, 119-126.

For MMW-specific writing requirements and guidance, please use the following handouts posted on the MMW 12 website: “MMW Program Policies for Formatting, Documentation, Copies of Sources, Late Papers, Plagiarism” and the grading criteria and assignment sheet specific to each assignment.

Before turning in the final draft, please proofread your paper and correct all surface errors so that your paper reflects your best work. Not only will you catch errors that spell-check misses (or makes), but you will often catch other types of errors and awkward phrases, which you can then correct for a better paper and grade overall. You will usually see errors more easily if you print out your paper and proofread hard copy.

Note: You must complete all three writing assignments in order to pass MMW 12.

8%  PAPER #1
Write a scholarly argument that answers an open-ended, arguable question of interpretation about one or more of the primary texts assigned for the course. The Writing Program will assign the texts and question for each track.
LENGTH: 3-5 pages + Works Cited page
DUE: Tuesday, January 27, and Wednesday, January 28

12%  PAPER #2
Write a scholarly argument that asks and answers an open-ended, arguable question of your own about one of the primary texts assigned for the course. The Writing Program will assign the text for each track.
LENGTH: 3-5 pages + Works Cited page
DUE: Tuesday, February 17, and Wednesday, February 18

15%  PAPER #3
Write a scholarly argument that asks and answers an open-ended, arguable question of your own about an important text, event, institution, or phenomenon


produced by one of the cultures studied in the course. The Writing Program will specify the cultures for each track.

*Note: Before you write your paper, your TA must approve your topic. Paper topics must be submitted in writing no later than Friday, Feb. 28, and approved by your TA by March 3 or 4, depending on your section time.*

**LENGTH:** 5-7 pages + Works Cited Page

**DUE:** Tuesday, March 10, and Wednesday, March 11