

Analytical Essay (AE) MMW 121, Fall 2015

Page Length: 5-6 pages, not including Works Cited page
Value: 20% of course grade
Due date: Beginning of section during Week 10. After this time, late penalties will apply (see MMW Program Policies). Even with late penalties, your AE will not be accepted after the Final Exam, after which time it will be considered “not completed” and will result in a grade of F for the course. Any exception to this deadline must be approved with specific and legitimate documentation *in advance* by your TA.

Purpose

In the Comparative Source Analysis you just completed, you were introduced to two scholars' work on a common topic. You were asked to make observations about how these two sources relate to one another and to design a research question that both scholars answered in their work. In the third writing assignment, the Analytical Essay, you will craft a small independent research project on a topic of your own interest. This assignment will provide you with another opportunity to practice critical reading, summarization and paraphrasing skills, and research question design. Moreover, you will develop new skills to prepare you to write a full-length research paper next quarter in MMW 122. In this assignment you will:

- **Identify a research topic** of your choice (but related to class themes and within the period 3,000 BCE-1750 CE)
- **Complete the required Library Research On-line Module** during Week 7 and conduct independent research to identify scholarly articles of interest. Read as many of these articles as possible to **refine your topic** and pay attention to **conceptual problems** or questions that arise in your reading.
- **Design a Level-3 research question** that answers a conceptual problem that arises from your reading. Bring several sources (at least two), your completed “On-line Module Pre-Research Worksheet” and a working research question to the **mandatory Library Research Workshop** during Week 8 for help in finalizing your sources, **selecting two sources** for your paper and refining your Level-3 research question.
- **write an essay** that summarizes and analyzes these two sources and ultimately advances your argument (with a **thesis** statement) for the most convincing answer to your question. This essay should address all of the relevant components of argumentation required in MMW papers.

Steps of the Assignment:

Step 1 – Take required On-Line Pre-Research Module (link available on Ted site Saturday, November 7 – Sunday, November 15 at 11:59pm)

Start early to get the best results! This on-line module will show you how to use UCSD Library article databases to conduct your research for this paper. After completing the module, you will know how to search the UCSD databases to refine your topic and locate several relevant scholarly journal articles to bring to Library Research Workshop during Week 8. In order to attend the required workshop, you must complete the on-line module and the Pre-Research Worksheet located on the last slide of the module (that you will send by email to yourself as a receipt that you completed the module).

Step 2 - Research: From Topic to Question

Use the strategies learned in the On-Line Library Research Module to do your own independent research on a topic of your choice that relates to a theme of your course. An appropriate topic for this assignment is something that you want to know more about than you do now. A good topic and research question often emerges from what some scholars call “a mental itch” (something that piques your curiosity) or a conceptual problem (a contradiction or inconsistency that you observe). Narrow your topic to identify several academic sources and select those that provide different answers to an initial, working research question or different solutions to the problem you have identified. To make your research manageable for a five-to-six page paper, you must narrow your topic to a specific region, culture, and/or time period and to a specific problem that you have noticed in your reading. (For more help on selecting and narrowing a topic, see the “From Topics to Questions” chapter of *The Craft of Research* that is posted to your course Ted site.) After your research, go back to the On-Line Research Module and complete the Pre-Research Worksheet; you will email this Worksheet to yourself and print it. Print all relevant articles and the completed Pre-Research Worksheet to bring to the Library Research Workshop; you might also have a working research question in mind.

Note about Sources: The sources for this paper must be peer-reviewed sources published by academic presses. For an explanation of “scholarly, peer-reviewed sources,” see the Sources for MMW Research Papers posted to the MMW Website. While you *may* use class materials for additional evidence in your paper, the purpose of the assignment is for you to write an analytical essay that evaluates the arguments made in two secondary sources (and only these two) as they relate to your topic and research question and to advance your own position based on evidence in this scholarship.]

Step 3 – Refining your (Level-3) Research Question – Library Research Workshop, Week 8

With your sources and a working research question in hand, you will attend the mandatory Library Research Workshop where librarians will provide consultations to help you refine your research question and identify two sources that answer that question differently. The goal of the workshop is to finalize the two sources that you will analyze in your essay and to propose the research question they answer; your advanced preparation will make this goal possible.

Library Workshop times have been posted to the MMW Website or your course Ted site; you may attend only one workshop. In order to attend this required workshop, however, you must: 1) complete the on-line research module, 2) print and bring at least two sources to the Library Research Workshop, and 3) print and bring your completed “Pre-Research Worksheet.” You will not be admitted to a workshop without these. Space is limited to 32 students in each workshop, so please arrive early and attend a workshop early in the week, if possible.

The deduction for not attending the workshop is 1/3 letter grade.

Step 4 - Evaluate Scholarly Arguments

After you have identified at least two articles and refined your research question, you will evaluate the strength of the scholars’ arguments and consider how they provide plausible, but different answers to your question. To evaluate the authors’ arguments and advance a strong argument (your

thesis), you might find it helpful to annotate your selected sources in response to the following questions (as relevant):

- How many and what kinds of sources do the authors use? Do they contribute to or detract from the argument being made? How do the authors evaluate them? How do you evaluate them? Which evaluations are best?
- What questions are *not asked* by the authors? Are there areas or perspectives that are lacking?
- How much and how well are the authors' claims substantiated with evidence? Are some claims better supported than others; do authors offer more evidence for some claims than for others? If so, which ones?
- Does the evidence support the authors' stated theses, or does it actually support some other claim? Is there enough evidence? Strong enough evidence? What evidence is *not* included? Do you need more proof? What kind?
- How should you deal with opposing arguments, different points of view, or conflicting evidence (counter-arguments)? Can you explain these points of view? Can you provide a clear rebuttal of an opposing argument? Do your authors adequately address differing/opposing points of view or conflicting evidence? Or do they ignore them (leaving you wondering what others have found)?
- How representative are the examples your authors use to demonstrate their main points?
- How adequate are the authors' coverage of the subject? Do you detect faulty assumptions or personal biases, implicit or explicit?
- Overall, how persuasive do you find your authors' arguments? Based on your analysis of the argument's components, how well have they convinced you that their point of view is correct, or at least plausible?
- In order for your TA to evaluate *your argument*, how well have *you* done all of these things in writing *your* analytical essay?

Step 5 - Write your analytical essay

Please consult the Analytical Essay Grading Rubric to learn what is expected in a strong analytical essay. In five-to-six pages, you will answer your posed question with a thesis that you will support with an argument. Your analysis should include (not necessarily in this order):

- a **title** that captures the reader's attention and best reflects the content of your analytical essay
- an introduction to the subject that provides the **background information** necessary to situate the two sources in their historical context and to help the reader understand the conceptual problem that you have identified in your reading. In the introduction, briefly describe how the **conceptual problem** that you have observed has led you to your **research question**. State the research question explicitly.
- your **thesis**. This is *your* case for the best answer to your research question. You may discuss which of your two selected sources provides the most convincing argument or you may advance an original thesis based on your analysis of the two arguments you have selected. As you make your case (**your argument**), you will articulate, with **evidence** from the sources, why the position that you advance is the most convincing answer to your research question and the best solution to the problem. In doing so, you should also address, even rebut, relevant **counter-evidence or opposing/different points of view (counter-arguments)**. You may use course material as additional evidence if you'd like, but

the purpose of the assignment is for you to analyze the arguments made in the two secondary sources you have selected.

- an explanation of the **significance** of this question and your answer to the question for those of us studying the pre-modern world. A strong paper addresses significance throughout the paper, not just in a sentence in the conclusion.

Note: Direct Quotations and Citations: You may use direct quotations in this assignment, but please use them intentionally and sparingly. Cite paraphrased and quoted material appropriately. Include marked photocopies/printouts of all pages that you cite.

What to complete and submit:

- ___ Your five-to-six page Analytical Essay in MLA format
- ___ Labeled photocopies/printouts of title pages and all other pages from which you have cited material. On each page, you must mark the material cited by underlining or highlighting the text. You must also write the name of the author on the top of each page.
- ___ Works Cited Page in correct MLA format (if you cite class materials, you must include these)
- ___ Library Research Workshop Handout (given at completion of the Workshop)
- ___ Analytical Essay grading rubric
- ___ Same version of your Analytical Essay (excluding Works Cited page) to Turnitin.com by midnight of the day it is due in section

MMW Showcase:

Every year, in what we call the MMW Writing Showcase, the MMW Program honors the best papers written during the preceding academic year. TAs who teach MMW courses nominate students who have written papers that demonstrate excellent scholarship on important and intriguing topics and present clear and engaging writing. It is quite an accomplishment to be a Showcase nominee: of the more than four thousand papers written every year for MMW, fewer than one hundred are selected to be Showcase honorees. That's higher than the top 5% in any given MMW class. Showcase honorees each receive a certificate that expresses our admiration for their work and attests to their achievement and all honorees' papers will be recognized on our MMW Website. Writers of the top papers are invited to participate in Eleanor Roosevelt College's Undergraduate Research Conference each Spring. A writing award is a great item to add to a graduate school application or resume. We look forward to reading your excellent work!