

# Synthesis Essay

## Notes



### Overview

For this assignment, you will examine a current, specific, and debatable topic to explore and present to a specific audience.

### Length, Genre, and Audience

1250-1750-word **essay**, double spaced  
**plus** any images you choose to include  
Use 12-point font, 1-inch margins  
Audience & Style: **your choice**

### Due Dates

**PROPOSAL: M 10/21**

**FULL draft: M 11/11**

**FINAL draft: W 11/13**

**PORTFOLIO draft: M 12/2**





## Choose Your Topic

# 1

**Option 1: Investigate a theme that has emerged from our introduction to language politics.**

You could respond to one of the claims made in our texts, or research your own question (personal connections welcome) to share a new perspective not covered in the readings.

Or, consider language and literacy's relationship with one or more of these issues:

- identity, culture, and background; social and linguistic hierarchies; government, educational, and (socio)economic influences; public and cultural beliefs; family, personal, and other interpersonal dynamics and conflicts; accent politics; the dominance of standardized English; language suppression; colonization; race/racism.

# 2

**Option 2. Investigate any topic of your liking.**

While I encourage folks to seriously consider option 1, what's most important is that you choose a topic that genuinely interests you or that you are motivated to learn more about. This is why option 2 is available.

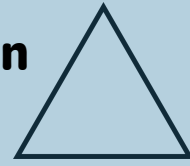
Your goal is to **get specific**: maybe you'll investigate the obstacles facing new immigrants from the Dominican Republic when learning English in ESL classes in NYC public schools, or examine the ways in which language and race play a role in hiring practices.



Whatever it is, **your topic must be controversial or debatable** in some way, allowing you to explore multiple perspectives and determine your own stance. While it's not necessary that you already have a strong stance on the issue, having background knowledge could help.



# Choose Your Rhetorical Situation



## 1. Who will be your intended audience?



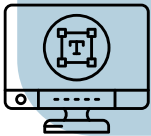
- Will they be your classmates and instructors? Friends or family? The general public? An academic crowd? Is your audience informed or uninformed about the topic? What are their interests and values? Are they likely to agree or disagree with your perspectives?

## 2. What will your purpose be? What is your goal? How much do you know?



- If you're not all that familiar with your topic, perhaps your purpose will be to **explore** the issue and to **inform** your audience what you find.
- If you're ready to take a strong stance on the topic, your purpose might be to **argue** your case, and you can decide whether to argue "gently" or "fiercely" depending on what your audience might find persuasive.

## 3. What will be your genre? Will you aim to meet or defy genre expectations?



- Will you go with a standard college essay? A public or online essay, like an op-ed? What are the expected conventions and will you conform to them?



## Choose Your Sources



Your essay must include **6-8 sources** comprised of the following:

- 1 **peer-reviewed** academic research article
- 1 **scholarly** source such as a chapter in a scholarly book, a scholarly website (.edu), or reference work (e.g., encyclopedia).
- 1-2 **non-scholarly** sources. Course texts welcome! Or, consider websites (public affairs, advocacy, government, commercial), statistics, essays and articles (newspaper, magazine, blog), press releases, & documentaries.
- 1-2 **multimedia** sources: video/movie clips, photographs, images, memes, (political) cartoons, sound bites, links, lyrics, Tweets, graphs, etc.

About **half** of the essay will be your **source work** (summary, paraphrase, and quotations). The **other half** will be your interpretations, ideas, examples, transitions, connection making, and claims about your source work.

Take careful notes on sources! Use **MLA, APA, or Chicago formatting** within the body of your essay and include a **Works Cited or Bibliography page**.



# Instructor's Learning Goals

## 1. Identify & Respond to a Specific Rhetorical Situation

How we communicate depends on our rhetorical situation—that is, the specific audience, purpose, and genre. Practice introducing your ideas and sources based on what you think would be most effective given your chosen rhetorical situation.

## 2. Integrate (and Synthesize Varying Perspectives from) Sources

- **Introduce** each source in your paper by providing a brief (1-3 sentence) **summary** of the rhetorical situation (the audience, genre, publication, purpose) and the overall argument.
- **Paraphrase** and **quote** key ideas/passages from sources to show specific perspectives.
- **Synthesize** the specific perspectives across texts, explicitly naming whether they support, extend, complicate, and/or challenge one another.

## 3. Emphasize Your Voice & Stance

Crafting your voice and stance is hard and requires risk-taking. Decide your tone and style. Draw on your different languages, literacies, and ways of being as you see fit.

Determine and make clear your stance (whether you lean to one side, see both sides, or are undecided). Make claims that are relevant, specific, qualified, and complicated.

## 4. Guide Your Audience Using “Signposts”

Provide “signposts” throughout your essay, aka topic sentences, transitions, and other “guiding” language aimed at helping your reader follow along and make sense of what connections exist between sources, ideas, examples, you, and your claims.

## 5. Carefully Edit and Format Your Essay

Editing and formatting essays is a major part of college writing. Choose a formatting style (MLA, APA, or Chicago) and practice using it. Also practice editing based on your language choices, common “errors,” and what your audience needs and expects.

## 6. Practice Specific College-Level Writing Goals

- Practice reflection and self-assessment (see Self-Assessment Prompt).
- Meet the assignment deadlines for rough and revised drafts.
- Meet the length and source use requirements.
- Participate in the peer review process and revise based on feedback.

# Your Learning Goals

**Identify 1-3 learning goals you want to set for yourself.**

By this point of the semester, your goals for writing and being a student may have shifted. Consider working on goals you've set but haven't yet achieved or maybe ditch that goal and shoot for something new. Maybe changing your process or changing how/where you work? Maybe you hope to share this essay with people you know or with a wider audience online?

Later, you will assess how well you have met the goals set by your instructor and by you.

Goal (What)	Rationale (Why)

