

CRTW 201 Fall 2009

**The "Big Paper" Assignment: A Researched, Thesis-Driven Critical Argument
Due in class and in Turnitin.com no later than 5 PM December 8**

Length: 8-10 pages exclusive of Works Cited or Bibliography

Required Documentation Style: MLA or whatever is required in your discipline** (If you are doing a different style of documentation, you MUST clear it with Dr. K in advance)

The big researched argument in CRTW 201 is your chance to demonstrate that you have mastered the skills and content of this course, so it weighs very heavily in the calculation of your final grade (25%). In it you should demonstrate the quality of your critical thinking, the depth and appropriateness of your critical reading, and the sophistication of your critical writing skills, as well as your demonstrated ability to use sources correctly. All of these factors will be weighed together in determining your grade on the project; I will in effect be performing a standards check on your final product as I assess its achievement.

The Task

You will choose a question at issue about the environment or environmentalism that is been raised in your mind by Wilson's *The Future of Life*. It may be a point he makes with which you agree or disagree, or it may be a whole new direction launched by your reading and thinking about the text. It must in some obvious way, however, be connected to Wilson's project; you cannot write about vegetarianism just "because Wilson made me think about animals." You could, however, look at how Americans' meat-heavy diets contribute to global warming. Confine yourself to topic ideas that connect with the concepts and assumptions of Wilson's book, please.

I am deliberately leaving the topic a little vague to allow you to create a space in which you feel free to argue; however, I will be asking you to clear the topic with me by November 9 so that we can be sure you have chosen a question of appropriate specificity and scale.

Your paper should take the shape of an inductive argument: pose a problem or question, let us see your thinking, and then make a pitch to solve your argument. Quite obviously *Writing Analytically* will be your best friend in helping you put this major paper together; use it liberally! You will be expected to:

- Define the Purpose and Question at Issue
- Identify Barriers, Establish Context, Recognize Point of View
- Gather Information (facts, claims, stances)
- Weigh Solutions (Test Implications, Consequences, Outcomes; Consider Concepts; Review Alternatives)
- Draw Conclusions, Interpretations, Decisions, Recommendations

A paper of 8-10 pages will need to be sustained at greater length than the kinds of arguments you may have written in WRIT 101 and GNED 102. We will spend some time in class in the next several weeks brainstorming how you would produce such a paper, what kinds of evidence and analysis is needed to support it, and where you might find the research.

As always, I encourage you to use the [Writing Center](#) and to bring drafts by my office to discuss them with me.

N.B. It will help if you finish reading the book before you pick a pitch. So get reading! →

Key Points

I encourage you to pick a question that you can engage with and that you feel you can write clearly and effectively about. You will be expected to figure out how this question is perceived by people in various disciplines and to bring to bear information from **mostly peer-reviewed sources, not just** Google and other Internet search engines, as you craft your solution. One of the criteria for your grade is the **quality** of your critical reading as evidenced in the research you present—so you will want to figure out **where** the best appropriate information is on your question and use it wisely. I will expect that **a significant majority** of your information come from peer-reviewed and/or disciplinary-acceptable sources. You may want to use sites like the Wikipedia for your own information, but **do not** rely on these for the **paper**.

Narrowing your topic will be key. "We need to develop renewable sources of energy" is going to be too vague and broad for your paper; "We need to put windmills on the Winthrop campus to power the blue security lights" is probably too narrow. But you'll need to be closer to the windmills thesis than to the vague thesis to make your paper successful.

You should envision this pitch being made to a **real audience**—one that I can identify from the strategies you use in your paper. **You may not use "The general public," "all interested people," "College students," or anything that vague as an audience.** Those strategies lead to failing papers.

Schedule

***Topic paragraph and bibliography e-mailed to Dr. K by Monday November 9 by noon.** This submission must include

- (1) the Q at I you intend to investigate in your individual large paper (it may not be a thesis statement yet but should be something that can lead to a pitch),
- (2) what specifically in Wilson has inspired the paper,
- (3) the kinds of disciplinary assumptions you are making about your Q at I,
- (4) your specific audience for this paper (a focused group of people who have a real interest in or can do something about your Q at I) and
- (5) a preliminary **annotated** bibliography of at least **eight** information sources you intend to consult (documented correctly in MLA or your disciplinary style).

****If you think you should use a different documentation style (e.g. APA or Chicago), talk to Dr. K before submitting this part of the assignment.** Annotations should be three or four sentences long for **each** work and should tell me basically what the source is about, why you think it is credible, and how you think it will be useful for your paper--in other words, it should be both **informative** and **evaluative**. Assume that you want **each entry** to be about 100-150 words, but they can go longer if you need to. You **must** use peer-reviewed sources from databases for this bibliography; no Google-type searching or Wikipedia material will be acceptable.

***Mandatory draft conference week of December 2 (you MUST have a COMPLETE rough draft for this conference!)**

***Final draft due at my office in hard copy AND in www.turnitin.com by Tuesday December 8 at 5 PM.** No extensions! (If the paper is NOT submitted to turnitin.com by that time it will not be graded.)

In rare instances (and I do mean *rare*) I may offer the opportunity to revise this paper, but that is at my discretion. Students who fail to bring a complete rough draft to their scheduled rough draft conference are **not eligible to submit a revision** of this paper.