Research Report

People sometimes think of researchers as extraordinarily intelligent people who wear lab coats and play with mysterious chemicals. However, all of us are researchers—to some extent. We often conduct research before making big decisions such as buying a new vehicle, moving to a new city, or accepting a new job. We also do informal research on a daily basis: investigating where we can get the best meals, checking out our options for entertainment, and inquiring about the requirements for a particular course or assignment. In academic settings, more formal types of research are important. This project is an adventure in research—not only in reading about others’ research, but also in trying your hand at a small research project of your own design. For this paper, you will conduct field research that uses primary sources to answer a question you have about writing or writers.

Goals: The main goals for this assignment are for you to learn more about:
• writing in academic situations in order to pursue your own answers to inquiry questions;
• designing, conducting, and presenting primary source research; and
• situating your writing within ongoing academic conversations.

Audience: Your primary audience is other CORE 120 students; you are to provide your classmates with a report on your research findings. You and I are also audiences for this writing-to-learn project. Finally, you may wish to submit a version of this paper to a research journal for undergraduates.

Procedures and Requirements: To compose your research report, complete the steps below. Keep all notes, research materials, and drafts of your work. You may collaborate on this project with a classmate from your section of CORE 120.

1. Choose a research question that you could answer through primary source research (e.g., through interviews, surveys, observation, or textual analysis). This question should be related to the literature review that you composed, as you will want to use those same scholarly sources to help you give a “They Say” context for the “I Say” research question and findings that you will present in this report.

2. Review your class notes on primary source research. Then write a research proposal in which you state your specific research question, discuss the significance of your question, indicate where and how you will collect data for your research, and explain how you will analyze the data that you collect. Include a draft of your informed consent form for human subjects as well as a draft of your research instruments (e.g., surveys, interview questions, protocols to guide your approach to observing writers or analyzing written work).

3. Conduct and document primary source research that works toward answering your research question. Follow your approved plan from step 2.

4. Meanwhile, review scholarly literature related to your topic in order to establish a scholarly context for your own research. Make notes about the ways that your research is informed by or builds on others’ work. Also note the ways that your research will extend or “fill in the gaps” in existing research on the topic. These notes will be helpful to you when you write the introduction to your research report, which should include a minimum of five scholarly sources. You are welcome to use sources that you included in your literature review paper; you may also “repurpose” excerpts of your literature review to include in this research report.
5. Study mentor texts to help you design the most appropriate structure and format for your report. Compose your research report: present the scholarly context, methods, observations/findings, discussion, and conclusions of your research. Use APA-style headings and documentation. The final draft should be at least 6 double-spaced pages of text and should meet the standards listed in the grading section below. The final draft of this paper is due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, April 17.

Workshop drafts: Meeting due dates for the workshop drafts is important for you and for your classmates who will be learning with you. Each time that you miss one of these deadlines or come unprepared for a workshop will result in a full-grade reduction from your score on the paper.

Grading: The Research Report is worth 20% of your final grade. A quality paper will:

- Thoughtfully and skillfully explore an important question about writers or writing.
- Establish a scholarly context for the relevance and significance of the research.
- Design and implement a research approach that is both effective and ethical.
- Consider your role as well as the rhetorical genre, audience, purpose, and situation to make effective rhetorical choices about content, structure and organization, format, style, and voice.
- Apply academic conventions for grammar, usage, and mechanics.
- Document in APA style any and all sources whose words, ideas, or illustrations are cited or used in the paper.
- Demonstrate a developed and accurate understanding of course readings and activities.