

Essay 2: Discovery Essay

The motive for writing a research essay...is not to prove but to discover.

---Bruce Ballenger

WHAT'S THE ASSIGNMENT?

For this essay, you'll be incorporating research into a piece but not writing what you might think of as a "research paper." Your goal with the discovery essay is to **find something out rather than prove something**. *You should pick an issue you genuinely wonder about* that stems from your experiences and interests. As you'll see in doing research, there isn't one answer to your question or issue—there may be multiple answers, conflicting answers, or no answer at all. **Your essay will address 1) your interest in the issue; 2) what others have to say about the issue; and 3) the significance for you in what you've discovered.**

A successful discovery essay:

- ✓ **Focus/Purpose/Genre:** has a clear controlling idea that explores a complex research question and is coherently organized around the exploration of the question; relays author's interest in the topic by 1) showing how research informs author and 2) discussing issues that emerge from research (not finding an easy answer). The research question is open-ended and explores an issue
- ✓ **Support and research:** provides support for controlling idea by incorporating five sources, integrating quotes and information, putting them in conversation rather than just inserting or listing them, selecting reliable, relevant, and substantive sources; provides introduction/context for sources
- ✓ **Style and Conventions:** incorporates five sources correctly using MLA format in the text and in the works cited; the writing has sentence variety and a sense of the writer's "voice" as appropriate to the writing situation; follows conventions of grammar, spelling, and punctuation

Course outcomes met:

- ❖ *Demonstrate competency in reading, quoting, and citing sources, as well as competency in balancing your own voices with secondary sources*
- ❖ *Write in a range of genres, using appropriate rhetorical conventions*
- ❖ *Demonstrate the ability to employ flexible strategies for generating and revising your writing (such as: invention, drafting, revising, recording, and editing)*

HOW DO I APPROACH THE ASSIGNMENT?

After doing some brainstorming in class and **forming a research question**, then finding many sources so you can choose among them the sources most useful to you, narrow to **at least five sources** about your research question (they should not all be websites; we'll talk more about this in class) that represent various points or approaches to your topic (you don't want all of your sources to say the same thing). **Read—and reread—your sources carefully, taking notes** that record both what the authors are saying and what you think about what they are saying (you'll use a dual-entry journal, which we'll talk about).

Then you'll write an essay in which you explore the issue based on the sources you've read—*not an argument paper where research feeds your opinion about the issue*; rather, you'll be *exploring* a topic and explaining how the research impacts your beliefs and opinions—or not—instead of developing an argument in which you try to change the minds of others. Remember that just because you are incorporating sources doesn't mean you can't have your own voice in the piece—you are the person putting these ideas together in conversation. You're guiding readers through the sources and issue with your own voice and in how your sources together. You'll want to explain your knowledge on the issue *before* you began research (even if limited) and how the research has changed your thinking (or not—and why not). You might also want to be overt about the research process—you can describe, as part of your essay, how your research led you to other research and shaped your thinking. As Ballenger says, "the *process* of coming to know something, for the essayist, is as important as *what* he or she comes to know" (*The Curious Reader* 39). Potential research questions range from, "Should a Mars landing be the next mission for NASA?" to "Should colleges have safe spaces?" You are welcome and encouraged to use images, hyperlinks, or graphs in this piece; do make sure they are credited properly.

Final Draft: 1,600-2,100 words (approx. 5-7 pages) with works cited in MLA format, plus author's notes

First Draft Due	Sept. 24 th – Have author's note and 3 copies for peer review
Second Draft Due	October 1 st – Have author's note and 3 copies for peer review
Pencil Grade Draft Due	October 6 th