

**Synthesis Essay Assignment Instructions**

**Purpose:** So far this term the assigned readings have dealt with the often interrelated issues of education, media, and consumption. This final paper will require you to write an essay which brings together ideas and data from multiple sources in order to inform your audience about one of these themes. Writing this essay will require you to 1) look for connections among the ideas in five assigned essays from *Inquiry*; 2) develop a thesis statement and main points which make an informative claim (based on the assigned essays' content) in response to a research question; and 3) synthesize information from your sources to support and explain your main points. Your goal will be to effectively and accurately synthesize the source material in order to inform your audience. A secondary goal will be to integrate and document sources correctly.

**Topics:** Choose one of the following writing prompts:

- **Education: What challenges the effectiveness of education in 21st Century America?**

If you choose this topic, you will need to both *identify and explain the nature of* the potential obstacles facing American students, educators, and/or educational institutions. You might explore the social, economic, technological, political, and/or personal forces affecting access to, participation in, and/or administration of education in America. Once you've considered these various concerns, you may choose to narrow your focus to just one of them (or one part of one of them), or you might decide to address multiple components.

- **Media Studies: What do we learn from what entertains us?**

If you choose this topic, you will be exploring ways that social media, the Internet, cell phones, television, advertising, and/or consumption of goods influence our mindsets, worldviews, and/or behaviors. You might consider influences on identity formation, perceptions of gender roles, political engagement, views of education, influences on lifestyle, marginalization of minorities, etc. Again, you might choose to focus on just one of these, or you might opt to address multiple aspects of the topic.

- **Business and Marketing: What Are Potential Effects of Our Consumption Practices?**

If you select this topic, you will want to consider how business and marketing practices influence our decisions as consumers. Consider the potential impacts on our health, environment, worldview, identity, consumer habits, and education. Again, you might choose to focus on just one of these, or you might decide that you will need to discuss and explain multiple impacts.

**Content:**

**Introduction:** The introduction should follow the inverted triangle model in your textbook and should provide a context for the rest of your essay by providing some background of the cultural situation which has precipitated the “conversation” regarding the issue about which you’re writing. That is, it should lead us into the topic as well as provide a context for the topic by explaining the cultural problem to which the academic “conversation” is responding.

**Thesis:** Your thesis statement should avoid making a persuasive opinionated claim, and instead should make an informative claim which represents the ideas you’ve encountered in your sources. It should acknowledge agreed upon components of the academic conversation but also make mention of diverging views (when appropriate). You might use one of the following templates:

- Although scholars do not agree upon \_\_\_\_\_ minor informative claim \_\_\_\_\_, cultural critics largely agree that \_\_\_\_\_ major informative claim and main focus of your essay \_\_\_\_\_.
- Despite widespread agreement among sociologists about \_\_\_\_\_ minor informative claim \_\_\_\_\_, they cannot agree upon \_\_\_\_\_ major informative claim and main focus of your paper \_\_\_\_\_.
- Cultural critics widely agree that \_\_\_\_\_ and all point to research which supports the belief that \_\_\_\_\_.
- Television programming and advertising have X impacts on X group as they present a view that X group members are \_\_\_\_\_, thereby causing \_\_\_\_\_.
- Increasingly, \_\_\_\_\_ challenges educational effectiveness in 21st Century America.

**Body:** This section of your essay should provide any additional background necessary and should lay out the major claims in support of your thesis. Your goal here is NOT to merely summarize each of your sources. Instead, you need to have topic sentences which put forward a point and then use information from multiple sources to help explain and support that point. That is, your topic sentences will put forward overarching areas of agreement or contention you’ve seen across multiple sources (or conclusions about the issue you’ve come to through reading all of your sources), and your paragraph content should explain the topic sentence through providing your own discussion as well as information synthesized from your sources.

**Conclusion:** Your conclusion should bring appropriate closure to your essay, tying together the claims made in the body, reinforcing the thesis, and perhaps even commenting on the potential far- reaching cultural implications of this issue.

**Additional Content:** Either in the body or as part of the conclusion, you might choose to briefly explore issues, counterarguments, or implications the sources overlooked or failed to address.

**Source Requirements:** Refer to the “Topic Choices and Reading Assignments” handout.

**Documentation:** Your essay should follow MLA documentation guidelines, including source integration methods, in-text citations, and a Works Cited page.

**Formatting:** Please use twelve-point Times New Roman font, one-inch margins, and MLA formatting.

**Length:** 5-7 pages, double-spaced (not including the Works Cited page)

---

© Kameo Keltner and Indian Hills Community College