WRS 106
First-Year Writing II
Dr. Adam Abraham
Fall 2026

RESEARCH ESSAY

Rough Draft DUE: Wednesday 11 November/Thursday 12 November
Bring HARD COPY to class

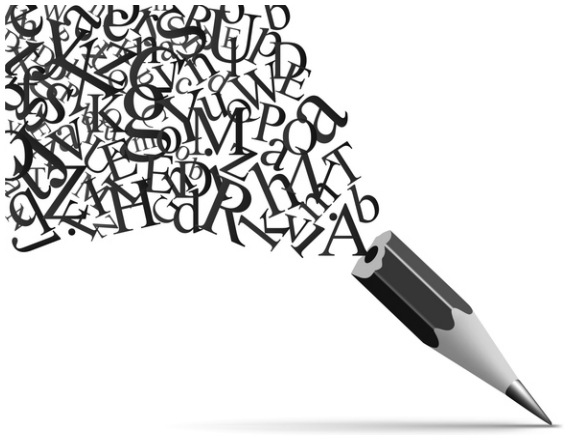
First Draft DUE: Monday 16 November – Thursday 19 November
In Zoom conference (to be scheduled)

Final Draft DUE: Friday 4 December by 4:30 pm
Email to axa4376@miami.edu
Submit as an attachment in Microsoft Word or pdf form
In the subject line write "RESEARCH ESSAY"

This essay serves as the culmination of the writing course. You will compose sentences (simple, additive, subordinating); you will write paragraphs (with cohesion). You will write in the Middle (or mixed) style, with perhaps an occasional detour into the Grand or the Plain style. You will demonstrate your research and citation skills, using Chicago style to generate footnotes (with short-title citations only) and a Works Cited.

Thus far you have written a proposal and a literature review. You have asked a Difficult Question, meeting three criteria:

1. A question with no easy answer.
2. A topic for which academic research could provide possible answers.
3. A project that one undergraduate could reasonably undertake while completing other academic courses and engaging in other activities.



Now it is time to answer that question. Your answer appears in the form of a thesis (aka argument), which you will attempt to prove to the skeptical reader.

In this essay, you will quote a minimum of five sources. Six or eight or more sources may be appropriate. One must be an ARTICLE from a newspaper or magazine (print or online edition); one must be a peer-reviewed JOURNAL ARTICLE; one must be a BOOK (you might read just one chapter or part of the book). The two or more additional sources can be any other print or online materials, including films, podcasts, YouTube videos, and primary research (like interviews or surveys). You might not agree with all the authors that you found. That's ok—show why they are wrong, how they missed an important insight. All sources must be in English.

Continue taking notes and finding pull quotes from your sources. Make sure to QUOTE (with quotation marks) every single work in your Works Cited. Make sure to generate FOOTNOTES and place information at the bottom of each page (usually it's Last Name, Short Title, page number).

Assume that the AUDIENCE of your essay is another member of this class, a University of Miami undergraduate with a reasonable amount of patience. Do not assume that this student knows anything about your Difficult Question.

Therefore, explain the history and background of your topic. Define unusual terms. Explain acronyms (OPEC, HUAC, etc.) Make this student understand why your Difficult Question matters.

There is no one shape that works for the research essay—everyone is writing on a different topic. That said, there are a few structures that often work. Feel free to try one of these, if appropriate:

- Argumentative Essay = make an argument and support it with details.
- Point/Counterpoint = illustrate both sides. Then choose and support one side.
- Problem and Solution = describe a problem and then suggest a potential solution.

In any case, all final submissions (due in December) are required to have three parts:

1. A reflective cover letter.
2. The essay itself (beginning on a new page).
3. Works Cited (beginning on a new page).

COVER LETTER

Write the letter in the form of a letter. At the top, write "Dear Dr. Abraham:" and conclude with "Sincerely," followed by your name.

Like any piece of writing, the cover letter will benefit from a sound structure. Write in multiple paragraphs (not one long paragraph). First, introduce your essay. Why did you select this Difficult Question? Then reflect on the steps that you took to complete your research project, from proposal to Final Draft. Which skill that you developed this semester are you most proud of? Which skills do you want to work on in the future? What did you learn that surprised you? How did your research and writing evolve over the course? If you had more time, which aspects of the essay would you improve?

Do not offer a numbered list or bullet points. Do not mechanically answer all the questions stated above. (Those questions are meant to prompt your thinking, not limit it.) Write one or two double-spaced pages. Do not label the letter as "Cover Letter"; it will be obvious.

THE ESSAY

Begin your essay with a title, centered, using mixed case (Capitals and lowercase), at the top of the page. Follow the Chicago-style rules on capitalization. Your title should be specific and intriguing. Do not call your essay "Research Essay" or anything generic.

Each essay should have the following elements (DO NOT LABEL THESE ELEMENTS OR USE SUBHEADS):

Introduction • Methodology • Arguments and Evidence • Conclusion

Begin with an INTRODUCTION (one or two paragraphs). It helps to intrigue the reader with an image, a quote, a hypothetical, a rhetorical question at the start. Explain any necessary background information or context. Ask your Difficult Question. Then propose your thesis, which is your answer. In the introduction, you should use the pronoun *I*, as discussed in class. Think about your audience—what do they need to know? (Remember: your reader has not spent months on this topic.)

Next, offer one or two paragraphs of METHODOLOGY. In these paragraphs, you explain how you went about writing this essay. Mention some sources that you used (primary or secondary). If primary, explain how research was conducted. If secondary, discuss the features of the works, some strengths and weaknesses. For this section, you might draw on the Analysis produced for your literature review. But be careful to rewrite it. And do not repeat what is stated in the cover letter.

For ARGUMENT AND EVIDENCE, you will write any number of body paragraphs. Support your argument with the evidence of your research and your own reasoning.

And leave time to write a CONCLUSION (one or two paragraphs). Summarize your argument and your main ideas. Try to leave the reader with an interesting question or a thoughtful provocation.

High school teachers promote the five-paragraph essay. That is not going to work here. Write as many paragraphs as you need to articulate and support your argument.

WORKS CITED

The final page of your document will be the Works Cited. Type "Works Cited" at the center and top of that page. List your sources alphabetically and in Chicago style. If you need further guidance, see the presentation "Citing Sources" and the "Works Cited Sample Page" (both available at adamabraham.info) or ask the instructor. Follow the Chicago rules on capitalization for every title that appears (capitalize first word, last word, important words). Format the Works Cited in the same manner as the essay

(font, double-spacing, black ink, etc.) If you do not quote a work at least once, then it should be deleted from the Works Cited.

THREE DRAFTS

You will prepare three drafts. The Rough Draft will be required for in-class peer review. Two fellow students will read and evaluate your work. It is NOT expected that the essay will be finished. Show up with something (more than nothing).

Next, you will prepare a First Draft for your Zoom conference. Again, it is NOT expected that the essay will be finished. You should have the introduction and the Works Cited ready—maybe some paragraphs in between. Do not include the cover letter (do that last).

Each of these steps is designed to help you produce the Final Draft, which will include ALL required elements and be submitted at the end of the semester.

REQUIREMENTS

- Use a normal, 12-point font, with serifs, such as Times or Times New Roman.
- Double-space EVERY LINE. Double-space is not single-space or space-and-one-half. Double-space the cover letter, the footnotes, the Works Cited.
- Write in multiple paragraphs. Indent each new paragraph. Do not skip lines.
- Follow the conventions of edited American English unless there is a good reason not to. When in doubt, consult *The Chicago Manual of Style*.
- Attend a peer-review session on Wednesday 11 November/Thursday 12 November. Bring one printed hard copy (this is your Rough Draft). Any student who misses this class or who shows up without a printed hard copy will lose five points.
- Meet with the instructor for a fifteen-minute conference on Zoom (this is your First Draft). A sign-in sheet will be available (adamabraham.info). Email the First Draft to axa4376@miami.edu before your conference begins. Any student who misses the conference will lose five points.

- Before you submit the Final Draft, make sure the cover letter, the essay, and the Works Cited are combined into a single document. Do not submit more than one document.
- Approximate length = 2,000 words.

GRADING

- The research essay is worth 30 points, which is 30 percent of your final grade.
    - The Rough Draft (peer review) is worth 5 points.
    - The First Draft (conference) is worth 5 points.
    - The Final Draft is worth 20 points.
- For the Rough Draft and the First Draft, scoring is holistic.
- Only the Final Draft will be evaluated and scored. Each submission will get a score from 1 (lowest) to 4 (highest) in each of five categories:
    i. Cover Letter
    ii.
    iii.
    iv.
    v. Citations/Works Cited
- Any Final Draft that is received late (even one minute late) will lose 3 points (10 percent of all available points).
- According to the syllabus, any work received after 4 December will receive a score of zero. No excuses or exceptions.
- If you want more guidance, feel free to visit during office hours or set an appointment.