Argumentative Research Paper
Overview and Guide to Researching, Composing, and Writing

A.P. ENGLISH LITERATURE & COMPOSITION
Archbishop Moeller High School, Mr. Rose

Due Date: _____

Length: 4-6 pages, double-spaced using MLA format + one page of Works Cited (Bibliography)

Assignment: You are to research and write an original essay on a controversial issue in the field of biotechnology or scientific experimentation. Topics include:

1. Transhumanism / Posthumanism
2. Designer Babies / Egg Harvesting
3. Organ Harvesting
4. Animal-Human Hybrids / Chimeras
5. Human Cloning
6. Genetic Engineering / Trangenic Life Forms
7. Human Embryo Stem Cell Research / Embryonic Beauty Treatments
8. Selective Reduction Eugenics

You will be writing an evaluative argument, with the purpose of informing your audience of the issue and controversy involved and convincing them of your stance on that issue. You will be composing your essay according to the Classical method of structuring an argument as outlined below:

I. **Introduction** (1 paragraph)
    - Gains readers' attention and interest
    - Begins with a "hook": for example, a startling statistic
    - Convinces the readers you've done your research and you know your subject well.
    - Demonstrates that you are fair and even-handed
    - States your claim (this is your thesis statement)

II. **Background** (2 or 3 paragraphs should be devoted to exposition)
    - Gives your audience the necessary background about your issue
    - Clearly defines the issue
    - Clearly defines the controversy
    - Explains the rationale for pursuing the issue

III. **Lines of Argument** (3-5 paragraphs in support of your claim)
    - Presents the research you've done that serves to support your claim
    - Each paragraph should be devoted to one "line of argument" (reason)
    - Each line of argument should presents <u>facts</u>, <u>statistics</u>, <u>expert testimony</u>, <u>personal experience</u>, <u>observations</u>, etc. that serve to prove your claim.

IV. **Alternative Arguments & Refutation** (2-3 paragraphs)
    - Examines alternative points of view and opposing arguments
    - Notes advantages and disadvantages of these views
    - Explains why your claim is better than the others: more accurate, sensible, convincing, etc.

V.   **Conclusion** (1 paragraph)
- Summarizes your argument
- Elaborates on the implications, effects, etc. of your claim
- Makes clear what you want the audience to think or do

Step One – Topic + Claim

Arguments begin with **claims**, which are debatable and controversial assertions you hope to prove. A claim is also known as a thesis statement. Your claim should be:

- Written in clear, straightforward language.
- Debatable (there must be opposing viewpoints)
- A judgment/evaluation about your issue/topic
- Supportable by evidence: facts, statistics, testimony, personal experience, observations, etc.
- Properly qualified

In order to formulate a claim, you should first come up with a "guiding question" that your claim (thesis) will answer.

> **Example guiding question:** *Should violent video games be regulated in some way?*
> An effective <u>claim</u> would answer the question. Your essay would then set out to <u>prove</u> your claim.
>
> **Example claim:** *Violent video games should be carefully evaluated by the industry, the government, and parents because these games can cause addiction and psychological harm to players.*

Qualifying a Claim
- Avoid making unintended sweeping generalizations when formulating a claim.
- When appropriate, use qualifiers, words and phrases that place limits on claims. Such as:
  Few, often, more or less, in some cases, routinely, etc.
- Qualifying expressions make writing more precise

Step Two – Locating and Using Sources

During the next stage of the project you will be gathering at least five distinct sources that you will use to conduct research for your term paper.

What are Secondary Sources?
Secondary sources provide information, interpretation or analysis of your subject. These include encyclopedias, online databases, magazine or newspaper articles, and books that document and analyze your subject.

Requirements:
1. You must have at least <u>five secondary sources</u>, though you may want and need more.
2. You may <u>not</u> use encyclopedia entries, including Wikipedia! as one of your secondary sources.

Evaluating Potential Sources
As a part of this research project you will need to either visit the public library, use online research databases, or both. Either way, you need to know how to evaluate potential sources. Not every book or article will be suitable to your purpose. In order to evaluate, consider the following questions:

1. Did you find enough information to meet the requirements of the assignment?
2. Is this source understandable to you?

3. Is this source current enough? Not out of date?
4. Is this source too broad or too vague for your use?

The quantity of information available is so staggering that we cannot know everything about a subject. For example, it's estimated that anyone attempting to research what's known about depression would have to read over 100,000 studies on the subject. And there's the problem of trying to decide which studies have produced reliable results.

Similarly, for information on other topics, not only is there a huge quantity available but a very uneven level of quality. You don't want to rely on the news in the headlines of sensational tabloids near supermarket checkout counters, and it's just as hard to know how much to accept of what's in all the books, magazines, pamphlets, newspapers, journals, brochures, web sites, and various media reports that are available. People want to convince you to buy their products, agree with their opinions, rely on their data, vote for their candidate, consider their perspective, or accept them as experts. In short, you have to sift and make decisions all the time, and you want to make responsible choices that you won't regret.

Evaluating sources is an important skill. It's been called an art as well as detective work. You have to decide where to look, what clues to search for, and what to accept. <u>You may be overwhelmed with too much information</u> or too little. The temptation is to accept whatever you find. But don't be tempted. Learning how to evaluate effectively is a skill you need both for your course papers and your life.

Locating Sources
Library databases will provide you with a great place to start your research. The Cincinnati Public Library's computer system holds important resources that either aren't available freely on the Web at all or aren't easily accessible to you except through the library's system. The most important of these resources is the library's own catalog of its holdings (mostly books, magazines, and journals), but the library also provides access to databases that you can use for free.

At the library's website http://www.cincinnatilibrary.org
1. click onto the "Research & Homework" section
2. and then onto "Research Databases" link.
3. This will provide you with access to a list of the available databases. The direct link to the directory of databases is: http://cincinnatilibrary.org/resources/research.asp
4. Now, click onto the "Health & Medical" link: http://www.cincinnatilibrary.org/resources/research.asp?group=11
5. You will now see a listening of the databases that will be most helpful to you on this project.

The most helpful literary databases are:

Gale Virtual Reference Library
Search the *full-text* of hundreds of electronic reference books on a wide range of subjects, including: the arts, business, education, history, law, medicine, and science.

Medline
Authoritative information on clinical medicine, dentistry, education, experimental medicine, nursing, nutrition, pathology, psychiatry, and toxicology. Created and maintained by the National Library of Medicine.

General Science Full Text
Abstracts (1993+) and *full-text* (1995+) articles from popular science magazines and professional journals. Many articles are accompanied by graphs, charts, diagrams, photographs, and illustrations. Designed to serve the needs of students and non specialists.

[Expanded Academic ASAP](#)
Access articles from scholarly journals, news magazines, and newspapers. Designed to serve the needs of students across a wide range of academic disciplines from arts and humanities to science and technology.

There are many other valuable databases available through the Cincinnati Library system. You should explore its website. Note: **You will need to enter your Library Card number and PIN** (usually the last four digits of your phone number) to access these resources.

Recommended Bio-tech Related Websites

- [Culture of Life Foundation: Science & Medicine](#)
- [CERC: Bioethics](#)
- [Science & Technology in the Catechism](#)
- [Infertility Drugs & Selective Reduction](#)
- [Fertility Factories & Egg Harvesting](#)
- [Transhumanism & Posthumanism](#)
- [Wesley J. Smith Archive](#)
- [Center for Bioethics & Culture](#)

Note on Web resources:
Resources available on the Web other than the databases listed above (and others linked to from the Library website) are of varying quality and usefulness. You may NOT use any of the following as sources for your paper:

- Spark Notes, Cliff Note, GradeSaver, or equivalent student study tool
- Wikipedia
- Yahoo Answers
- About.com

The Invisible Web
The invisible web includes many types of online resources that normally cannot be found using regular search engines. The listings below can help you access these resources:

- [Alexa:](#) A website that archives older websites that are no longer available on the Internet. For example, Alexa has about 87 million websites from the 2000 election that are for the most part no longer available on the Internet.
- [Complete Planet](#): Provides an extensive listing of databases that cannot be searched by conventional search engine technology. It provides access to lists of databases which you can then search individually.
- [The Directory of Open Access Journals](#): Another full-text journal searchable database.
- [FindArticles](#): Indexes over 10 million articles from a variety of different publications.
- [HighWire](#): Brought to you by Stanford University, HighWire press provides access to one of the largest databases of free, full-text, scholarly content.
- [Infomine](#): A research database created by librarians for use at the university level. It includes both a browsable catalogue and searching capabilities.
- [Invisible Web Database](#): A database maintained by Chris Sherman and Gary Price, authors of the book *Invisible Web*, that provides a host of links to invisible web resources in a variety of categories.
- [MagPortal](#): A search engine that will allow you to search for free online magazine articles on a wide range of topics.

Step Three – Note-Taking

Avoiding Plagiarism
Your research paper is a collaboration between you and your sources. To be fair and honest, you must indicate when you borrow another writer's ideas or words. You do this by documenting, or citing, your sources. "Citing your sources" means telling your reader whose ideas or words you have used and where you found them. To use someone else's words or ideas without giving them credit is dishonest. It is called plagiarism.

Two different acts are considered plagiarism: (1) borrowing someone's ideas, information, or words without citing the source and (2) citing the source, but paraphrasing the source too closely, without using quotation marks to indicate that words and phrases have been borrowed.

You must, of course, underline document all direct quotations. You must also underline document any ideas borrowed from a source: paraphrases of sentences, summaries of paragraphs or chapters, statistics or little-known facts, and tables, graphs, or diagrams.

The only exception is common knowledge or information that your readers could find in any number of general sources because it is commonly known. For example, everyone knows that Columbus is the capital of Ohio. It is common knowledge and would not have to be cited.

Taking Notes
In order to avoid unintentional plagiarism, you must take notes carefully. I highly recommend that you do this by using some type of note-cards. Here is a time-tested method that works!

What is a Note Card?
A note card is a 3"x 5" index card on which you write information from your sources. Note cards contain the information that you might include in your research paper. There are 4 kinds of note cards:

   I. Source Cards
   II. Quotation Cards
   III. Paraphrase Cards
   IV. Summary Cards

A note card should contain information about only one piece of information. Give each note a distinct title. Do not use the same title on any two cards, but use similar titles for notes on the same topic. Good titles on your cards will make things easier for you when you outline your paper.

All note cards should have these items:
   1. **Label:** Located in the upper left hand corner, this label clearly describes the information in the note.
   2. **Source Code:** Located in the upper right hand corner, this code comes from the source card and is used to identify the source of the note.
   3. **Specific Page Number:** Located next to the source code, this reminds you of the specific page from which you took the note if you are using a book or a magazine.
   4. **The Note**: This is the information you took from the source.

I. Source Card
When you begin working on your research, you will go to a variety of sources for information. Each time you begin working with a new source, you should complete a source card. On each card you will record:
   1. All the publication information required to include this source in your "Works Cited" list.
   2. A code letter that you will use on all note cards that come from this source.
   3. The call number of the book or URL (in the case of a web site) so you can locate it later.

You might not use anything from that source, in which case the card can later be thrown away, but it is still a good idea to make a card for each source. Get in the habit of doing this before you do anything else.

II. Quotation Cards
Quotation cards are used to record a quote, word for word, from the source.
- Always include the author of the quote
- Punctuate correctly with quotation marks
- Only use direct quotations for very important passages
- Don't copy sentences from a source without showing you are using a direct quotation

III. Paraphrase Cards
Paraphrase cards are used to record information, from the source, in your own words.
- Write in complete sentences, in your style
- Write in your vocabulary

IV. Summary Cards
Summary cards are used to summarize information or opinions in the source.
- May contain a short quote to support summary
- May include source of quote, if used
- May be useful in drawing conclusions or making observations from research

Step Three – Outlining
Due Date: Friday, May 8

Now that you have collected information on your topic, it is time to organize that information so that it can be the most useful to you in writing your paper.

Sorting and Grouping
The first step in this stage is to go through your note cards and divide them into general categories. For example, your general categories for this paper will most likely correspond to each line of argument or counter-argument. Information that does not fit in any of these categories may be useful to use in your introduction, background, and conclusion.

Outlining Your Information
An outline will show a basic overview and important details of your report. It is also a great way to organize what you're learning. Keep the following guidelines in mind when writing your outline:

1. Make items at the same level as parallel as possible.
2. Use sentences, unless phrases are clear.
3. Use the following system of numbers and letters:

    I. Main Idea (e.g., Line of Argument #1)
       A. Subsidiary idea or supporting idea to I
       B. Subsidiary idea or supporting idea to I
          1. Subsidiary idea to B
          2. Subsidiary idea to B
             a) Subsidiary idea to 2
             b) Subsidiary idea to 2

    II. Main Idea (e.g., Line of Argument #2)
       A. Subsidiary or supporting idea to II
       B. Subsidiary idea to II

C. Subsidiary idea to II

III. Main Idea (e.g., Line of Argument #3)
etc…

4. Always use at least two subdivisions for each category. Nothing can be divided into fewer than two parts!
5. Limit the number of major sections in the outline: if the list of roman numerals begins to be too long, find a way to combine the items into a few major categories with subdivisions.
6. Be flexible: be prepared to change your outline as you write your draft.

Once you have a working outline, you are ready to write the first draft of your paper!

MLA Formatting

You will be presenting your research paper in the MLA format. The MLA format specifies guidelines for formatting manuscripts and using the English language in writing. MLA style also provides writers with a system for referencing their sources through parenthetical citation in their essays and Works Cited pages.

Writers who properly use MLA also build their credibility by demonstrating accountability to their source material. Most importantly, the use of MLA style can protect writers from accusations of plagiarism, which is the purposeful or accidental uncredited use of source material by other writers.

General Guidelines

- Type your paper on a computer and print it out on standard, white 8.5 x 11-inch paper.
- Double-space the text of your paper, and use a legible font (e.g. Times New Roman). Whatever font you choose, MLA recommends that the regular and italics type styles contrast enough that they are recognizable one from another. The font size should be 12 pt.
- Leave only one space after periods or other punctuation marks (unless otherwise instructed by your instructor).
- Set the margins of your document to 1 inch on all sides.
- Indent the first line of paragraphs one half-inch from the left margin. MLA recommends that you use the Tab key as opposed to pushing the Space Bar five times.
- Create a header that numbers all pages consecutively in the upper right-hand corner, one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin. (Note: Your instructor may ask that you omit the number on your first page. Always follow your instructor's guidelines.)
- Use italics throughout your essay for the titles of longer works and, only when absolutely necessary, providing emphasis.
- If you have any endnotes, include them on a separate page before your Works Cited page. Entitle the section Notes (centered, unformatted).

You should visit the following site and familiarize yourself with all the general requirements:

LINK: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/

Preparing a Works Cited

According to MLA style, you must have a Works Cited page at the end of your research paper. All entries in the Works Cited page must correspond to the works cited in your main text.

Basic Rules

- Begin your Works Cited page on a separate page at the end of your research paper. It should have the same one-inch margins and last name, page number header as the rest of your paper.
- Label the page Works Cited (do not italicize the words Works Cited or put them in quotation marks) and center the words Works Cited at the top of the page.
- Double space all citations, but do not skip spaces between entries.
- Indent the second and subsequent lines of citations five spaces so that you create a hanging indent.
- List page numbers of sources efficiently, when needed. If you refer to a journal article that appeared on pages 225 through 250, list the page numbers on your Works Cited page as 225-50.

You should refer to the following website at Purdue's Writing Lab for all the specifics:
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/05/