

# Research Paper Directions

WRTG 3030: Environmental Health Science, Policy, and Ethics

## General Overview of Research Project:

The major research project for this course consists in the following two components.

Literature Review: demonstrates knowledge of scholarship and contemporary debates relating to your topic, and how your argument fits into and advances the conversation.

Outline: organizes the major ideas your paper, providing a clear blueprint of your argument.

Research Paper: defends a thesis related to your major—via conceptual reasons, descriptive and empirical evidence, and effective logical analysis—on an issue that has some problematic broader social, political, economic, or environmental implication; and satisfies the conventions of research and writing in your discipline.

## General Overview of Grading Criteria:

Literature Review	5-7 single-spaced pages Includes <i>at least</i> 10 scholarly sources Constitutes 10% of final course grade
Outline	3-4 single-spaced pages Constitutes 10% of final course grade
Research Paper	15-18 double-spaced pages Constitutes 35% of final course grade

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## DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH PAPER (ONLY)

1. Write a 15- to 18-page paper that develops an interesting and well-researched argument in defense of a properly-formulated thesis statement, which pertains to some issue in your major that has some problematic broader social, political, economic, or environmental, implication. (An interesting and contestable descriptive or empirical thesis that answers some relevant scientific or social scientific research question will not suffice: your topic must be one that has clear policy or normative import.)

- Students are encouraged to write a research project for this class that could also satisfy the term paper requirement for another class, or to use this opportunity to write a draft of a senior thesis or honors thesis. (You need to receive approval from me and your other instructor or advisor, so please come speak with me.)
- The aim here is to write a paper that is relevant to your field of study—and to improve your understanding of the conventions of research and writing in your major by applying them in this research paper.
- And the requirement that your topic entail some problematic implication is to have you think about the broader relevance of the subject you decide to write about: why should your average reader care about your subject?
- Students who choose to not write a paper from their discipline are still encouraged to research and write about a topic that is of personal interest. These students will be asked to write a research paper on some contemporary public or environmental health hazard—successfully applying the interdisciplinary conventions of research and principles of good writing that we explore in this class.

Whatever topic you choose to write about and from whichever discipline you approach this paper, I encourage you to start with an empirical or descriptive fact or example that demonstrates the broad

relevance of the problem you are engaging or the plausibility of the claim you are defending. (This will count as the real-world example you are required to incorporate into your paper.)

2. Your paper must state a strong and properly-formulated claim (thesis)\*\*, explain in detail at least three conceptual reasons and three pieces of descriptive or empirical evidence that support your claim, as well as to provide a strong warrant that explains the underlying justification for your position.

\*\* Since students are not expected to conduct an in-depth analysis of original or secondary data, it is unlikely that you will defend a *hypothesis* as opposed to a thesis in this paper.

- The conceptual, descriptive, empirical, or normative thesis you will defend will be discipline-specific; it will depend on your major or subfield that you choose to adopt for this paper.
- For many students, this will mean defending an ‘empirical’ thesis: defending an argument about what key causal factors can explain some scientific or social scientific phenomenon, relating to an issue that has broad policy or normative relevance.
- For others, this will mean defending a ‘descriptive’ thesis: defending an argument about our understanding of some state of the world, relating to an issue that has broad policy or normative relevance.
- Still for others, this will mean defending a ‘normative’ thesis about why a problematic social, political, economic, or environmental status quo is morally wrong, or why we should strive to implement a particular solution to the problem.
- If you have questions about what an acceptable thesis in your major is, come speak with me.

3. Moreover, your three reasons and three pieces of (descriptive or empirical) evidence must be drawn from your 15 required sources, and you must show explicitly how each reason and piece of evidence supports your thesis (logical analysis).

- Note that when introducing a new reason or piece of evidence, you must state explicitly what source you draw the reason or evidence from.
- Note also that in your paper you must discuss one real-world example that illustrates your problematic status quo or the plausibility of the claim you defend—which can count as one of the pieces of evidence in support of your central claim.
- As for what we’ve been calling ‘analysis’, if you do not explain how each reason or piece of evidence shows that your thesis is true, then you leave your readers to assume or infer the connections you see between your reasons and evidence and the claim.

4. With regard to your external research, all of your 15 required sources must be scholarly or academic (peer-reviewed) literature.

To determine whether a source is academic or peer-reviewed, look for some of the following cues:

- peer-reviewed articles in academic journals will have a volume and issue number on the first page of the article or in the citation—which will be written like Vol. 10, No. 1 or 10 (1).
- unless books are self-published (avoid these), all books are peer-reviewed—but you should try to find books published by university presses or respected popular academic presses
- university presses are easy to identify: Oxford University Press, Michigan University Press, etc.
- some quality popular academic presses include the following (this list is not exhaustive): Hackett, McGraw-Hill, Palgrave Macmillan, Pearson, Penguin, Routledge, Rowman & Littlefield, Sage, Taylor & Francis, Wiley and Sons

Credible or reputable, non-peer-reviewed sources may include

- government agencies (e.g., DOI, DOE, EPA, FDA, DOD, DOJ),
- international governmental organizations (e.g., UN, EU, World Bank, NATO, OPEC, OECD),

- non-governmental organizations (e.g., Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Doctors Without Borders, International Red Cross),
- think tanks (e.g., Hague Institute for Global Justice, Brookings Institution, Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, Carter Center, CATO Institute, Migration Policy Institute), or
- respected media outlets (e.g., *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Foreign Policy*, *Reuters*, BBC News, National Public Radio, CNN, etc.).

5. Your paper must also explain two realistic objections to your argument, why these two counterarguments are plausible (that is, why the objections are strong and accepted by reasonable people), and yet why the objections ultimately fail to show that your position is wrong.

6. You must correctly summarize, paraphrase, and/or quote material from your sources, properly and consistently applying the MLA, APA, or Chicago documentation style.

7. Lastly, you must mind the rhetorical situation—paying attention to the expectations of a general academic audience with regard to language, style, and tone, as well as attention to the specific grammatical and stylistic issues we will be covering in our sentence-level lessons this semester.

- this means that you must familiarize yourself with and successfully apply the conventions of academic research and writing in your major
- this also means that your paper must be free of spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors
- refer to our grammar reviews and our working list of principles of good writing to help with this

## ☑ Feeling Overwhelmed by the Directions? Follow this Checklist

### ***Substance of your argument***

- I have clearly stated my thesis (in one sentence only).
- I have clearly identified and explained each of the three conceptual reasons that support my thesis.
- I have clearly identified and explained a possible warrant for my argument (a fundamental idea, theory, principle, or value that I assume is true and which has to be true if my argument is correct).
- I have integrated three pieces of descriptive or empirical evidence to support my thesis, including one real-world example that either motivates the problem I'm engaging or illustrates the plausibility of my thesis.
- I have developed a coherent argument—explicitly showing how each reason or piece of evidence supports the truth of my thesis, and neglecting to commit any logical fallacies.
- I have clearly described two reasonable objections to my thesis, I have thoroughly explained why the objection is plausible (convincing), and I have effectively explained why the objection is wrong.

### ***Presentation of your argument***

- I have provided an introduction that tries to capture the reader's interest and attention by showing the broad relevance of my topic or thesis.
- I have provided relevant background information on the topic to give readers necessary context.
- I have defined important concepts and ideas (especially if they are contestable).
- I have clearly stated the assumptions I am making in my argument.
- I have attempted to make effective rhetorical appeals (logos, pathos, ethos) in my argument.
- I have clearly structured my paper, making smooth transitions between ideas (via blueprinting, signposting, foreshadowing).
- I have line-edited my paper to catch and correct any sentence-level errors (spelling, punctuation, and grammar).
- I have implemented the rules of good writing in our working list to the best of my ability.

### ***Using your sources effectively***

- I have integrated 15 scholarly, peer-reviewed sources into my paper.
- I have accurately reconstructed or represented the arguments and ideas of these authors/sources.
- I have correctly cited my sources in the body of my paper (using in-text citations, footnotes, or endnotes)—including specific page numbers.
- I have correctly provided the full citation of all my sources in my bibliography.

# Research Paper Grading Rubric

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

WRTG 3030: *Environmental Health Science, Policy, and Ethics*

<i>Specific Requirements</i>	<i>Poor/ Omitted</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>	<i>% of Total Earned</i>
<b>Rough Drafts (10%):</b> students must submit <u>full</u> (comprehensive) rough drafts by the due dates.	✓	✓	✓	✓	%
<b>Rough Draft Peer Review (10%):</b> students must participate in <u>both</u> peer-review workshops and complete the questionnaires provided. Your grade on this section will be based on the quality of the comments you as a reviewer give your classmates on their draft papers, and will be determined by your peer-review partners.					
<b>Introduction/Summary (5%):</b> briefly explain the topic you chose to write about, explaining any important concepts or ideas your audience needs to know to understand your argument, as well as any starting assumptions you make in your argument.					
<b>Thesis (5%):</b> clearly state the properly-formulated, qualified claim or the probabilistic hypothesis that you are defending.					
<b>Reasons, Evidence, Warrant, and Analysis (30%):</b> defend your claim by explaining your starting assumptions, your <u>three</u> reasons and <u>three</u> pieces of evidence that support your claim, and a strong warrant that explains the underlying justification for your position. Your reasons and evidence must come from your <u>15</u> required peer-reviewed sources—and your analysis must explicitly demonstrate how each reason or piece of evidence directly supports your thesis.					
<b>Counterarguments (15%):</b> you must explain <u>two</u> possible objections to the thesis you defend, explain why these counterarguments are plausible (persuasive), and yet why the counterarguments are ultimately wrong.					
<b>Conclusion (5%):</b> you must explain the broader policy and normative implications of your argument.					
<b>Grammar (10%):</b> committing more than <u>five</u> errors—including sentence fragments, run-on sentences, improper punctuation (, ; :), and incorrect spelling—will result in the loss of a full letter grade. Refer to our grammar reviews for the grammatical rules you should be implementing in your writing.					
<b>Citations and Bibliography (10%):</b> all quotes, paraphrases, and summaries must be cited using in-text citations or footnotes. Specific page numbers must be provided with each text citation. (If the text lacks page numbers, include n.p. (no page) in the citation.)  At the end of your essay, you must also include the full citations of all your sources—using MLA, APA, or Chicago style (choose one style)—and the bibliography must be properly alphabetized. This does <u>not</u> count toward the minimum page requirement.					
Grade:					