

Assignment Six: Archival Researched Essay (Penn State Traditions)

“Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose” — Zora Neale Hurston

So far this term, we have practiced making an argument using personal narrative, making an argument within a conversation of others’ opinions, and arguing through the use of analysis. This last project will ask for you to build an argument from primary research.

This is a chance to learn more about Penn State and develop an argument about a topic that inspires your curiosity. Whereas our prior research generally started from a firm conviction or belief (or a general sense of what you were going to argue), research for this paper should start with curiosity.

After researching your topic in the Special Collections Library (both online and in person), you will **describe** your chosen artifact(s) to your readers, **evaluate** its importance to our understanding of PSU history, **analyze** its content in a way that supports your evaluation of its importance, and develop an **argument** about your artifact. Types of arguments might include persuading your audience why the artifact you’ve chosen is important, arguing how it changes our perception of PSU, or using compare/contrast to argue how and why Penn State has changed over time. Regardless of your argument, have fun with this assignment!

For the purposes of this paper, I suggest choosing that your audience be other Penn State citizens (either students, alum, faculty, or some more narrow aspect of these groups), though other audiences are fine.

Requirements

Find a topic that lends itself to 3-4 pages (double spaced, size 12 serif font) of rigorous analysis. Your argument must include **at least two** archival artifacts and be contextualized or supported by **at least one** outside source (secondary source). We will discuss in class what kinds of sources might be most helpful and how you might incorporate them. Your paper should also include a visual of some sort that is integrated into your argument (this does not count toward the 3-4 pages).

During the last three days of class, we will have **informal presentations** (roughly 5 minutes) presenting our findings and arguments to the class. Five percent of your paper’s grade will be based on participating in these presentations: being an *active audience*, incorporating at least *one visual*, and clearly articulating *your argument* and making the *importance of your artifact salient* for the class.

Expectations

A successful paper will:

- Provide analysis of the research included, not expect the research to speak for itself
- Use and cite sources responsibly and correctly
- Exhibit an ability to develop ethos and appeal to readers’ emotions and sense of logic
- Make the importance of the artifact(s) clear
- Develop an argument that is important to your readers that can create change in how an aspect of Penn State is understood

Note: This project requires you to spend a significant amount of time outside of class in the Special Collections Library. To encourage you to keep up with your research, you will be required to submit **two research logs** at two different times. See information on the research logs below.

Special Collections Library Hours (104 Paterno Library): M-F 9:00-5:00 pm

Contacts: (omitted for sample)

Resources: Links will be made available on ANGEL

Schedule for this paper:

Visit the archives as class: Wednesday, July 28

J #10 Proposal: Friday, July 30 by 5:00 pm

J #12 Research Log: Tuesday, August 3

J #13 Research Log: Thursday, August 5

Rough Draft due: Friday, August 6

Presentations: Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, August 9-11

Final Draft due
(print and drop box): Wednesday, August 11

Proposal (Journal #10)

You should have visited the archives or done online research at this point. Submit this as an attachment via ANGEL drop box before 5:00 pm on Friday, July 30.

1. Issue: What topic will you write about? What artifacts will you analyze? How will you describe them? Why are you interested in or connected to this topic?
2. Research question(s): Brainstorm at least three different (and narrow) research questions that could guide your research
3. Exigence: Why is this topic important to explore *right now*? Why is this relevant to others at Penn State? Why would they care about this topic or these questions?
4. Research: What sorts of information will you need in order to understand your topic more fully?
5. Questions about the assignment: What questions or concerns do you have about this assignment?

Research Log (Journals #12 & 13)

These are due in class on Tuesday, August 3, and Thursday, August 5. To encourage you to keep up with your research and get feedback early on in the research process, you will submit two research logs that describe your visits to Special Collections (either in person or digitally). *At least one of these needs to be about a visit to the physical Special Collections.*

Requirements: Each log should include the following:

1. Date and time of your visit to Special Collections (if online, when you searched online)
2. The items you viewed
3. A detailed description of the item(s) you found most useful or interesting to your project
4. A brief analysis of what you think these items mean, how they're advancing your project, or why they're important
5. A brief update on the progress of your research. What research questions have you answered? What do you have left to do?