
RESEARCHED INQUIRY ESSAY

Due for Comment April 29 (100 points) | Due for Grade May 15 (100 points)

**Data Analysis and
Coding
Due April 17**

**Introduction,
Focus, Methods
draft
Due April 22**

**Complete
Researched
Inquiry Essay
Due for Comment
April 29**

**Final Researched
Inquiry Essay
Due for Grade
May 15**

**Final Essay Must
Include Accurate
MLA in-text
citations and
complete Works
Cited Page.**

**Final Essays Must
Be 10-15 Word-
Processed pages,
MLA Format (or
approved
alternative
format)**

Researched Discovery

Unlike a purely personal essay, which may unfold without reference to outside sources of information or ideas, a researched ethnographic inquiry essay interweaves personal experience with the research you conducted yourself and material gathered from published writing. Your goal is to explore your research questions and the culture of your research site in the context of your primary and secondary source material as deeply as you can, reaching toward and eventually expressing **new insights**.

As you write, keep present the idea that this is an **ethnographic, inquiry/discovery** essay, exploring what you have discovered this semester in response to your research. **You, your thoughts, and your voice, and your process of discovery must be present in the essay as you discuss what has INFORMED that discovery and reflect on the process that led you there.** This is NOT simply a report on ideas from books and articles or a simple description of the community you observed with no connection to knowledge **you** have gained and how it has impacted you.

Writing the Essay

Use the guidelines below to structure your essay for **your complete draft**. You can (and probably will) change many of these things to improve the flow and coherence of your final essay and make it more sophisticated, but these steps provide a structure for your draft.

Introduction

- Create an interesting opening frame for your paper. This can be a personal story or an “aha” moment from your research. You want to engage your readers with your research site and your research question.
- Posit the idea behind what you have come to know through your inquiry (this should come out of your research question) this semester and provide a framework for discussion of that idea, in-depth, using primary and secondary source material. Do this by:
 1. Establishing a controlling idea for your essay that acknowledges general or typical understandings/misunderstandings of your issue (*Most people think...*) and then turn to make your central claim (*...but/and I have come to understand/ come to a deeper understanding of...*). This controlling/umbrella idea should be related to your research question and your process of discovery.
 2. Following your controlling idea with a focus/structure statement (*In this essay I will....First..., Second..., Third...*). In the “In this essay I will” statement, you articulate your big or “umbrella” idea/claim. In the first, second, and third, you specifically address different aspects or approaches to that umbrella idea that you will explore in the various sections of your full essay.
 3. Explaining your methodology and methodological traditions of your research project. This is where you will tell us about your research process. You need to describe how you conducted your primary research: describe the site, the participants, when and how you observed, how you took notes, and how you conducted your analysis of the primary research data.
- Establish a connection between your research project and previous work (from secondary source material) conducted in relation to your research question. Highlight some of the most relevant or interesting ideas in the work of published authors that you have been able to make connections with. This does not need to be an in-depth discussion. Save that for digging into the ideas in the body sections. Rather, give us a sense of the ideas and theories (remember that “theorist in your back pocket) that inform your inquiry. Here, you can start with a bit of a formula if you need to and tweak for style later. For example:

Throughout the course of my research, the work of several authors provided insights into ways to approach my inquiry. In Duty Bound, Mark Blitz explores philosophical truths that define the purpose of the media. His work provides a basis for me to argue that the current media is, in fact, affecting the American people’s rights in a negative way. Similarly, Eric Alterman’s, What Liberal Media? has been very provocative for me. Alterman argues that the current Conservative Elite, by controlling the media via monetary resources, has gained power over the American people’s ideas. His argument allows my to position my ideas of ____XXXX____ in relation to the interviews I conducted with my participants.
- No matter how you approach working with source material in your essay, you need to be sure to comment on and highlight the connections between ideas that you have found and the connections to your own primary research process.

Body Sections (three of them)

- Build the body sections of your essay out of your focus statement to argue what and how you have discovered -- use your “first, second, third...” statements to create 3 (or so) sections, sharing your ideas and thought processes. You can use subtitles (catchy but substantive ones when possible) to both transition and break from section to section. In each body section:
 - Work from your research question(s) and the coding of your primary data in a way that is personally meaningful to you, to share what light other thinkers have shed on your research question/activity at your research site to reflect on what additional awareness you have as a result of your primary research, and to engage in a written conversation that offers original insight. To do this:
 - Use excerpts from your fieldnotes to provide meaningful and concrete examples of the idea/phenomenon/issue that you are exploring in each section.
 - Use secondary source material in a meaningful way. Let the work of others inform your thinking about your own question(s) and observations and let what others have written (or otherwise produced) interact with your own thinking. It is your discussion of the material (lengthy and insightful discussion) that takes it out of the realm of simple report and into the researched discovery space. Respond, comment, expand, explore, and connect.
 - Spend *at least one paragraph* signaling and introducing and contextualizing source material (quote, paraphrase, example from fieldnotes) and *at least one or two paragraphs* making assertions, discussing, commenting on, explaining, and/or expanding upon that material to make connections to what you are trying to do in your essay. Don't drop source material into your essay if you cannot explain why it is there, how it connects, and how it advances your essay.
 - Highlight Complexity. Don't be afraid to try and explore MANY facets of your observation/focus, making sure NOT to construct an argument based stereotypical or one-dimensional logic. Instead, explain that the reality you observed and are explaining is relative to many different factors.
 - Reveal Reflexivity. Remember to include yourself as an integral element of this research project. Explain transitions YOU have made during the process of your research. You were there. You should write to acknowledge how you understand the reality of your research site. You are an authority on how you understand this site--write from that authority.

Conclusion

- Conclude your essay by considering the meaning generated by your researched ethnographic discovery process—personal meaning, and meaning for the wider, global community. This should be a deep and informed exploration of the “so what?” question. What does this all mean? Why does it matter? Why should we care? What are the implications of your research? What are the limitations of your research? What could/should happen in future research in this area? What happens to you and your thinking as a result of conducting this research?

All Final Researched Ethnographic Inquiry Projects Must:

- Include clear and direct reference to/reflection upon primary data collected as a result of your fieldnote writing.
- Include clear and direct reference to/reflection on at least three academic sources that you cite in a Works Cited page in MLA 2009 format.
- Reference all primary and secondary source material (quote/paraphrase/string quote/mention) with the appropriate in-text citation for MLA 2009 format. Use the Purdue Online Writing Lab as a resource.
- Be 10-12 word-processed pages, 12point font (or approved alternative format), MLA Format.

Note on Alternative Forms / Multimodal Work:

- If you would like to develop your researched discovery essay in a multimodal form, using image, sound, and/or video along with your print text to express your insights, I am certainly open to this and happy to help. Be aware that the intellectual and rhetorical expectations for the kind of work involved in writing a 10-12 page researched essay remain the same. You cannot just “air drop” print, image, sound, or video elements into a piece and expect them to stand on their own; the research and discovery process must be articulated in a smart and interesting way.