

*Notes to instructors are in red; please delete before sharing with students.
Assignment updated summer 2025.*

Writing Project 3: Community-Centered Argumentative Essay

Purpose

For this major writing project, you will write a 5-7 page essay that explores a significant issue affecting a community of which you are part, one that is local and connected to UW-Madison and/or Madison. Your task is to make a well-researched and compelling argument that addresses this issue, considering both the community needs and possible solutions. This project will help you think critically about your immediate environment, engage in local research, and practice making arguments that are specific, focused, and actionable. This project builds on your previous work, encouraging you to use the same issue/idea discussed in Writing Project 2, incorporating revisions and additional insights. You'll also connect your argument to the Wisconsin Idea (from Writing Project 1), discussing how university research and initiatives can improve the quality of life, health, environment, and agriculture for Wisconsin residents or residents of the community you are highlighting.

Learning Outcomes

- To build on research skills and strategies.
- To gain experience with different research genres and audiences/stakeholders.
- To craft claims and reasons for an extended argument
- To learn strategies for critiquing, evaluating, interpreting, and incorporating researched ideas.
- To gain practice in drafting and revising in response to peers and your instructor.
- To learn how to support an informed and credible opinion or point of view.
- To continue to practice planning, drafting, and revision.

Assignment Description

Introduction

Start by telling us about the specific issue you'll be focusing on. Give some background information to help us understand the context, and explain why this issue is important for the UW-Madison campus or the Madison community. Be sure to clearly state your main argument or thesis, so we know where you're headed with your discussion.

Background and Context

Next, provide a detailed description of the community (place, people, space, concept, etc.) in Madison that plays a central role in your argument. Share any relevant historical, social, cultural, or economic contexts that help us understand the significance of this place or space.

Analysis of the Issue

Use the observations and research you gathered in Writing Project 2 as evidence of a broader perspective for your argument. Don't forget to include additional research from at least five sources, making sure that at least one of them is scholarly. Then, take a look at how this issue affects the community by considering different perspectives and the various stakeholders involved.

Connecting to the Wisconsin Idea

Reflect on what you wrote in Writing Project 1 about the Wisconsin Idea. Discuss how this issue and your proposed solutions relate to the Wisconsin Idea. Explain how university research and initiatives can improve the quality of life, health, environment, and agriculture for Wisconsin citizens.

Proposed Solutions

Offer well-researched and practical solutions to address the issue. Discuss the feasibility of these solutions and how they can be implemented. Consider the potential benefits and challenges of each solution. Decide which solution is most viable and tell your audience why.

Conclusion

Summarize your main points and restate your thesis. Reflect on the broader implications of your argument for the UW-Madison campus and the Madison community. End with a call to action or a statement about the importance of continued attention to this issue.

Details

- Length: **5-7 pages**
- Use **at least five sources**; at least one must be scholarly.
- Include charts, graphs, tables, or images if they support your argument and understanding of the issue.
- Include Works Cited/Bibliography (which does not apply toward your overall page count). Each entry should use hanging indents and be in alphabetical order.

- Follow citation guidelines based on your major's style preference. (Note to instructors: some instructors require the use of MLA format; others allow students to use whatever format they are comfortable using and/or need to know for their major.)
- Include a reflection: At the end of **each** draft on a new page, include a brief reflection of 1-2 paragraphs that shares your process for writing this piece, who your audience was, what assistance you received on this draft, what you feel you did well in this draft, what you struggled with, and what you would like feedback about. See more in the Writer's Memos Instructions document on Canvas.

Writing Process Timeline

(Note to instructors: adapt this process to match your model calendar. We provide you two different options below; choose one of them. You can have students turn in partial drafts or just a full final draft. Also, consider where you might want to hold your conference: after the proposal is due? After a partial draft? After a full rough draft?)

- Draft and submit your initial assignment by ____.
 - Conference with your instructor on ____.
 - Participate in peer workshop on ____.
 - Submit the final copy (revised using instructor and any additional feedback) in your Final Portfolio by ____.
1. *Early Draft/Pages*: To encourage you to start writing, remember that writing is a process of discovery. You'll turn in 2-3 pages of writing related to your first draft. These pages do not need to fit together neatly. They can be rough writing or your first three semi-polished pages. They can be freewriting or a close analysis of a source. Including these pages in the Full Draft is optional. Include a brief reflection (see above).
 - a. Submit Early Draft/Pages by ____
 2. *Conference with Instructor*: Conferencing with your instructor about your Early Draft/Pages provides an opportunity to discuss the direction of your project and ask questions before you get too far along. This will help you refine your ideas and approach.
 - a. Conference with instructor on ____
 3. *Full Draft*: Use the insights from your conference with your instructor to continue drafting your project into a full draft. This draft should include a beginning, middle, and end. Focus on getting your big ideas into this draft without worrying too much about polished prose. Include your Works Cited list and a brief reflection (see above).
 - a. Submit Full Draft by ____
 4. *Peer Workshop*: Writing is a social activity. We become better writers by reading others' work and sharing our own. This workshop will follow the peer workshop pattern we have used throughout the semester.

- a. Participate in peer workshop on ____
5. *Final Revision Due in Final Portfolio*: Use the feedback from your peers and instructors to revise and bring everything together into the final draft. Be sure to edit and proofread for the desired effect.
 - a. Submit your Final Revision to the Final Portfolio by ____.

Evaluation Guidelines

(Note to instructors: you may use these recommended guidelines in your rubric or use it to guide holistic feedback)

- *Development or Evidence*: Are the writer's ideas complex and interesting? Are they presented with clarity for the intended audience? Is the evidence in the paper appropriate to the assignment and purpose? Are the details specific and effective, supporting their point? Does the essay make a clear connection to the Wisconsin Idea? Are the potential impacts of university research and initiatives discussed? Are the solutions well-researched and practical? Are the potential benefits and challenges of the solutions considered?
- *Purpose and Audience Awareness*: Are the writer's purposes and intended audience dynamically or at least clearly understood and addressed? Is the language, tone, and the use of appeals highly effective for a particular audience and purpose?
- *Arrangement and Organization*: Does the overall organization and arrangement suit the rhetorical situation? Are the concepts well-developed and connected? Does the essay use a variety of credible sources? Are at least three scholarly sources included? Is the research integrated smoothly and effectively into the essay?
- *Style*: Is there clear control and purposeful use of language? Is the writer able to use variety, repetition, or other related strategies to emphasize and communicate ideas effectively? Is the diction appropriate and deliberate?
- *Portfolio*: Do the many noteworthy strengths outweigh any weaknesses? Is a strong engagement with the revision process demonstrated? Did their process of revision include reconsideration of early ideas, additional sources, significant changes in organization and/or other features? Does the range of pieces and drafts demonstrate the writer's strong ability to handle multiple approaches or genres as assigned and in ways that are not always predictable? Overall, is the writing substantially developed, often moving beyond the predictable and clichéd in approach, style, or subject matter?

Technology and AI Guidelines

(Note to instructors: we recommend engaging students in the process of developing these guidelines.)

- *You may use technology or tools to aid your learning and writing in the following ways:*

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- *You may not use technology or tools to replace your learning and writing in the following ways:*
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- *You should document any assistance you received in your reflection, whether from tools, technologies, people, or strategies to acknowledge that writing is a process and a complex social activity.*