

Sonya Lancaster
English 320
Paper Assignment 1 (inquiry paper)

Due date: October 22

(Papers are due by 5:00 in my office.)

Manuscript Instructions: Papers should be 6-9 pages in length (one-inch margins, eleven –or twelve – point font, double-spaced). Citations should be in MLA format with a works cited page.

We will have conferences during the weeks of September 29 - October 3 and October 6 – October 10. There is a sign-up sheet for conferences on Blackboard in the folder with the paper 1 topic. These conferences are mandatory, and at them we will discuss your paper topic and how to research it. You will need to bring a concept map or other type of topic generating device with you to your conference. We will work on generating topics in class as examples as well.

Inquiry is a questioning state of mind. It is the search for questions to pose without easy answers. These questions are ones that delve into what a text is doing rather than saying, that require one to tolerate complexity and nuance. They also ask readers to think about what our readings of a text say about us as readers – how a reader’s readings can overshadow descriptions of what they text says. Readers are encouraged to examine our entrenched beliefs and how to try to bracket what we know in order to think about texts created in the past.

The willingness to prolong the exploration of a topic to find the most satisfying answers is essential to inquiry. Research, in this case, is an open rather than closed process. This means that through research, you discover more interesting questions and avenues of explorations instead of starting with what you think about a topic and finding research that supports your thought. The key is to postpone judgment for as long as possible and to find out as much as possible before coming to conclusions.

This paper should chronicle your exploration of your topic, delaying your thesis (or your conclusions about what you have found) until the end. It should be a map of your exploration of your topic. We will practice this process in class, and you are free to discuss it with me or your groups. We will also talk about how to go about researching the questions you ask in our conference.

A successful paper will include:

- A question sufficiently complex and interesting to generate good analysis
- A narrative that takes the reader through your explorations of your question
- The narrative should have logical transitions and be easily followed
- The research should be well-integrated and nicely chosen
- The thesis should be delayed, and your judgments or answers should come at the end
- Effective introduction and conclusion
- Clear, concise academic prose
- Proper MLA documentation and works cited page