## Sample High-Stakes Assignments (prepared in 2013)

**Assignment #1**

In all three essays that we have read so far this semester, the authors suggest that language shapes who we are, and how we interact with the world, and vice versa. For this first assignment, I'd like you to consider the following question:

**How does our language shape our reality?**

In order to develop your answer to this question, please use evidence from - that is, quote from - Gloria Anzaldúa’s "How to Tame a Wild Tongue," Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue" and Brooke Gladstone's "The Great Refusal."

Your grade for this assignment will be based on the following elements of your paper:

* Quotation Selection, Incorporation, and Analysis
* Reading Comprehension
* Topic Sentences and your Thesis Statement

... that is, the things that we are working on in class. These, of course, are not the only elements of a paper. In the next paper, we will add Paragraph Structure and Use of Evidence as the primary foci of the paper, and your last two papers in this class will focus on all four of these elements. Your sentence-level control will be a factor for all your papers, but, at the beginning of the semester, it will not be the primary focus of my evaluation of your work.

Your rough draft for this assignment will be due on Tuesday, September 27. This draft should be at least 3 paragraphs long. Please bring three (3) copies to class on that day.

Your final draft for this assignment will be due on Thursday, October 1. It should be at least 5 paragraphs long, including the introduction. Only one copy is necessary.

## Assignment #2

Having surveyed texts about the definitions and etiology of [autism], I still find it nearly impossible to imagine what it would be like to have severe autism. When I try, I imagine a world in which sensations are disordered and overwhelming, in which language cannot help to put experience into a coherent narrative, in which all but the most familiar people are mysterious and incomprehensible, and in which repetition, routine, and the predictable provide the few available forms of solace. I can no more fully imagine the emotional, mental, and social lives of people with autism, especially how they understand human relationships, than I can imagine a life without the spoken word. Here is where my practice of empathy confronts its limits. (Jurecic 6-7)

In the passage above, Ann Jurecic explains how the minds of people with severe autism might work, and how difficult it is to understand this from an outside perspective. In the rest of her article "Mindblindness: Autism, Writing, and the Problem of Empathy," she explores how difficult it has been to imagine the experience of people with autism, and how profoundly different that experience seems to be from that of people who fall in the "normal" part of the neurological spectrum.

As you think about these differences, please consider the following question as you write your second paper for this class:

**How do our brains shape how we perceive the world and how we interact with others? What, if any, other factors come into play?**

In your answer to this question, please use quotations from Ann Jurecic's "Mindblindness," Stephen Jay Gould's "On Women's Brains" and one other text from the selections we have read on this theme. These quotations should support your answer to the question above.

In this paper I will be looking for:

* Good quote incorporation and reading comprehension (i.e. you need to show that you understand the details of the quotations you select)
* Quotation analysis (why you chose them in the context of your own essay)
* Thesis statement and topic sentences
* Paragraph structure
* Good connections between ideas from the texts.
* Sentence-level control

We've been working on all of these things in class, so while the list is long, it shouldn't be daunting.

Your rough draft for this paper should have at least 3 body paragraphs (as well as an introduction and conclusion); your final draft should have at least 5 body paragraphs. Your paper should be typed in 12 point Times New Roman, with 1" margins, and be double-spaced, and stapled. Please include page numbers, and your information, formatted like the information at the top left hand side of this page. This information should be single-spaced. Please try to think of a creative title: we will have a title competition in class.

Your rough draft is due on ***Thursday, October 17***. Please bring 3 copies to class on that day.

Your final draft is due on **Thursday, October 29**. Only one copy is necessary.

**Exercise #1: Making Connections.**

Look at the two quotations above, and then look at the assignment question. Can you see a connection between the three? Here are some sentences to help you get started:

Gould's idea about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is connected with Jurecic's idea about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Jurecic states that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. This related to Gould's idea about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_'s idea about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ relates to Jurecic's/Gould's idea about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

## Annotated Bibliography Assignment

By now, you should have found at least five to six potential sources that could help you tackle the research question you have chosen to focus on. Some of these sources may be relevant and reliable, others may be less useful or of more questionable authority. Select three of the sources that you think are relevant and reliable and prepare bibliographic entries in proper MLA format. After each bibliographic entry, skip a line and write an annotation. Each annotation should do two things:

1. Briefly, summarize the key ideas from the source.
2. Describe how the key ideas and/or information can help you answer your chosen research question. Be specific. Do not write, for example, "this source provides useful information" without explaining what useful information the source provides and how it connects to your research focus.

The annotations should be a paragraph long--somewhere between five and eight sentences. As in summaries, you should not use quotations. Note that in the sample annotation below, about half of the sentences describe the source and half of the sentences indicate how the source was used in the student's writing. That is a good balance to aim for.

(Optional: For one additional source that you have located but have rejected as a potential source (because it is unreliable, off-focus, etc.), prepare a bibliographic entry in proper MLA format and then write an annotation describing WHY the source is unsuitable for your research. Be very specific about why the source is not useful or reliable.)

Here is an example of an annotated bibliography entry in MLA format that is reliable and relevant and reliable to the following research question:

* What are some of the reasons why lower-income students are less likely to complete college and how might these reasons be addressed?

Ripley, Amanda. "The Upwardly Mobile Barista." *Atlantic Monthly*, May 2015. pages.

Ripley discusses a new program developed by Starbucks and Arizona State University to support employees of the Starbucks who wish to start or finish undergraduate degrees. The program encourages employees to enroll in a variety of online majors at Arizona State University by providing a reduced rate--or full reimbursement--to those working at least 20 hours a week at Starbucks. Ripley suggests that the most important feature of the program is targeted, personalized support that provides the students with counseling on enrollment, financial aid, and academics. Reading the article, I sensed Ripley might be too enthusiastic about this program which is too new to have proven itself and has several key limitations--degree work is done online and the program is only really free for employees with two-years of college credit. For these reasons, I would not yet recommend this particular program to help improve college completion rates. However, the focus the program places on helping students navigate the intricacies of the processes needed to obtain financial aid, transfer credit, and stay engaged academically connects to suggestions I have seen in other articles on the necessity of providing support to low-income students so that they may finish college.

## Assignment #3

For this final assignment, you'll be writing a paper using Gary Gutting's "What is College For?" and Mark Edmundson's "On the Uses of a College Education," and Linda Lee's "The Case Against College." You'll be creating your own assignment question for this final paper, rather than responding to one that I've written, as a follow-up to the kind of thinking you did when you developed your research question for the Annotated Bibliography.

In this paper I will be looking for:

* A viable assignment question that leads to a detailed thesis.
* Good quote incorporation and reading comprehension (i.e. you need to show that you understand the details of the quotations you select)
* Quotation analysis (why you chose them in the context of your own essay)
* Thesis statement and topic sentences
* Paragraph structure
* Good connections between ideas from the texts.
* Sentence-level control

We've been working on all of these things in class, so while the list is long, it shouldn't be daunting.

Your first rough draft of this paper should have at least 3 body paragraphs (as well as an introduction and conclusion); your final draft should have at least 7 body paragraphs.

Your paper should be typed in 12 point Times New Roman, with 1" margins, and be double-spaced, and stapled. Please include page numbers and your information formatted like the information at the top left-hand side of this page. This information should be single-spaced. Please try to think of a creative title: we will have a title competition in class.

Your draft research question is due on ***Thursday, November 7***. Bring a copy to work on in class.

Your first rough draft is due on ***Thursday, November 19***. Please bring 3 copies to class on this day.

Your second rough draft is due on ***Thursday, December 5***. Please bring 2 copies to class on this day.

Your final draft is due on **Thursday, December 12.** Only one copy is necessary.