

WR 39C: ARGUMENT & RESEARCH

The Historical Conversations Project

Two major projects comprise the 39C curriculum: The Historical Conversations Project (HCP) and The Advocacy Project (AP). This first one, the HCP, asks you to do four things: **(1) define and describe a significant political/social/cultural problem**; **(2) justify and frame this problem** to convince your audience that the problem you're addressing and the questions you're asking are alive and relevant right now; **(3) summarize and critically evaluate various conversations and debates** made by credible scholars and organizations about your topic; and **(4) describe and decipher the historical contexts of the problem at hand by locating at least 2 pieces of evidence, at least 1 from the past and 1 from the present**, that tie the problem as we see it today to its past.

Over the next four weeks you will work on this project, which will be submitted for a grade at the end of week four. One of the main purposes of this first assignment is to expose you and your peers to various topics, arguments, histories, and background knowledge that will enable you engage with each other over the course of the quarter. Another purpose of the HCP is to begin the process of teaching you how to locate, evaluate, select, arrange, and integrate sources into a multi-modal composition. As a genre of communication—and in the case of this assignment, one that frames a problem, delivers arguments, uses evidence, and speaks to a broad audience—a multi-modal composition can be a synthesis of various rhetorical positions—visual and written for example—that work together to deepen argumentative positions and claims. Your composition's multi-modality will come from your use of these two modes together.

You may be asking yourself (and you should ask your teacher), “What is a composition and what does it mean if it's multi-modal?” In your case, you will locate at least two pieces of evidence, one from the present that helps you define the problem you are exploring and one from the past that deciphers this problem's historical context. And then you will use credible sources to describe for your readers how these distinct pieces of evidence work together to explain the viability of the contemporary problem.

You will need to ask a number of questions in order to understand how your key pieces of evidence speak to each other: How does the “artifact” from the past illustrate the evolution of the problem? What arguments do scholars make about the problem's past and its present? What are scholars and credible people and organizations debating about the problem and its past? As you explain how and why certain historical changes tie your central pieces of evidence together, you will have to think creatively to arrange your arguments and your evidence, both your key pieces of evidence and scholarly sources, to persuade your audience that the historical foundation you have located is meaningful to our understanding of the problem in the present.

The Assignments

Assignments	Deadline	
Prewriting: Annotations & source evaluations, reading responses, free writing, outlines, etc.	Week 2	
Draft 1 (Written portion: 1500 minimum, multimodal, including notes and in-text citations but not bibliography.)	Week 3	
Final & Graded Submission (Written portion: 1700 minimum, multimodal, including notes and in-text citations but not bibliography.)	Week 4	25%

The Rules of the Game:

The Graded Submission:

By the end of Week 4 or thereabouts, you will submit this assignment for a grade, and your instructor may ask that you “publish” this final version in your ePortfolio for your peers to read. Instructions for how to make your ePortfolio viewable by your peers will be forthcoming from your instructor.

The Ungraded Work:

Between now and the final submission deadline, your teacher will give you a number of assignments to complete: source evaluations and annotations, outlines, prospective statements of argument, free writing, drafts, peer reviews, and other useful things to help you draft and craft ideas and arguments. All of these assignments are ungraded, and they give you lots of things to use in your final ePortfolio! Take advantage of these ungraded assignments; use them to explore ideas and various arguments and as opportunities to receive feedback from your peers and your instructor so that your arguments become clearer and your composition more cogent, richly textured, and gracefully organized. All of the ungraded work is mandatory, and if done well, you put yourself in a much better position to turn in a well-developed submission by the time the final deadline arrives. Imagine if you do not do the ungraded work, but your peers complete all of the assignments. In all likelihood, their work will be of higher quality due to its polish and to the maturity of its arguments. Keep up and have some fun exploring!

The Word Count:

The written component of your final submission should be 1700 words (minimum).

Sources & Citations:

At minimum, you should use between 6 and 8 sources.

- Locate at least 2 significant pieces of evidence, at least one from the past and one from the present, that tie the problem as we see it today to its past.
- 4-6 scholarly sources, at least 3 of which you should find yourself.
- Use the MLA system for citing your sources.

Additional Guidance

What is a “Key Piece of Evidence” for the HCP?

-Key Evidence (Present): It can be a table of data, an image or a series of images or an incident. It is something, a primary source for example, that clearly articulates the cultural, political, and social problem that is the focus of your project.

-How do you locate your evidence?

Any social, cultural, or political problem that demands the attention of scholars, intellectuals, thinktanks and advocacy organizations will be defined by and grounded in evidence, and these pieces of evidence are what you are trying to find. What sorts of evidence do your scholarly and credible resources use to substantiate their arguments?

-Key Evidence (Past): Like your evidence from the present, your historical artifact(s) can be a compilation of statistics in a table or a graph, an image, an incident, ideas and arguments from primary sources, stories, and various art forms. You can use credible sources to locate your historical “artifacts,” and in selecting them think and write about how the historical evidence speaks to your central problem in the present. Try to describe how your historical pieces reside in the past, summarize how they speak to your contemporary evidence, and explain how the historical dialogue between these two pieces or bodies of evidence connects the present with the past. The historical space between them, which documents historical changes, will enable you to articulate clearly the importance of your central problem in the present.

Reflective Prompts

-What specific aspects of your historical evidence make it historical? Is it far enough back in time to be considered historical? Does it represent significant and meaningful historical changes?

-What are my credible sources saying about my historical evidence?

-How is my historical evidence different from my contemporary evidence? Why are they different? Are they too different to speak to each other to capture historical changes?

-What arguments am I using from my scholarly sources and contemporary research to explain the historical relationship between my two bodies/pieces of evidence?

-What significant historical changes explain the relationship between my sources? What credible sources am I using to support such explanations and summaries of historical change?