**Synthesis Essay Assignment**

Becoming a **critical reader** is an essential skill in college. Not only do you have to read an immense amount of information in college, but you also have to become *critical* of everything you read. You have to be able to sort facts from opinions, identify author bias, and develop your own perspective on a limitless number of issues. For this assignment, you will read essays on two sides of a controversial issue and then write a **synthesis essay** in which you provide a critical analysis of what you have read. Refer to chapter 18 (pages 216-225) in your *S&S Handbook* for information on synthesizing sources.

For this assignment, we will be using the **EBSCO Points of View Reference Center**, which is a database available through the SCC Library. This database includes essays that provide points-of-view and counterpoints on a huge number of controversial topics.

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| **To get to the EBSCO Points of View Reference Center:** 1. Start from the college’s homepage **www.salemcc.edu**
2. Click on the “**Current Students**” tab at the top of the page, and then click on “**Library**” from the drop down list.
3. On the left-hand side, under the heading “**Resource Links**,” select “**Databases and Journal Articles**.”
4. Under where it says, “**Locate a database below**,” click on the letter “**P**,” then click on the database titled “**Points of View**.”
5. Note, if you are off campus, you will then be prompted to enter your ten-digit Student ID# to gain access to the database.
6. Once you are in the EBSCO Points of View Reference Center, you can browse topics by category or by specific topic. You can also use the search function to search for topics.
7. Each topic in the EBSCO Points of View Reference Center has three main essays—an ***Overview***, which provides general background information on the issue, a ***Point Essay***, which presents one opinion on the issue, and a ***Counterpoint Essay***, which offers an alternative or opposite view of the issue. You can move between these essays by clicking on the colored rectangles in sidebar featuring the Points of View icon.
8. You will have freedom of choice in selecting which topic you want to read and write about.
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***As you read . . .***

Once you have selected a topic to read and write about from the EBSCO Points of View Reference Center, you want to make sure that you read both the **Point** and **Counterpoint** essays. You may also find it helpful to read the **Overview** essay to get an overall better understand the controversy. Start by printing out each essay and annotating them as you read (i.e., highlight key terms, write notes in the margins). Complete the following **Critical Reading Worksheet** to record key points.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Critical Reading Worksheet**

*Instructions: After you choose your topic from the Points of View database and read the* ***Point*** *and* ***Counterpoint*** *essays, complete this worksheet as a means of prewriting for your synthesis essay. Upload a copy of this completed worksheet in Canvas.*

***Point Essay***

1. Title of “Point” essay:
2. Author(s) of “Point” essay:
3. What was the main thesis—overall main point—of this essay? (Write it as a single sentence in your own words):
4. List several of the strongest supports that the author(s) provides to advance the thesis:
5. In light of your own values and beliefs, do you agree or disagree with this author’s thesis? Why or why not?

***Counterpoint Essay***

1. Title of “Counterpoint” essay:
2. Author(s) of “Counterpoint” essay:
3. What was the main thesis—overall main point—of this essay? (Write it as a single sentence in your own words):
4. List several of the strongest supports that the author(s) provides to advance the thesis:
5. In light of your own values and beliefs, do you agree or disagree with this author’s thesis? Why or why not?

***After you read . . .***

Consider what you have read in the **Point** and **Counterpoint** essays in light of your own set of personal values. Decide which argument you accept—the Point or Counterpoint essay or a completely different argument. **Write a 750-word synthesis essay in which you critically analyze each side of the controversy.** Please consult Canvas for the following due dates:

**Due date for outline of synthesis essay: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Due date for rough draft (for peer-review): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Due date for final draft of synthesis essay: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

***Essay Elements to Consider***

***Audience***: You are writing for people for who are interested in your topic; however, assume they have not read the Point and Counterpoint articles you will be discussing.

***Introduction and thesis***: Your introduction should grad your readers’ attention and also provide background information on the controversy you will be discussing. You *must* include the titles and authors of both the Point and Counterpoint articles you will be discussing in your essay. Your introduction must also include your **thesis**—the one sentence that states what your essay is about—for example: “Racial profiling is a controversial topic with surprisingly strong arguments on both sides.”

***Quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing***: You will need to refer to the Point and Counterpoint articles regularly throughout your essay; however, the majority of your essay should be your own words, your own ideas, and your own explanations. Only use quotes where the authors’ words are particularly powerful or interesting. All source material must include adequate introductions and explanations. For instance:

In her counterpoint article titled, “The Dangers of Racial Profiling,” Amy Witherbee cites studies begun by the Department of Justice in the late 1990s that showed that, “racial profiling was rampant throughout the country, but that 90 percent of all searches done at a traffic stop uncovered no evidence whatsoever” (1). This means the vast majority of blacks and Latinos being pulled over were completely innocent, ordinary citizens.

You should consult sections 25B and 25C in your *S&S Handbook* (pages 311-317) for information on how to document source information within your essay—this is referred to as “**in-text parenthetical documentation**” and it is required for *all* source material you paraphrase, summarize, or directly quote.

***Works cited page***: You must include a works cited page at the end of your essay. See model #2 on page 324 in chapter 25 of your *S&S Handbook* for information on how to create a works cited entry for an “**Article in a Scholarly Journal with a Print Version: Database**”.

***Outline and writing your rough draft***: Do not start writing this essay before you create an outline; otherwise, your writing will likely be disorganized and hard for your readers to follow. You will need to post your outline on Canvas and carefully consider the feedback you get on it before you begin writing your rough draft. Then, make sure you refer to your outline often when you are writing your rough draft. Pages 216-226 in your *S&S Handbook* contain some greatideas for sentence starters for synthesis essays.

***Revising and editing***: Take some time away from your rough draft (at least a day) and then read it over with “fresh eyes.” Think of ways that you can revise your writing to make it more clear, detailed, and interesting. Participate in peer review through Canvas and carefully read the feedback from your classmates. Make additional revisions based on the feedback you receive. Read your essay over *several times* to proofread for mistakes in grammar, word choice, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. Be especially careful to look for any citation mistakes. Plagiarism occurs when sources are not correctly documented. See chapters 18, 19 and 25 in you *S&S Handbook* for advice on how to correctly cite sources.