Capstone Assignment

For the Capstone Project, you will compose a 6–8 page evidence-based analysis or argument on the issue, topic, or question of your choice*. For this paper, you will be required to develop and support a thesis using a strategic array of evidence, good reasons, and rhetorical appeals. You are encouraged to draw your evidence from a combination of primary and secondary source material, and to find your sources in places relevant to your chosen interests and experiences (personal narratives and observations; interviews; anecdotal evidence; relevant Web sites; news magazines; radio, TV, and newspaper analyses) as well as in academic databases, such as Academic Search Complete and Opposing Viewpoints. This paper should showcase your ability to analyze your rhetorical situation and construct a purposeful, well-designed, audience-oriented, and engaging argument. As a Capstone Project, in other words, this essay should represent the culmination of your work as a student who has completed the composition sequence.

*Please note that you are not being asked to submit a simple report summarizing a lot of data. This assignment asks for critical thinking and interpretation in addition to quality content.

Advice:

- A well-chosen topic and a well-crafted thesis are key to your success. We will be doing in-class exercises to find a topic, but the key idea is to begin early and to seek out topics that lend themselves to this kind of writing.

- This will be a paper that refers to outside sources for its grounding. Your MLA Works Cited page will have at least four outside sources, at least two of which are not sources we've read as a class. You must dig these up yourself. (By the way, a conversation with your roommate or with your Uncle Harry do not count as valid outside sources unless your roommate or Uncle Harry can qualify as a historian, legal scholar, linguist, or some other specialty. We don't want seat-of-the-pants uninformed opinion here.) Non-scholarly sources will damage your grade, so don't base this paper on Wikipedia, About.com, snake-oil brochures, your boyfriend's opinion, and so forth. A university research paper is not a collection of ignorant half-truths and guesses.

- No matter how strongly you feel about your subject, your emotions are not the topic of the paper. Do not try to prove anything with “It seems to me” or “I think that.” Don’t lose control either. We want an academic paper, not a rant.

- Read widely, and keep good bibliographic notes so you can assemble the paper efficiently. You don’t want to go rummaging around the library at the 11th hour looking for that great source whose name you forgot.
**Mechanical Details:**

- Six to eight pages. Papers significantly outside the limits will be penalized. The MLA “Works Cited” page doesn’t count toward the minimum length requirement.
- Citations: MLA style, with a separate Works Cited sheet. This paper will refer to at least four reliable outside sources, at least two of which were not assigned as in-class reading.
- Format: standard MLA page format.
- No cover page or cover sheet
- Pages numbered MLA style in the upper right corner
- Don’t invent your own format for citations. Part of your grade is how well you handle citations.

**Note on APA and other citation styles:**

If you wish, you may write this as an APA paper. We will not be covering APA style in class, however, and if you do choose to use APA style, you will lose points if you write a mix-and-match paper. The whole thing must be correct APA style, including page numbers, cover sheet, etc.

**Do not:**

- Do not mix citation styles. Do not submit a paper with APA in-text apparatus and an MLA Works Cited page.
- Do not write a paper in any style other than APA or MLA. Do not submit a paper in Chicago, Turabian, Columbia, Harvard Referencing, MHRA, ACS, AIP, IEEE, ASME, CSE, ASA, or any of the other styles found in a modern university.

**Due Dates:**

1. **Thursday, October 25:** Topic proposal (1–2 pages) This part of the assignment counts as two quizzes. It will not be accepted after Thursday, November 1.
2. **Tuesday, November 20:** Bring TWO printed copies of your rough draft for peer editing.
3. **Tuesday, November 27:** Final copy of essay #5 is DUE!

This essay is worth 150 points.