

## Ashland English 102 Essay #4

# Synthesis

## Your Writing Task

Choose one of these topics for your research/synthesis essay:

1. Do some research into the changing demographic picture of the United States. What is the current racial and ethnic breakdown of the U.S. population? By what year is it predicted that whites will no longer be the majority? Do you think this will affect the way “minorities” are thought of and treated? How, or how not?
2. Do some research into the literacy rate in the United States today. How would you characterize the situation? What do you think are the causes and ramifications of illiteracy? What might Malcolm X or Frederick Douglass have to say about it?
3. Research the politics of bilingualism in recent American history. What laws have been passed or proposed? What policies enacted or ended? What are the larger political arguments that have supported these developments?

## Hints For Success

A successful synthesis paper has several characteristics.

- It limits its topic. You only have six pages to work with, so you cannot hope to deal with everything related to education or with all racial or ethnic strife everywhere in the USA.
- It has a tight focus on its limited topic: It does not go wandering off to other topics the writer thought of in passing.
- It tells the truth. Wild guesses, conspiracy theories, and discussion of the writer’s favorite opinions do not count.
- It depends on outside evidence to support its point. You are not an expert in any of these fields, but you can write something worthwhile by using evidence from other experts. A paper that depends on the writer’s feelings, opinions, and guesses is worthless.
- It is more than a collection of quotations. Just stringing a lot of quotes together does not make a point, even if you cite them and avoid plagiarism. You need to do the work of interpreting and synthesizing.

Three writing prompts above are phrased as a set of questions, but you should not take these as outlines for your paper. Do not simply write a set of answers to these questions. You are expected to come up with your own thoughtful thesis and your own essay organization which explains your thesis. Do not deal with these prompts as questionnaires.

## Mechanical Details

**Length:** Minimum 2000 words not counting title, your name, etc. That's about a six-page paper. There is no maximum, but try to keep it under 3000. Papers significantly under the minimum (90% or less) will not receive the best possible grade. The Works Cited page does not count as part of the word count.

**Outside sources:** The essay will have MLA in-text citations and an MLA Works Cited page which cites at least four outside sources.

**Format:** Standard MLA format. (12-point Times Roman type, double-spaced, 1" margin all around, MLA header.)

### *Submitting the paper:*

- The English Department wants electronic copies of all your essays this semester, so please upload the final product to the drop box in Blackboard. Some students (especially those who use Google Docs) have trouble figuring out how to do this, so ask if you are uncertain how to proceed!
- If you have any trouble getting the Blackboard upload to work, simply print a copy and bring it to class.

## Due Dates

1. **Research paper proposal:** Friday, October 25, 2019
2. **Annotated bibliography:** Wednesday, November 6, 2019
3. **Thesis memo:** Friday, November 15, 2019
4. **Reverse outline exercise:** Monday, November 25, 2019 (Bring a complete rough draft.)
5. **Peer editing:** Wednesday, December 4, 2019
6. **Final copy:** Monday, December 9, 2019

Items 1 through 3 are worth 25 points each. The essay is worth 150 points. MLA citation format and Works Cited page will count for an additional 25 points.

### *Note about peer editing:*

Peer editing counts as a quiz. You get credit if you show up in person with two printed copies of your rough draft (at least 90% of the assigned length). Do not expect us to hand your laptop around the room and make comments on your word processing file. Take a deep breath and actually print these out on paper.

- No credit for sending your copy by email.
- No credit for bringing it in later.