

Project 2: Academic Inquiry Essay

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

In this unit, we are moving from thinking about how inquiry works to engaging in the inquiry process itself. Inquiry starts with a good question. The most important questions do not have easy answers, and often they have more than one answer. So, we will be wading through ideas and opinions in order to understand and evaluate them, to see if they're valid, reputable, and sound. Many issues in public discourse today come from misinformation, fake news, and lack of knowledgeable reporting. So, the goal of this unit is to learn how to ask good questions, consider rhetorical situations, and find good answers that are based in reputable and timely information. Be forewarned: the inquiry process is long and sometimes frustrating, with false starts and U-turns, but by the end of it, we'll know more about how to both ask and answer good questions about food – as well as consider why asking these questions matters in the first place.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

You will write an academic inquiry essay that both **contextualizes** and **answers** a **deep research question** about a **food issue** and its **social, cultural, and economic impacts**. You will use reputable and relevant **sources** that help you answer this question from a **variety of perspectives**, using (and documenting) your sources as evidence to support your claims.

Your essay should include the following (not necessarily in this order):

1. **A deep research question related to food:** The specifics of this question are up to you. You may want to consider the consumption, production, purchasing, accessibility, or impacts of a particular food issue. However, your question/subject needs to be the following:

a) **Contended:** this should be a food issue about which there is some debate, not a question that is easily answered. You should select a question you do not know the answer to...yet!

b) **Timely:** this should be a conversation that people are having now, one that matters in 2021. For example, you may want to consider how COVID is affecting a particular food issue.

c) **Local:** while your question does not have to focus on Fort Worth or TCU (though it could!), it should be focused and narrow, so you can find clear and appropriate answers and explain them completely with depth and specificity.

d) **Significant:** the question needs to matter. Your question should consider the social, economic, or political ramifications of this food issue.

2. **Context for this question:** You will want to consider the rhetorical situation of the question. How does this question fit into contemporary (American) society and/or culture, economics, and politics? Who are the stakeholders? What is the exigence? How do you, as an inquirer, relate to the question?

3. **Answer(s) to the question:** You will want to find and consider different relevant and reputable answers to your question from experts and stakeholders on the issue. You will need to represent those answers fairly and accurately, and then help us see the pros and cons of each answer. Ultimately, you want to help us understand the conversation: what are people who care about this issue saying? Make sure you explore various perspectives. You are not necessarily making an argument about which answer is right or best; instead, you are reporting on how people are answering this question and how/why their answers are different.

4. **Sources that support your answer(s):** In order to answer the question, you will need to rely on people who have been thinking and talking about this question for much longer than you have, people with expertise and knowledge. You find and evaluate sources that are reputable, relevant, and accurate. Most of these sources will likely be text-based, but you may do a survey or an interview with an expert on your issue.

Once you have read and understood your sources, you will use them to support your explanations of the answers you have found, citing them well. You may want to use the TCU Library search, as well as Google Scholar or other online search engines. You may not use Wikipedia as one of your sources, though it is a useful place to begin your research. Ultimately, you will need to cite **at least 4 different reputable, relevant, and timely sources** in your essay, but be prepared to read at least twice that number of sources in order to find the information you need to answer your question well.

5. **A takeaway:** Lastly, you will want to give your readers an understanding of why asking and answering this question matters. “So what?” Who benefits from this question? Why should we care, and what impact does this food question have?

All of these elements should work together to teach us not just about a food question being now in our current cultural climate, but also the various answers experts have given to that question and why the whole conversation matters.

See more details on the [Project 2 rubric](#).

WHERE AND HOW DO WE POST IT? WHEN IS IT DUE?

Essays should be between **1,200-1,500 words double-spaced and in 12-point font**. Please include a header with your name and the date, as well as a catchy title.

In this essay, you will need to **cite at least 4 reputable, relevant, and timely sources in your text**. As such, at the end of your essay, you will also include a bibliography of your sources in MLA style. *We will be using MLA style not because it's important to know MLA style, but rather, it's important to be able to report where a source came from, who wrote it, and where you received your information.*

This project is worth **35%** of your grade.

Bring a draft of your [Project 2 proposal](#) to your [conference](#) on **Thursday, 2/18**. A complete and/or revised proposal is due to the [Project 2 Proposal Assignment box](#) by **Thursday, 2/18 at 11:59pm**.

A draft of your **potential bibliography** with at least 3 sources and descriptions of each source is due to the [Project 2 Potential Bibliography Assignment box](#) by **Thursday, 3/4 at 11:59pm**.

Rough draft and [author's note](#) is due by **Friday, 3/19 at 11:59pm** to your group's [Project 2 Workshop discussion forum](#) **and** the [Project 2 Draft Assignment box](#).

Final revised draft and final **author's note** is due by **Friday, 3/26 at 11:59pm** to the [Project 2: Academic Inquiry Essay \(Final Revised Draft\) Assignment box](#).