Faculty Author: Eric Rawson

Course: Writing 150

Department or School: The Writing Program

Student Population: Second-semester freshmen

Duration: 4 weeks

Deliverables:

• Rough draft
• Conference with instructor
• In-class peer review of rough draft
• Final draft submitted through Turnitin

Keywords: writing, data, analysis, essay, research paper

Description

Summary

Students analyze empirical data to evaluate a specific widely held belief of conventional wisdom. Through a 5-7 page thesis-driven essay, students demonstrate that the conventional wisdom is incorrect and argue that failing to correct the misconception has significant social consequences.

Assignment Goals

By this point in the semester, we have dealt with matters of invention, rhetorical analysis, counter-argument, and using research for discovery. This essay asks you to go even deeper into argumentation, with an emphasis on scholarly research and on making logos appeals. We will focus again on research methods, scholarly sources, bibliographies, quotation integration, and counter-arguments. For this assignment, you will analyze empirical data to discover the parameters of the issue and to draw original conclusions. In order to develop
support for your argument, you will cite at least three authoritative sources in your paper. (These sources can include primary data resources.)

In a thesis-driven essay of 5-7 pages in which you adopt a contrarian position, identify a myth, misconception, or point of conventional wisdom regarding technology’s impact on society.

Through the analysis of data, you will demonstrate that the conventional wisdom is incorrect. You will then argue that failing to correct this misconception has significant social consequences.

In your research and writing, you may need to explore the origins and history of this myth or misconception, as well as its currency. Consider also the way in which conventional wisdom is allied with ideology even as it is disproved by the data.

Recommended Tools

• [http://libguides.usc.edu/data](http://libguides.usc.edu/data) (not for journal posting)
• Google Scholar, ProQuest, Jstor, and other databases
• Blackboard LMS
• Microsoft Word or other word-processing program
• Turnitin (accessed through Blackboard)
• Katharin Peter, USC Data Librarian

Faculty Author Advice

If I were to use this assignment again, I would frame the assignment differently. I would ask students first to research public perception information, like polling data, for the issue before framing their final research question.

Keep in mind it’s not the data that matters; it’s the writing. The data is just the thing that is being written about. It’s the argument and analysis that matters.