

Creative Nonfiction and Science Writing
Unit 4 Major Assignment: Research Essay
Assignment Sheet

DUE DATE: _____

SUMMARY OF THE ASSIGNMENT

Use at least two research methods discussed in class for a creative nonfiction essay or science article that offers readers new information. You can write on any topic for this assignment.

PURPOSE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

This assignment adds to your writerly toolkit in providing additional means of gathering material for your essays. Creative nonfiction essays rely on research to offer interesting “news” to readers through literary means. The old mantra to “write what you know” is best understood as translating to “write to know more.” In this assignment, you’ll use at least two means of “knowing more” – interviews, surveys, ethnography, statistical analyses, archival research, or another methodology.

REQUIREMENTS AND GENERATIVE CONSTRAINTS

- Submit the source material that you worked with to compose your essay. Provide copies of primary data that you collected from your research work. Remember that you need to use at least two of the methodologies that we listed in class.
- Your essay should be 3-5 double-spaced pages.
- Include a title that is unique and specific to your essay.
- Make ample use of detail, drawn from your research.
- Find information that most people don’t know in order to defamiliarize something for the reader.
- At some point in your essay, make reference to how different types of scientists (biologists, ecologists, chemists, physicists, etc.) would approach your topic. How do the interests, methodologies, and conventions of different research disciplines produce different knowledges about your topic? This mention should be well-integrated into your prose.
- Use evocative language, including metaphor.
- Make unexpected connections between your subject matter and something that is apparently unrelated to your topic.
- References should be blended into your prose and should not read as “tacked on.” Don’t “drop quotes”; all quotes should be prefaced and followed by your own words. Introduce quotes and integrate them into the grammar of your prose, while remaining faithful to the integrity of the source.
- Your essay should be easy to follow and consistently interesting.
- Style, tone, word choice, verb tense, grammar, and spelling should be consistent. All departures from convention should have a clear purpose and should contribute to the meaning of the piece.