English 300
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Spring 2016

Team Project: Researched Report

The semester-long team project will introduce you to technical report writing and to strategies for researching and writing in teams. We'll focus on including the expected parts of a report, such as front matter, executive summary, study the productive use of charts, tables, graphs, and other graphics, and practice reader-friendly layout and design techniques.

This group project will involve identifying a problem, conducting text-based research to learn about the issue, and proposing a solution (a recommended course of action) to address that problem. Each group will choose its own topic and agree on how to share responsibilities. Each group will produce a substantial written document (4500–6000 words) as well as present on their findings to the class in a formal, ~15 minute presentation.

First, though, you'll need to have something to report on, so we'll start with the research component of the assignment.

I'd like you to decide on a local issue or topic that you can research sufficiently with 8 to 14 sources. The topic should be "local" in that it might be related to Richmond, EKU, your home town, an organization you belong to, your employer, etc. In the report, you'll make the case that there is a need for a change or improvement and then offer ways to make that happen.

Proposing a topic
Before you fully commit to a topic, I'd like you to brainstorm some ideas, search for some sources, and write a project proposal (a professional genre in itself). When drafting the proposal, use the attached template as a guide for what to include and what order to arrange it in. In the proposal, make a case for its relevance and timeliness, and identify the possible real-world target audiences. Include a brief bibliography of a few possible sources related to this topic and a brief statement on how each source might help you (you don't need to have read them yet—just verify that there are sources available for your topic). I'll meet with your groups in a few weeks to discuss your proposal—please have your proposal completed and printed by the time of your conference.

Your topic should be one that allows you to identify a problem and offer a solution, or one that allows you to propose a better way of doing something. That is, in your report you'll need to make a case for a change in policy or behavior. Choose a topic of a scope that you can reasonably comment on in the amount of time available to you, and for which you can find an audience you can reasonably persuade (see below). For example, if reporting on recycling policy, focus locally (on Richmond, on EKU) rather than nationally.

Audience
Your report will need to address a specific, real-world audience. This audience should be a group or person who could reasonably take action on the proposal you are writing. Choose an audience

whom you have a reasonable chance of persuading (e.g. your congressional representative may not be swayed by your report, but a local town council member might; you may not be able to persuade all the youth of America, but you could persuade the members of the EKU student government).

Research Requirements

Your report should draw from *at least* eight substantial sources. Sources need to be credible, but they may include a mix of academic and popular sources. You may include a personal interview with a knowledgeable interviewee as a source as well.

Reporting Your Findings

In 4500–6000 words (this document has 913 words) provide an overview of the issue and propose a course of action. That may involve identifying a problem, proving that a problem exists, showing that a change is needed, showing the benefits of a change, and providing realistic steps for making that change. For example, you might explain how adopting a new protocol might save lives, or show how using a new technology or piece of equipment could increase productivity.

Your finished report will need to include the common elements often found in an analytical report, which are outlined in the textbook: Front matter, introduction, methodology, results, discussion, conclusion/recommendation, and back matter (Johnson-Sheehan 262). This way of organizing and present findings may be very different from what you are used to in research papers you've been asked to write in other classes, so we'll spend time in class looking at model reports, identifying the parts, and planning how to use them in your report.

Format and Presentation

We will also focus considerable time on formatting the report to give it a professional, polished appearance. This will include effective use of headings, font choices, use of columns and block formatting, and inclusion of informative graphics such as charts, tables, and illustrations.

Once the report is finished, we'll work on ways of presenting that information, focusing on delivering an oral presentation with slides, and on producing reader-friendly infographics.

In short, there will be a lot involved in this project, which will take up the majority of the rest of the semester—so be sure to choose a topic you are interested in writing about!

Proposal Superstructure

Introduction   Explain in general terms what the research project is all about.

Problem   Describe the problem that your project will address.

Objectives   Define what features your solution should include in order to be successful. Formulate objectives based upon the specific problem(s) you have identified.

Solution   Describe your plan for achieving the objectives you have listed. What is your final project going to look like?

Methods   Explain how you will go about gathering data and/or resources for your proposed solution.

Resources   Describe the facilities and equipment you will need to complete your project.

Schedule   Tell the reader what you are going to do and when you are going to do it. Break it down by weeks and plan for any deadlines and other events listed on the syllabus.

Qualifications Demonstrate your suitability for the tasks you've proposed by describing your experience and capabilities. Think of classes you've taken, jobs you've had, projects you've worked on, and other unique abilities you bring to this task.

Management   Identify who in your group will have management responsibilities (who's in charge?) and explain what each group member's responsibilities will be.

Costs   Detail the costs of this project in terms of time and money.