

English 1001, Dr. Hollyfield

Synthesis Essay Prompt

Length: 2-3 pages (500-750 words)

Value: 10 points (10% of final grade)

Due Date: By November 18th

Assignment: Synthesis means a cohesive summary of a variety of sources and viewpoints revolving around a particular issue. For this assignment, you will follow an issue related to our course theme in the news. I would suggest following the story at minimum for a week, not only to collect a solid data sample but also to see how the story develops. However, you can go back to previously released stories directly about the 9/11 anniversary as long as you can find copies of the material.

Your research should focus on general news sources such as newspaper articles, magazine and newspaper features, editorials, and blog posts from numerous perspectives. You should look at multiple sources, but choose **at least** six (6) sources for your paper. These sources should be equally balanced between print and electronic media as well as between conservative and liberal viewpoints, which means, **at least** three (3) must come from printed publications and **at least** three (3) must be written from different political viewpoints. You will need to save your print sources and make hard copies of all electronic sources because you must turn in a source portfolio with your paper draft.

After you have collected your sources, you will write a 2-3 page (500-750 word) paper that analyses and synthesizes this information for your audience. You should A). Explain basic facts about the issue, B). Explain the arguments from all sides of the issue, and C). Evaluate the validity of each side by assessing the quality of its sources using the methods discussed on your library visit (for example is a blog by an amateur more credible than an editorial by an economist in the *New York Times*?). Though this assignment can be submitted any time before November 18th, you should complete it before you begin work on your final paper since it serves as a practice for that larger assignment. As always, feel free to bring early drafts and revisions to my office hours.

In-Class Synthesis Practice (Quiz I)

9/12/11

In order to prepare you for your synthesis paper and your final issue paper, we will practice a sample synthesis in class. While the assignment will be the same exercise as above, this will be a timed, 15-minute, handwritten draft, and you will use last night's readings from Noam Chomsky's *9/11* and Ann Coulter's *How to Talk to a Liberal (If You Must)* as your source sample.

Over the weekend, I asked you to post an issue you found that Chomsky and Coulter both address to the Moodle discussion forum. Now, explain that issue pretending that Chomsky and Coulter are the only sources. Your paper should not summarize the articles. Instead, it should put the issue first and cite the sources second. For example, instead of "Noam Chomsky writes" as beginning paragraph statements, you should write something like "Advocates of this side say that" and cite Chomsky or Coulter as an example. After all, when you wrote research papers on dinosaurs in elementary school, the dinosaurs were the subject, not the authors of the books you read to prepare.

Your draft should address all three of the following: A). Explain basic facts about the issue, B). Explain the arguments from all sides of the issue, and C). Evaluate the validity of the side by assessing the quality of its sources using the methods discussed on your library visit.

Again, this is a draft. I will not grade it like a polished paper. Strive for clarity, not perfection.