

Personal Interview and Research Essay

Purpose:

- To learn how to use personal interviews as research tools.
- To practice incorporating a variety of sources into a research paper.
- To work collaboratively.
- To prepare for the final presentation at the end of the semester.

Directions:

With a partner, interview a person who somehow represents a local, probably non-profit organization involved in protecting human rights and/or improving the lives of local citizens.

Step One: Pick a partner and a topic.

What are some issues that interest the both of you? What causes do you both think are important to address at the moment?

Examples could be an organization involved in helping the homeless find work, shelter, or food; an arts organization that works with children in under resourced areas; a group involved with criminal justice reform, education reform, economic inequality (poverty), student rights, labor rights, migrant/immigrant protection, refugee resettlement, protection of LGBTQ people. Religious freedom organizations would be fine for this too, as would a local branch of the NRA, or an organization that focuses on self-defense/firearm safety (try to find a non-profit regarding this). You can write about an animal shelter if you want. You can also find an organization interested in protecting voting rights/voting accessibility, rights for small business owners. You may write about a housing project like Habitat for Humanity

Step Two: Set up the interview.

You'll probably want to have two topics on hand, in case one of the interviews falls through. Once you pick an organization, email or call names on the website and request 30 minutes of a member's time to interview them about the organization for a college English research project. Also, let the member know that you will be sharing information about their organization to our class, including how to get involved/donate. ;)

Step Three: Research

Prepare information from at least **at least four** sources (outside of the interview) which somehow address the organization's background, the context for the organization—major issues it addresses, the history of how it came to be, and outside reactions to it, if possible.

You may use *The New Jim Crow*, or any other source we've read in class, but make sure you narrow down the passages that you will be applying to the paper.

Step Four: Prepare the questions.

Have a list of at least seven questions, based on your research, to ask during the interview. Also prepare follow up questions to have on hand.

More Essentials:

A clear topic

You and your partner will want to choose an angle for presenting the interview—it should go a step beyond just “telling the reader about this organization”. We will be reading and watching interviews in class, to get an idea of how to angle the paper.

Content:

The interview should take up 2/3 of your paper. (For instance, if you write nine pages, the interview should be six of them.)

Context:

One third of your interview should be context. What kind of interview was it? (Phone? Face to face?). What should we know about the topic (organization) or person before we go into the interview?

Using Sources:

Four (min) sources cited somewhere in the paper, MLA style. **THIS INCLUDES YOUR INTERVIEW AS A CITED SOURCE** (so, you need to find 4 additional sources). You can cite the sources either in the body of the interview or the contextual segment. You also can cite sources in your questions.

Choice of formatting.

You must make a creative decision about how you will present the interview to your reader. I suggest you look up interviews online and look at how they are formatted. We will look at some examples in class, too. You should be able to defend your choice.

Proposal:

You will provide the MLA citations for **FOUR** sources, along with a brief, 1-2 sentence description of how you will use that source in your paper. You will also show me a list of five (minimum) prepared questions for the interview **OR** a list of questions you already asked, if you conducted the interview already. Finally, you'll state the topic and choice of formatting. We will discuss these at conferences and count for your draft one. I will give you more information about the proposal as we near the due date.

Note: each person will write his or her own proposal.

Final Paper Format:

7-10 pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman font, one-inch margins.

Submission:

Even though you will write the paper together, you must each submit a copy of it (Word Document) to an iCollege dropbox on the day that the paper is due.

Key Dates to Remember:

Day to have your topic: February 14
Day to have your interview set up: February 16
Proposal: February 18
Peer Review: February 28
Final Draft/Memo: March 4

Proposal for Paper II: The Interview

Due: February 18th, upload to the iCollege dropbox before midnight.

Format:

1. Write a paragraph answering the following questions:

Who is your partner? What organization will you profile with your interview? Who will you interview? Where are you in the process of interviewing that person? Finally, how are planning to divide the work for this paper?

2. Write an annotated bibliography for **two** sources that you will use in the paper.

- a. write out the MLA citation that would go in your works cited page at the end of the paper.
- b. Write a one-sentence summary of that source.
- c. Write one sentence about how you will use that source in the paper.

Remember:

Both of you must submit your own proposal, and you must write about your own sources. (There are four sources required, aside from the interview, so if you both write about two, you will have all of your research finished by the end of the week.)

Rubric for Interview:

How each part will be allotted points for each of the four sections:

25	20	15	10	5<
Masterful/Original		Good	Average	There but flawed	Missing/Unacceptable

Total: 100 points.

Development/Language (25%)

- The questions and ideas presented are specific and not general.
- The author finishes thoughts (doesn't leave the reader hanging).
- The contextual section gives a complete introduction to the topic and person.
- Avoids clichés and generalizations.

Excellent	Good	Adequate	Weak	Inadequate
-----------	------	----------	------	------------

Organization (25%)

- Each part of the essay flows logically from the preceding point. Strong beginning and ending.
- Coherence between and within paragraphs is distinctive and further supports the writer's goal to provide clear understanding and engaged reading throughout the essay.
- Proper editing of the interview brings focus and keeps paper moving.
- The format is consistent.

Excellent	Good	Adequate	Weak	Inadequate
-----------	------	----------	------	------------

Incorporating Sources (25%)

- Presentation of the essay, including **MLA format and documentation of sources**, is appropriate to the writing context.
- The sources are incorporated with context and assessments (TIQA).
- Source information strengthens the authors' point in a particular paragraph.

Excellent	Good	Adequate	Weak	Inadequate
-----------	------	----------	------	------------

Grammar, Spelling, and Mechanics (25%)

- Minimal errors in spelling, grammar, or mechanics appear so that the reader is never distracted by errors.

Excellent	Good	Adequate	Weak	Inadequate
-----------	------	----------	------	------------

