

# A More Perfect Union - Term Paper Assignment

This assignment serves several purposes:

- help you reach your writing goals
- give you experience writing a college-level essay
- give you a dry-run for your senior project paper
- allow you to personalize what you're learning
- help you synthesize the ideas and information about government and U.S. History

Your paper must fulfill the following requirements:

- Be 6-10 double-spaced pages
- follow the guidelines of one of the specific essay formats I've listed below
- Use at least three different pieces of evidence from readings, class activities, and films that we go over in class. Honors students must integrate their chosen film, *The Grand Inquisitor*, or *Angels in America* into their argument in some way.
- Use proper MLA in-text citations and include a works-cited page

Due date (provisional): Draft will be due on Friday, October 16th. You will have roughly from October 20th to 29th to complete a revision if you so choose.

Writing Time: My intention is to give you time in-class over five days to work on the paper. There will be other responsibilities during this time for our class project. My hope is that we can build flexibility into these days so you can decide how much you want to work on the paper in class versus the group project. Similarly, you will have time to work on the revision in-class but will also have to juggle responsibilities for the group project.

What do I need to do?

- Choose an essay format (see below)
- Reflect and write on the ideas and information we cover in class (e.g. Market and Polis, Four Faces of Power, Decision-Making, etc.)
- Identify a couple of topics you want to explore in more depth
- Set up a time to talk with me about your interests, ideas, and preferred format so we can find a topic you're passionate about and get you going in a productive direction

Evaluation: Each format has its own rubric. I will grade your initial draft. We might build more flexibility into grading the revision. It depends on how the self-assessment on the college essay goes and how much time we have.

Potential Formats:

**Writing a profile** - You can write a profile of an individual. This can be an historical figure or someone who is living today, such as a local elected official. If you do someone living today, you should strongly consider doing an interview. *Evaluation:* detailed description, point of view, tone, organization

**Explaining a Concept** - With this essay, you pick a concept or idea (e.g. power or federalism) and explore it from one or more different angles. The focus in this essay is on explanation, not argument. *Evaluation:* focused thesis, organization, explanatory strategies

**Finding Common Ground** - You will pick an issue where people hold opposing viewpoints, such as freedom of speech or abortion. Your goal is to use your powers of analysis to find where these two perspectives come together and where they are irreconcilable. This will require you to find specific articles to represent each side. *Evaluation:* clear introduction, impartial presentation of positions, probing analysis, solid evidence, organization

**Arguing a Position** - This is the simplest format and the one you will encounter most in a college class. You choose a topic, such as the Syrian Refugee Crisis, develop a thesis, and support your thesis with evidence drawn from our readings and discussions. *Evaluation:* well-presented issue, arguable thesis and strong evidence, effective counterargument, organization

**Proposing a Solution** - In this essay, you identify a problem or issue, such as climate change, and make an argument about why a particular approach or strategy is the best solution. *Evaluation:* well-defined position, well-supported solution, effective counterargument, organization

**Speculating about Causes** - This essay will explore the factors and dynamics that result in a particular phenomenon, such as the increase in student debt. *Evaluation:* well-presented issue, arguable thesis, plausible causes and support, effective counterargument, organization

**Analyzing Stories** - This essay focuses on literary or film analysis. You can choose any of the texts or films on the honors list and develop a thesis about what they mean. You must relate them to the other ideas and information that we cover in the class: *Evaluation:* clear, arguable thesis, well-supported argument, organization.

With each of these essays, mechanics, which includes grammar, syntax, and punctuation, will be part of the evaluation of your essay.

With any of these formats, you can go deeper with the issue or topic that we choose for our group project. If you have a clear idea for your senior project, you can use this essay to explore the policy implications connected to that topic.

I encourage you to use your DP for ongoing reflection on your topic and its connection to what we are doing in class. Talking to me early and often will likely help you develop beautiful work.