

## Humanities 12 - Speculating about Causes

Your paper must fulfill the following requirements:

- Be 6-10 double-spaced pages
- follow the guidelines of one of the specific guidelines 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. Refer to the List of Topics We've Studied posted on my DP under Student Resources to choose these three pieces of evidence
- Use proper MLA in-text citations and include a works-cited page. A handout explaining MLA citation is in your writing folder

### Speculating about Causes - Specific Guidelines

In this format, you will make a reasoned argument for that a phenomenon or trend is due to one or more specific causes. I will evaluate the following four features to arrive at a final grade.

- **Well-presented subject** - Your first job is to establish the phenomenon or trend you are examining as real and important enough to write about. You should give examples, scenarios, or anecdotes that people can relate to and that make the subject concrete. The question you are trying to answer is some version of "Why does X exist or occur?" or "Why is X are increasing or decreasing?"
- **Plausible Causes** – A good thesis makes the cause you are proposing clear. There are many ways to classify causes (we have discussed direct, indirect, and root causes). You need to classify the different causes you bring up and how they relate to each other. Do not list causes. Rather, explain how the causes interact to produce the result you are writing about. Remember correlation doesn't equal causation. You should support your explanation with at least three references to material we have studied in class.
- **Effective counterargument** – You will need to include at least one potential objection to your position. You will need to accommodate or refute this objection, not simply acknowledge it.
- **Readable plan** – You must have a clear thesis and forecasting statement in your introduction. Paragraphs should have topic sentences. The best papers will use repeated words or phrases to focus the reader and include strong transitional phrases to move the reader from one section of the essay to the next.

**Note that I do not assign point totals or percentages to these features above.** An essay that is extremely strong on one feature can make up for an area that requires more refinement.

Match these requirements with the general essay standards posted on my DP to understand how I will evaluate your essay.

Here is the checklist I will use to evaluate each feature

Feature	Comments
Well-Presented Subject	Shows the phenomenon or trend is important Use at least one source to establish subject and importance Seems to write with a clear purpose to a defined audience
Plausible Causes	Thesis offers a causal argument Explains the connection between multiple causes Explanation supported by credible evidence Avoids logical fallacies (e.g. correlation equals causation)
Effective Counterargument	At least one objection to the argument Provides an accommodation or refutation
A Readable Plan	Thesis and forecasting statement Topic sentences Labels positions consistently Repeats key words to identify agreement and disagreement Uses transitional words and phrases - "For example," "as well as," "Even though."
Mechanics	No comma splices or sentence fragments Correct use of punctuation Writes primarily in active voice, minimizing passive voice Errors do not significantly hinder comprehension

### A Note on Topics

Good topics for this format are ones where people have not determined a definitive cause. Subjects that seem to have an obvious, straightforward cause won't make a compelling essay. Avoid subjects where the cause is something vague and amorphous (e.g. racism, poverty) because you'll have to spend too much time defining exactly what these things are. Think about whether you want to present the subject as a phenomenon or as a trend. You can present many subjects both ways. Do you want to explore why something happens? (Phenomenon) Or do you want to explore why something is increasing or decreasing over time? (Trend)

Due: End of class on Monday, November 2nd