INFORMATIVE SYNTHSIS ESSAY
Prewriting 1: Topic ideas and Sources

Now that we've read, watched, and talked about a lot of things, it's time to get started on our essay. As usual, we will do prewritings first. But, before we begin, let's review.

Our Goal
Keep your mind on our goal for the assignment:

Write a formal informative essay about an issue that is related to our connected society using credible sources in the field, sharing what they say about the issue. In the end, you are going to "*explain and show how their information is related to each other's, how the information may connect and diverge*" (Zhuravlova) and what that information reveals about the topic—including ideas such as why this is important to think deeply about, what we should take into account and what we may need to know more about.

Step 1: Choose a Topic

To start, you need to choose a topic. You may already have identified one, either way, make sure to connect it to online/computing technologies, social media, advertising/marketing—something having to do with our connected society. This is not an open assignment where you can choose whatever you want. It has to be linked to technology, **and it cannot be focused on any of these topics**:

•Abortion   • The Afterlife   •Politics
•Religion/Religious Issues   •Same-Sex Marriage

Your essay might discuss these, but they should not be the focus.

Step 2: Select a Focus

Kelsie Endicott, from the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, says that the first step to take in putting together a literate review is to "Determine what areas of scholarship related to your topic that you will need to discuss. These areas will be your strands of literature that you will eventually weave together as you write your literature review" (slide 8). Informative synthesis is the kind of writing done in a literature reviews as we read about in chapter 5 of *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First Year Writing.*

Once you choose a topic, you need to make sure it's focused. Writing about AI is cool, but HUGE. In the essay "What AI Teaches Us About Good Writing," Laura Hartenberger is looking specifically at A.I. and writing. So, think about what aspect of the overall topic you might want to look at, whether you choose parasocial relationships, social media, or any of the other multitude of topics you can pick from. Of course, you may already know what your topic focus is, but if not, use your research time to help you narrow it down.

Step 3: Find your Sources
In the end, you must use 4 sources. Two of those sources must come from our reading/watching list on the schedule or other places I've pointed out to you.

You need to pull together 4 sources

- **2 Sources from our READ|WATCH or other appropriate sources**

- **2 Sources you find—1 must be college-level and credible.**
  That doesn't necessarily mean the college-level source must be a formal study, but it should not be a lightweight general article or something like that. It should have an author who is credible in the field—education and/or experience.
    o A good place to begin is in the actual library talking to a librarian. They can ask you specific questions and help you with focusing your topic and finding sources. Remember that you can connect with a librarian online

too—please at least use audio instead of relying solely on the chat option. Just click on Get Connected on the Library home page.
- o Also, check out the library search page.

As you find sources, you'll need to read and/or re-read them and make notes on those, and as you do, keep these ideas in mind.

While you make notes on what points interest you and are helpful. You can think of these in two ways:

- **Big Ideas**: Philosophical statements that give us insight into how your topic has a bigger role in our lives or society.
  - o Often used in introduction and conclusion, but it can find a place anywhere in your essay.
- **Specific Information:** Facts, statistics, quotes, examples.
  - o Usually used in body paragraphs to show the details of the topic.

The other sources you bring in can represent any of these things and more:
- o Similar or opposing views.
- o Studies
- o Opinion pieces
- o Pro/con articles
- o A song, meme, ad, story, or example that relates to your topic.

Tips on how to read different kinds of writing/video/songs for this kind of writing—what to look for.
- "Reading and Writing about Multi-modal Texts," from *A Writer's Reference*. Check out the pdf pages 156-163.
- How to analyze an ad: New Mexico Media Literacy Project, especially "Deconstructing Media Messages" on pages 3-4.
- How to analyze song lyrics/poetry: "Literary Analysis of a Song." (Video) Obviously, your whole essay isn't about a song, but these ideas help you do the analysis and integrate parts into your essay along with the other evidence.
- "Notes to Make on Stories" worksheet just to help you focus on some key points.

Prewriting 1: Assignment
In this first step you are choosing and focusing your topic and making notes on the 4 sources you have found. (Remember, you can change your mind later if something better turns up.)

So, here are the basics:
- Choose your topic and focus it.
- Select your sources
    - Two sources from READ|WATCH or the other sources I've directed you to.
    - Two Sources you find: these could be similar or opposing views, a deeper study, a song, meme, ad, story, or example that relates to your topic.
        - For each of these provide:
            - **Citation:** Cite the source for Works Cited page
            - **Credibility:** Provide a sentence or two explaining the author(s) credibility—or the sources. Go with the author first.
            - **Usable Information:** Bulleted list of quotes, stats, facts, etc. with in-text citation.

It might look something like this:

Yes, you can use that topic if it's what you have in mind. This is just an example.

Topic/focus: How technology is used to make us want to buy things

Citation: (Make sure you get the MLA citation for this essay)
Crash Course. "How Companies Know What You Want (And Why)." *YouTube*, 19 Jan. 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mkDVC_izIV0.

Credibility: (Who are the authors, sponsors, etc. What are their educational backgrounds, experience, or other connection to the topic they're writing about?)
Crash Course (CrashCourse) is an educational YouTube channel started by John Green and Hank Green. It works in partnership with Arizona State University and Google.

Info to consider Using: (This can be parts you paraphrase, quotes, statistics, etc.)

- "Uma Karmarkar is a scholar whose research revolves around how we make decisions. 'What neuroscience does is it gives us access to some of these emotional elements or these elements that might not be fully conscious and tells us a little bit more about some of the things that might also be contributing to people's experiences and choices'" (qtd. in Crash Course, 00:03:09-00:03:28)

- "Through neuroscience – but also with the help of psychology and behavioral economics – they get a pretty good idea of what makes us tick. And they use this knowledge to get us to buy more of their stuff." (Crash Course, 00:04:28-00:04:27)

Then repeat the CITATION, CREDIBILITY, and INFO sections for each source.