PROJECT 1: EXPLORATORY SYNTHESIS
ENGL 1302: COMPOSITION AND RHETORIC II

OVERVIEW
For this assignment, you will write an Exploratory Synthesis (also called a Literature Review) based on a related issue to They Say I Say Chapter 16 “How Can We Bridge the Differences that Divide Us?”. You will research additional texts (from your annotated bibliography) related to your topic and enter a conversation with the texts, synthesizing them, evaluating them, and drawing upon them for additional support as you develop a claim about the larger significance of the topic. This essay focuses on the “they say” portion of argument and you are required to understand the academic conversation surrounding the issue you have selected. It is important to understand that you are not making an argument in this paper; rather, you are seeking to understand the arguments that others have made and find a place that you can contribute to the conversation. The essay should demonstrate a development of thought about your issue, moving from your initial viewpoint to a deeper understanding of the context and significance after completing your inquiry. This development should be structured around concepts that require a synthesis of texts to represent the conversation surrounding an issue.

The most important thing about this paper, in addition to developing the academic conversation (that, hopefully, does not just restate something obvious information about the essays, topics, and authors but, rather, gets at the larger significance of the issue, comparing and evaluating perspectives), is to make sure that you ground your inquiry in a close reading of the texts themselves by supporting your exploration with examples and descriptive details. Whatever it is you want to illuminate (and you have free rein to develop any your inquiry as you like; there is no “right” or “wrong” interpretations in this course, only stronger and more weakly argued ones), just be sure to connect your main observations and ideas to specific passages and details in the texts themselves.

GUIDELINES
Develop a comprehensive and detailed Exploratory Synthesis that draws comparisons between existing perspectives about an issue and support your discussion by evaluating and synthesizing evidence from at least seven (7) specific texts. Be sure to select a variety of texts so that you have a good number of perspectives on the topic. Write a paper of 5-10 (double-spaced) pages. In addition to the 5-10 pages, you will need to include a Works Cited page that indicates the texts you have selected to complete your assignment. As you integrate direct textual evidence, your synthesis should solely represent your own analytical thinking.

Consider the following questions when developing your Argument of Inquiry:

- **Purpose**: What common points about a larger issue are being explored across multiple texts? What is significant and current about this issue?
- **Angle**: Where can you add to this conversation? What significant ideas come to the surface after diving deeply into understanding the texts? What intersections do you see between the texts?
- **Tone**: What attitude about the texts should be clear in your writing? What words will you use to convey this tone?
- **Evidence**: What specific evidence from the texts should be provided to support your discussion of the significant concepts?
- **Contribution**: How will your synthesis advance your audience’s knowledge about the issue beyond the arguments that are constructed in the texts?
- **Style**: How clear is the language/style(expression in the texts’ arguments?}

I believe inquiry should be provocative, risky, stunning, astounding. It should take our breath away with its daring. It should challenge our foundational assumptions and transform the world.

Elizabeth St. Pierre 2011
CONCLUSION: What is meaningful and significant about your inquiry? What is better illuminated through the careful consideration of the texts as a “conversation” about this topic? What will you now contribute to the conversation (your argument) based on your knowledge?

Some additional considerations for the texts you select:

● Choose texts that represent multiple perspectives so that you can make your inquiry engaging for the audience.
● Your texts should be from reputable sources, including scholarly, peer reviewed articles from the LSC Library Databases (Academic Search Complete, JSTOR, Humanities Full Text, Project Muse)
● Your texts should be a variety of texts including discourse articles, studies or experiments, multimedia, and popular sources.
● Your texts should present an argument (i.e. there should be room for someone to disagree with it).
● Your texts must, ultimately, be approved by your instructor.

ORGANIZATION

Arrange the parts of your Exploratory Synthesis in the order that will prove most effective with your audience. Your essay should be objective and analytical rather than inward and subjective. In other words, your essay will look at the information presented in the texts objectively, and then you will participate in the pre-existing conversation, analyzing significant issues that are discussed and making a claim that adds to the conversation. A good Exploratory Synthesis includes a synthesized discussion of key concepts that incorporates multiple points of view; so, you must select your evidence carefully and give plenty of specific examples from the texts.

At a minimum, your Exploratory Synthesis should include the following elements:

● An engaging title that hints at the Exploratory Synthesis’s overall topic and significance.
● An introduction that identifies the issue you are exploring.
  ○ Establish a purpose statement that focuses your inquiry and guides the overall structure and organization of your paper.
  ○ Establish the significance of the issue.
● A background and summary that briefly relays the necessary points of the texts you have selected and includes a clear identification of the overall claim statement of the text. This will allow you to set up your thesis statement as a response to a preexisting conversation. You will need to decide how much to include in this section and how much you wish to integrate into the body of your essay.
  ○ Background for authors including full names, credentials, titles of the works read, and main points.
  ○ The summary should be written objectively – that is, without your opinion or assessment, and it should be written well enough that a person who has not read the texts will understand what is happening through your description. This section should not normally take up more than a fourth of the essay.
● Body paragraphs that organize and synthesize evidence in support of cross-article exploration of specific points. This section is the core of your essay. You will want to carefully explore and support textual connections on significant points, thoroughly supporting your exploration with evidence from multiple texts. Discuss each of your connecting points in clearly defined sections of the essay.
  ○ Begin each of your paragraphs with a topic sentence that clearly states the main idea and indicates that this is exploration of research rather than argument. Cluster your supporting sentences around that main idea without detours.
  ○ Each of your supporting ideas should use evidence from multiple texts (providing credibility and illustrating your ability to synthesize). Do not make the mistake of writing about sources in separate paragraphs. Instead make connections between the texts, demonstrating that they are in conversation with each other and with you.
  ○ Acknowledge the validity of at least one opposing perspective to a point and note the ways in which the point of view is valid. Naysayers can be hypothetical, or they can be authors of the articles on your topic. Identify
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naysayers, represent their views fairly and accurately, make any necessary concessions, and offer insight into how they contribute to the conversation surrounding the issue.

- **A conclusion** that emphasizes the significance of the topic and your contribution to the preexisting conversation.
  - Include a thesis statement that makes your claim about the issue. State clearly what is significant about your claim. What new or interesting insights do you have concerning the topic? To what extent has your inquiry helped explain how the issue works, what it means, or why it is significant? What should your audience understand about the issue that could not have been understood before having read your essay?

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**Introduction (1 paragraph)**
- Engage your reader
- Identify the issue
- Develop a purpose statement
- Explain the significance of the inquiry

**Background (1-2 paragraphs)**
- Objectively summarize and contextualize sources
- Identify authors, titles, and other credentials with appropriate formatting
- Identify the claim/thesis statements of each source

**Body Paragraphs (4-5 paragraphs)**
- Topic sentence that indicates the point of conversation and focuses on the scholarship ("they say") rather than the argument ("I say")
- Synthesize discussion from multiple sources and include textual evidence with appropriate MLA citation
- Explain the relevance of each perspective, clarifying the relationships between the sources
- Conclude the paragraph with insight into potential areas of additional research and considerations about the significance of the point

**Conclusion (1 paragraph)**
- State the significance of the overall inquiry
- Include a developed thesis statement that indicates what your contribution to the conversation will be

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**Important Note:** This essay should extend beyond the traditional 5 paragraph format. Develop your writing to build on this foundation and surpass it.

**Thesis Statement**

*But where does my thesis statement go?* Exploratory Synthesis essays, or Literature Reviews, explore and reflect on a central topic or question, but they rarely provide precise answers or explicit thesis statements early in the text. When writing an exploratory synthesis, put your point in the conclusion. Your conclusion describes not only what you learned but also what your reader should have learned from your research. An Exploratory Synthesis will have a thesis statement that showcases what area of the research still needs to be illuminated. Avoid a thesis statement that has already been developed by one of your sources. Instead, you should strive for something that adds to the conversation.

The foundation for a good thesis statement is this formula: **Thesis Statement = Subject + Opinion.** A strong thesis statement will also demonstrate **SASS;** it will be specific, arguable, supportable, and significant.
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Whatever type of thesis statement you develop, your readers should come away from your Exploratory Synthesis with a clear sense of what you will be contributing to the conversation (*Spoiler Alert: Paper 2*).

**SOURCE SYNTHESIS**

For this paper to be successful, you will need to create body paragraphs that include multiple sources (min. of 3). This is not as simple as sticking quotes in the paragraph just to meet the minimum requirement. Rather, you will need to carefully consider the textual evidence and each source relates to the other sources. Furthermore, you should be using a minimum of 7 different sources throughout the paper and combining them in interesting and illuminating ways. Consider this chart as you organize your body paragraphs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body Paragraph 1</th>
<th>Incorrect</th>
<th>Incorrect</th>
<th>Correct!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A, B</td>
<td>A, B, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Paragraph 2</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A, B</td>
<td>D, G, H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Paragraph 3</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C, D</td>
<td>B, C, E, H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Paragraph 4</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>C, D</td>
<td>D, F, G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>In the above example, the student is only using one source per body paragraph. This does not demonstrate synthesis or an understanding of the conversation.</td>
<td>In this example, the student has two sources per paragraph, but they are not meeting the minimum source requirement nor are they combining sources in interesting ways or considering the sources in a larger conversation.</td>
<td>In this example, the student has the minimum sources per paragraph. Notice that the combination of sources is different. If you completed your Synthesis Invention Activity, your chart should help you develop paragraphs with multiple sources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AUDIENCE**

For this project, you’ll be writing for a more general audience (strangers) whose values and beliefs may be difficult to pin down. They are readers of a general-interest periodical offering analysis and commentary about politics, news, and culture. Assume your audience is well-educated, fair-minded, and consisting of roughly the same percentage of Democrats and Republicans (with a few other political perspectives as well). Because of this, you’ll need to make a good impression by ensuring that your inquiry is well-supported with strong evidence and explanation and that you avoid bias and fallacy that might otherwise undermine your credibility. Clear communication and critical thinking are also necessary for a successful project. Finally, don’t assume that just because someone will read your essay that he/she will automatically be interested in what you have to say. Generate reader interest by making clear what is at stake in your essay, focus on points of interception in the discussion, and why the issue is important.

**STYLE (USING APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE)**

Because you are writing for a wide audience, you should adopt a more formal style, although this does not mean you must set aside your own voice. Think critically, understanding that the way you organize and express your ideas can be as important
as the ideas themselves. Be credible, providing enough detail and evidence to show that you’ve reflected deeply on the issue and that you can responsibly represent the multiple perspectives about the concepts you have chosen to highlight. Be respectful, showing your readers that your ideas are approachable and thoughtful, not arrogant or insensitive (this may also mean that you consider alternate viewpoints and treat opponents with respect so that you aren’t ignoring or demeaning the opinions of others). And finally, be careful, ensuring that your writing is clear and accurate (not generalized, disorganized, or ignorant of writing conventions).

**Academic Voice**

The essay should be written in a formal academic voice. This means that you should avoid first-person references (“I,” “me,” “my,” etc.). This also includes the plural first person references (“we,” “our,” etc.). You should not use phrases such as “I think that,” “I believe that,” or “in my opinion.” Readers will know that the ideas you present in your essay are your own because you are the author of the essay. Do not address your reader casually with the word “you.” Avoid casual language to communicate in a professional style. Avoid contractions like “can’t” or “don’t.” Remove words like “okay” or “lots” and avoid storytelling indicators like “then,” “next,” and “after that.”

**Formatting and Writing Conventions**

Papers should be typed in a legible (ex: Arial, Times New Roman), 12-point font and double-spaced (with space between paragraphs removed). All other formatting should adhere to MLA standards (see resources in D2L for MLA formatting help). Additionally, you’ll want to make sure you proofread your paper carefully to avoid errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics.

**Project Checklist**

With your essay in hand, go through the checklist below, noting where you have met the assignment criteria (these are the areas that I’ll be evaluating). If needed, re-read the guidelines for clarification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have written an Exploratory Synthesis that is 5 to 10 pages long, double-spaced, and in MLA formatting.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have written a well-developed Exploratory Synthesis that identifies a significant issue and effectively analyzes and evaluates multiple perspectives addressing important concepts in the conversation about the issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have written a title and introduction that engage my audience and clearly indicate the issue. In the introductory paragraph, I establish why the issue needs to be considered, and I clearly indicate the purpose and significance of my exploratory synthesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have written a specific purpose statement that 1) clearly identifies a significant issue and 2) indicates the direction and purpose of my essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have included a summary and/or background information for the texts (so that the layperson can understand the context). My summary and/or background is written clearly and objectively, avoiding assessment and bias.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have clearly identified significant points in topic sentences that focus on the current conversation (“they say”) rather than an argument (“I say”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have ensured that each point is explored through multiple perspectives (to maintain my credibility and demonstrate my ability to synthesize sources).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have clearly articulated the relationships between the sources for each point in the paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have concluded each body paragraph with a thoughtful consideration of the conversation, indicating any opportunities for additional research and/or how the point is significant to the overall issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have integrated quotes and/or paraphrases and description effectively and I have explained their significance.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
I have used attributions and in-text citations to give credit to my sources throughout my essay.

I have written a conclusion that states the overall validity of the Exploratory Synthesis and answers the “so what?” question by reminding the reader why it is important to critically consider this issue. My conclusion includes a specific thesis statement that could not have been made at the beginning of the paper but could only be understood once the context of the issue was further illuminated via the Exploratory Synthesis.

I have created and included a Works Cited page.

I have written sentences that are complete, clear, and relatively error-free.

My writing is coherent and well-organized.

I have submitted my project to the appropriate dropbox before the due date/time.

**Submission of Your Final Draft**
Upload your assignments to the appropriate dropboxes in D2L before the assignment deadline.

**Need Exploratory Synthesis Help?**
The following resources can be found in your textbooks and on D2L:

- *The Norton Field Guide* Chapter 3 “Summarizing and Responding: Where Reading Meets Writing”
- *The Norton Field Guide* Chapter 49 “Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing”
- *The Norton Field Guide* Chapter 51 “Documentation”
- *The Norton Field Guide* Chapter 52 “MLA Style”
- *They Say I Say* Preface “Demystifying Academic Conversation”
- *They Say I Say* Introduction “Entering the Conversation”
- *They Say I Say* Chapter 1 “They Say: Starting with What Others Are Saying”
- *They Say I Say* Chapter 2 “Her Point Is: The Art of Summarizing”
- *They Say I Say* Chapter 3 “As He Himself Puts It: The Art of Quoting”
- *They Say I Say* Chapter 7 “So What? Who Cares?: Saying Why It Matters”
- *They Say I Say* Chapter 10 “But Don’t Get Me Wrong: The Art of Metacommentary”
- *They Say I Say* Chapter 14 “What’s Motivating This Writer?: Reading for the Conversation”
- *Little Seagull* W-4 “Developing Paragraphs”
- *Little Seagull* “MLA Style”
- Academic Writing Module (D2L) – resources for Paragraphs, Transitions, Quote Integration, Citation, Verbs, Writing to Avoid, etc.

*Note: Additional Resources may be posted in the D2L module.*

**Other Writing Process Activities for Project 1**

- **Class Activities** – Activities in class provide an opportunity to practice skills that are necessary to successfully complete Project 1.
- **Synthesis Chart** – Even more than the class activities, the chart is meant to help you construct your approach to complete the Argument of Inquiry. After actively reading the texts you should be able to create a detailed chart that identifies significant questions about your topic and includes supporting evidence.
- **Rough Draft** – Completing a rough draft provides a student with the opportunity to receive feedback and gain help from several sources. Rough Draft should be 5 pages + the completed Works Cited page in MLA format

NOTE: Rough Drafts must be complete and submitted in order to be able to receive credit for review activities.
• **Grammarly Report** – Grammarly is a tool to help you identify errors and trends in your writing. While it is useful to consider as you draft and revise your paper, remember that you are the author. When you submit your Grammarly Report, be sure to give the initial report with all the errors. This will demonstrate all the revisions you have made prior to the final submission.

• **Tutor Review** – Review activities are meant to help you critically consider your own writing as you are working through the writing process. While you are not expected to be an English teacher, you are expected to understand the major requirements of the assignment, and you should be able to receive and apply critical feedback to your own writing. You will submit your rough draft to a tutor for this feedback.

• **Final Draft Reflection** – As the final document you will complete for this project, you will be able to reflect on the process and what helped you develop your Toulmin Analysis. This will also give you an opportunity to indicate what you feel is well done and where you would like to improve for future writing.