

The Research Paper: From Research Question to Final Draft **A scaffolded, 8-week program for undergraduate students**

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Mission Statement:

Writing a research paper represents an enormous challenge for college students. Many first-year CUNY students have never written a paper that incorporates both original research and critical thinking skills, and most do not know how to formulate a research question, locate source material, take notes, or cite sources. To compound the problem, many students do not begin work on their final research papers until very late in the semester. It comes as no surprise that the results are, for the most part, unsatisfactory. We believe that breaking down a complex process into manageable steps transforms a daunting assignment into a significant learning experience. Scaffolding the assignment takes students through the research process, offers opportunities for guidance throughout, and makes it possible for the professor to monitor more closely each student's progress. The hope is that peer intervention, instructor feedback, and critical reflection early in the process will improve the overall quality of final drafts and provide students with tools they can use throughout their college experience.

The plan that we have designed includes a number of informal writing activities. These activities help students explore different avenues of research, think through problems and stumbling blocks, narrow the scope of their project, refine their ideas, and articulate an interesting research question. We believe the plan will help prevent pedestrian summaries of broad, undefined subjects, random regurgitation of information (often based on Google searches and encyclopedic sources), and plagiarism. There are two guiding principles that have shaped the structure of this plan: original, in-depth writing requires that students a) have a personal investment in their area of investigation and b) have a genuine interest in finding answers to questions with informative or ethical value to the reading audience.

- This is a generic program that should be adapted and modified for each particular discipline and course need. Refer to the course objectives of your syllabus and make sure that stages of exploration, writing, and research fulfill at least one of the main goals of the course. Feel free to tinker.
- Start work on the research paper as early as possible in the semester. Students should start formulating ideas for the paper before the midterm. Our plan is structured in order that students may successfully complete an 8-10 page formal writing assignment in smaller chunks and over a period of time. We have found that spreading the work over an 8-week period benefits almost every element of writing a research paper: it helps students develop original ideas, enables critical thinking, strengthens revision processes, helps students avoid plagiarism, and allows them to formulate arguments and complete research that fulfills learning objectives for courses.

About grading and feedback:

- Other than the final draft of the paper, all the writing in the program is informal. We have observed that student writing often benefits more from written and oral feedback from professors and peers, rather than from a simple grade on a given assignment. In many cases, feedback on substantive issues is more valuable than grammar and spelling, especially in the early stages. When giving feedback on early drafts, we suggest that instructors provide comments that encourage revision and help students think more deeply about their subjects. In later drafts, organization, citation, grammar, spelling, and syntax can be addressed.
- There are a number of ways to grade this project; it is important to include the informal writing assignments in the overall grade in some way, even if individual informal assignments do not receive grades. In other words, an instructor might make completion of the informal assignments (or 8 of 10) an absolute requirement for receiving a grade on the final paper. Instructors could also devise a point system where each informal assignment receives a single point upon successful completion, and completion of all steps of the program guarantee students at least a “B” for the project.

The 8-week program incorporates 7 in-class informal writing exercises, 4 at-home writing assignments, and 2 full drafts. In class hand outs are in the appendix of this document.

Steps	Receives written feedback from the instructor	Receives in-class feedback from peers and the instructor
Step 1: Research Question	X	
Step 2: Developing Ideas for your paper		X
Step 3: Library workshop		X
Step 4: Thesis	X	
Step 5: Annotated Bibliography	X	
Step 6: Conversation Map		X
Step 7: Integrating Information		X
Step 8: Selecting Main Points		X
Step 9: Refreshing the Thesis		X
Step 10: Outline	X	
Step 11: First Draft	X	
Step 12: Final Draft	X	

Additional resources:

Bean, John C. *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1996. Print. This book is a staple for any Writing Across the Curriculum program. It is filled with formal and informal writing exercises.

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/> *The Purdue OWL*. Purdue University Writing Lab, 2008.

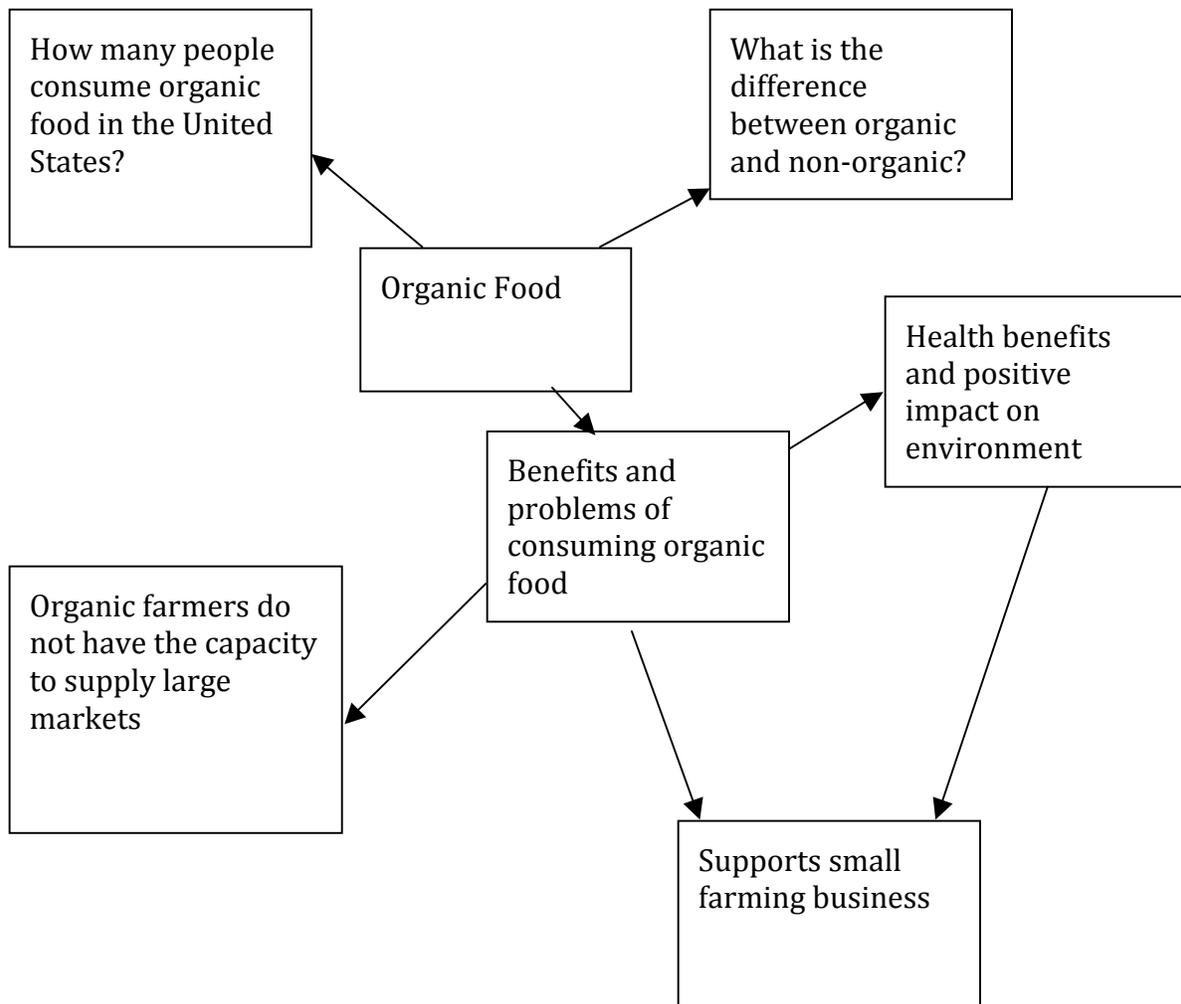
Web. 10 May 2010. Most universities have some sort of online guide to writing and formatting a research paper, but the Owl is one of the clearest and most comprehensive.

WEEK SIX OF THE SEMESTER (SUGGESTED)

Step 1: Brainstorm Map and Research Question (in class, 30 minutes total)

A. Identify a theme or subject matter from the course that greatly interested you (10 min)

Did you have a strong reaction to something from the reading that inspires you to continue research on this subject matter? In the center of a blank piece of paper, write down this theme or subject matter and circle it. Now think about some related ideas (these can be your own), disciplinary problems regarding the subject, or potential questions that you still have about the subject. Draw lines between the main theme and the new ideas and questions. New networks can evolve out of secondary ideas. Try not to edit yourself...free associate. Your network should be more developed than the following example:



B. Limit the focus of your paper (10 min)

Once you've created a large network, look at the entire scheme. Obviously, there's no way to incorporate all of these ideas in a single paper, so try to limit the focus. Of all the ideas and questions on the paper, which do you feel are the most important, relevant, and

interesting? Are there ideas that do not necessarily relate to your central theme? Identify the four or five themes, concepts, and questions that a) interest you the most, and b) are all connected in some way, and write these down in list form.

Example:

- I have the general impression that eating organic food is healthier, but I don't know how I know this.
- I've also heard that it is more ethical to eat organic. Why?
- Why is organic food so expensive? Wouldn't more people eat it if it was more available and less expensive?
- Is there any proof that eating organic has health benefits? Where could I find this proof?
- Can organic food be produced on a large scale, or can only small-scale farmers produce organic food?
- Are there different definitions of "organic"? How does the FDA define organic (for labeling purposes) and are there other ways of defining "organic"?

C. Devise a research question (10 minutes)

Looking at this list, can you identify a single, major question (unanswered, at this time) that incorporates most of the ideas and questions on your list? It is possible (even likely) that the research question will be modified later in the process. But for now, see if you can summarize in two or three full sentences, one of which is your *research question*.

Example: Most people believe organic food is healthy and good for the environment; however, I'm not sure why people believe that. I'm also unsure how exactly organic food is healthier to eat and how it is better for the environment. My research question is: *is organic food healthier to eat, and if so, why. Also, is food grown organically better for the environment?*

Hand in the research question to your professor for comments.

WEEKS SIX OR SEVEN OF THE SEMESTER (SUGGESTED)

Step 2: Developing ideas for your paper (in class, 40 minutes)

A. Answer the following questions (2-3 sentences each) (10 minutes)

1. I am interested in answering my research question because:
2. What I already know is:
3. What I would like to learn more about is:
4. In what ways is answering your **research question** relevant or meaningful to you and/or the community at large? How does it relate to society? In what ways?
5. I may be able to find **information** on this topic in (try to think of places *other than* a Google search):

B. Break-Up into Pairs (15 minutes)

Tell your partner the topic of your paper and share some of what you just wrote.

PARTNER: think about any questions or concerns you might have about this topic and goal.

Do you have any questions or objections?

- How does this topic relate to society, our community? To you?
- Whose viewpoint is being addressed?
- What proof do you expect the writer to cite?
- What if...? What could be an alternative explanation to the problem being addressed?
- Why is this important to you?
- Do you think your partner is taking on too much for an eight-page paper?
- How do you think they could make their goal more specific?

SWITCH and DISCUSS. *Make sure you record questions/comments/concerns raised by your partner!*

C. Digest the information (5 minutes)

Write about your findings: on paper, think through the issues/questions raised by your partner. Write for a couple of minutes on each of the following questions:

- How will I address my partner's ideas, concerns, etc.?
- What kinds of information would answer my partner's questions or address her/his concerns?
- What kinds of information will help me back-up my claims and find answers?
- Is there anything I need to clarify?

D. Discuss with entire class (10 minutes).

What did you discover through this process? How may it be helpful in developing your ideas? Are you super-excited about the subject matter and answering your research question? If not, perhaps you may need to refine or change the question keeping in mind what information will be required and your own interest in the subject matter.

Example of the way your research question might change after this process: After getting feedback from my peers and instructor, and an initial search for information, I now think it might be difficult to answer two research questions in one paper. **My NEW research question is:** *Is eating organic food healthier than traditionally grown food, and if so, why?*

WEEKS SEVEN OR EIGHT OF THE SEMESTER

Step 3: Library Research Worksheet (in a computer classroom or at home)

DEVELOP YOUR KEYWORDS

Write your research question:

Write down related keywords, ideas, and subjects:

Write down synonyms (words that are related to or mean the same thing as your keywords):

GETTING THE BIG PICTURE

A good place to start your research is in a **specialized or general encyclopedia or reference work**. The **reference area** of the library has encyclopedias on many topics. The library also subscribes to the **Gale Virtual Reference Library** database where you can find many encyclopedias online.

Search for an encyclopedia or reference work that deals with the area you are researching and write down the title:

If you can't find an encyclopedia that has information on your topic, go to the library's reference desk and ask a librarian for help finding one.

Write down the **title and author of an article** in the encyclopedia you have found.

Title: _____

Author: _____

FINDING BOOKS USING CUNY+

Write down the citations to two books you have found that are relevant to your topic:

1. Citation

2. Citation

LOCATING SPECIFIC DETAILS – DATABASE SEARCHING

Choose a database from the library's list of databases at:

<http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/library/hcc/dblist.asp>

The library subscribes to both general and more specialized databases that provide access to a variety of articles.

Using your keywords and search terms look for newspaper articles, magazine articles and scholarly journal articles.

Find three articles relevant to your topic or main points:

Database _____

Article Title _____

Author(s) _____

Date, volume number, issue number, pages _____

Database _____

Article Title _____

Author(s) _____

Date, volume number, issue number, pages _____

Database _____

Article Title _____

Author(s) _____

Date, volume number, issue number, pages _____

FINDING INFORMATION ON THE WEB

KEYWORDS: _____

URL: _____

Date accessed _____

What makes this websites useful? How do you know the information is trustworthy?

URL: _____

Date accessed _____

What makes this websites useful? How do you know the information is trustworthy?

WEEK EIGHT OF THE SEMESTER

Step 4: Write a thesis (30 minutes total)

A. Based on what you learned in researching your topic so far, answer the following questions (in class, 10 minutes):

1. The verb that best describes the purpose of my paper is (choose one, or write in another):

To clarify; to demystify; to increase the reader's knowledge of; to describe; to open the reader's eyes to; to stress the importance of; to argue for; to argue against; to make an entirely new point about an issue.
2. Now finish the sentence. What is it you are trying to describe, defend, clarify, or argue?
3. Share your work with the class. In class conversation, make sure each goal is clear and absolutely *doable* in an 8-10 page paper and with the resources available.

B. Define the thesis (10 minutes):

There are a number of ways a thesis statement can be written. They can be one sentence long, or as long as three or four sentences. It often depends on the size of the research project and the specific requirements of the academic discipline. Here are two principles:

- A thesis is a statement that formulates a provisional explanation or theory about something.
- The thesis is the answer to a research question.

Here are some examples of thesis statements:

The essential theme of the French Revolution was human freedom; Napoleon Bonaparte killed the French revolution by reversing its thrust toward freedom. (Bean 28)

Because half of all American elementary school children consume nine times the recommended daily allowance of sugar, schools should be required to replace the beverages in soda machines with healthy alternatives. (Writing Tutorial Services).

The current trend in treatment for congestive heart failure combines surgery and medicine. (The Writing Center)

C. Exercise – identify the thesis in sample writing.

Thesis statements are often embedded in the introduction to a paper. Identify the thesis statements in the samples provided.

Example 1

The period of intrauterine growth and development is one of the most vulnerable periods in the human life cycle. The weight of the infant at birth is a powerful predictor of infant growth and survival, and is dependent on maternal health and nutrition during pregnancy. Low birth weight (LBW) is defined as weighing less than 2,500 g at birth. In developing countries, including India, the majority of LBW infants because of intrauterine growth retardation (IUGR) are born small at term (> 37 wk of gestation) with only 6.7 per cent born prematurely. Low birth weight leads to an impaired growth of the infant with its attendant risks of a higher mortality rate, increased morbidity, impaired mental development, and the risk of chronic adult disease. (Muthayya 600)

Example 2

Eugenio María de Hostos was born in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, on January 11, 1839, and he died in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, on August 11, 1903. Hostos was a restless pilgrim dedicated to the liberation of the Antilles and Latin America. His exemplary life offers us a model of the intellectual who does not fear the sinuous roads of political and revolutionary action. On the contrary, as he stated in his first literary work, *La peregrinacion de Bayoán* (1863), his entire life would be “a stifled cry for independence” for the liberation of the Antilles. (María de Hostos 5)

Example 3

I'm wary of film. That's not to say that I don't enjoy film. On the contrary, I use film in my classes, and I use it to relax. I'm not film-adverse, just film-suspicious. Why so? The visual and narrative power of film, the sheer grandness of the film aesthetic, the compression necessary for something that generally lasts no more than a couple of hours brings in its wake a fair few problems. Reason and film are not always comfortable partners. There are times, of course, when that's just what's needed: the willing suspension of disbelief can be a welcome respite from time to time. But the visual seductions of film can have a reductive effect, and perhaps especially in historical films. The brevity of a film necessarily compress, forcing the viewer to grasp and grab everything on offer with little time for reflection, caution, or skepticism. (Levine 26)

D. Write a thesis paragraph (at home)

- A thesis paragraph includes the reason(s) you believe the work is important (how it is valuable to you and to a community at large).
- In the context of a piece of academic writing, the thesis statement provides an overview of the status of the literature in the field and makes the writer's position explicit, with respect to that literature.

- Most thesis paragraphs include a description of sources and explanation of the methods used to gather information and/or methods used to analyze information.

Example of a thesis paragraph:

Eating organic food has some health advantages; however, the health advantages are less than what most people think. Eating organic food reduces the amount of pesticides and hormones consumed, and these chemicals that have been found to have harmful health effects. However, the science is incomplete as to how much pesticide, preservative, and hormone consumption in a person's diet is harmful. Also, the health benefits of eating organic food must be weighed against other considerations, such as the additional cost of eating organic and the practicality of a strict organic diet. It is clearer that reducing pesticides and following other organic techniques—such as crop rotation—would benefit our environment.

[**NOTE:** notice the shift in focus from the prior research question: *Is eating organic food healthier than traditionally grown food, and if so, why?* After doing a bit of research on the topic of organic food and the benefits to the body, I discovered exactly what those benefits were and I found out that there is still debate about the degree to which eating organic will result in health benefits to the individual. I made this clear in the thesis. I also included another sub-topic I want to include in the paper; that is, the practicality of eating organic food.]

Bring your thesis (typed) to your next class and submit it to the professor. He/she will provide feedback.

WEEK NINE OF THE SEMESTER

Step 5: Create an annotated bibliography (at home)

A. Assemble your Works Cited page

Write out each of your sources in MLA (Modern Languages Association) format. Put them in alphabetical order (by author's last name). Example:

Reuben, Suzanne H. and the President's Cancer Panel. *2008-2009 Annual Report: Reducing Environmental Cancer Risk, What We Can Do Now*. Apr. 2010. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Web. 10 May 2010.

Specter, Michael. *Denialism: How Irrational Thinking Hinders Scientific Progress, Harms the Planet and Threatens Our Lives*. New York: Penguin Press, 2009. Print.

B. Add an annotation for each item

After each citation:

- Write a 2-3-sentence summary of the book or article. What is the thesis of the book (often can be found in the introduction) or article (often can be found in the first couple of paragraphs)? How does the author situate herself in the general field?
- Write one sentence stating which part(s) of the articles and/or books that you might incorporate into your own paper (quotes, statistics, evidence, **examples**). Go back to your own **research question: how will this source help you answer your question? What parts of this source reinforce/strengthen my own thesis paragraph?**

Example:

Reuben, Suzanne H. and the President's Cancer Panel. *2008-2009 Annual Report: Reducing Environmental Cancer Risk, What We Can Do Now*. Apr. 2010. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Web. 10 May 2010.

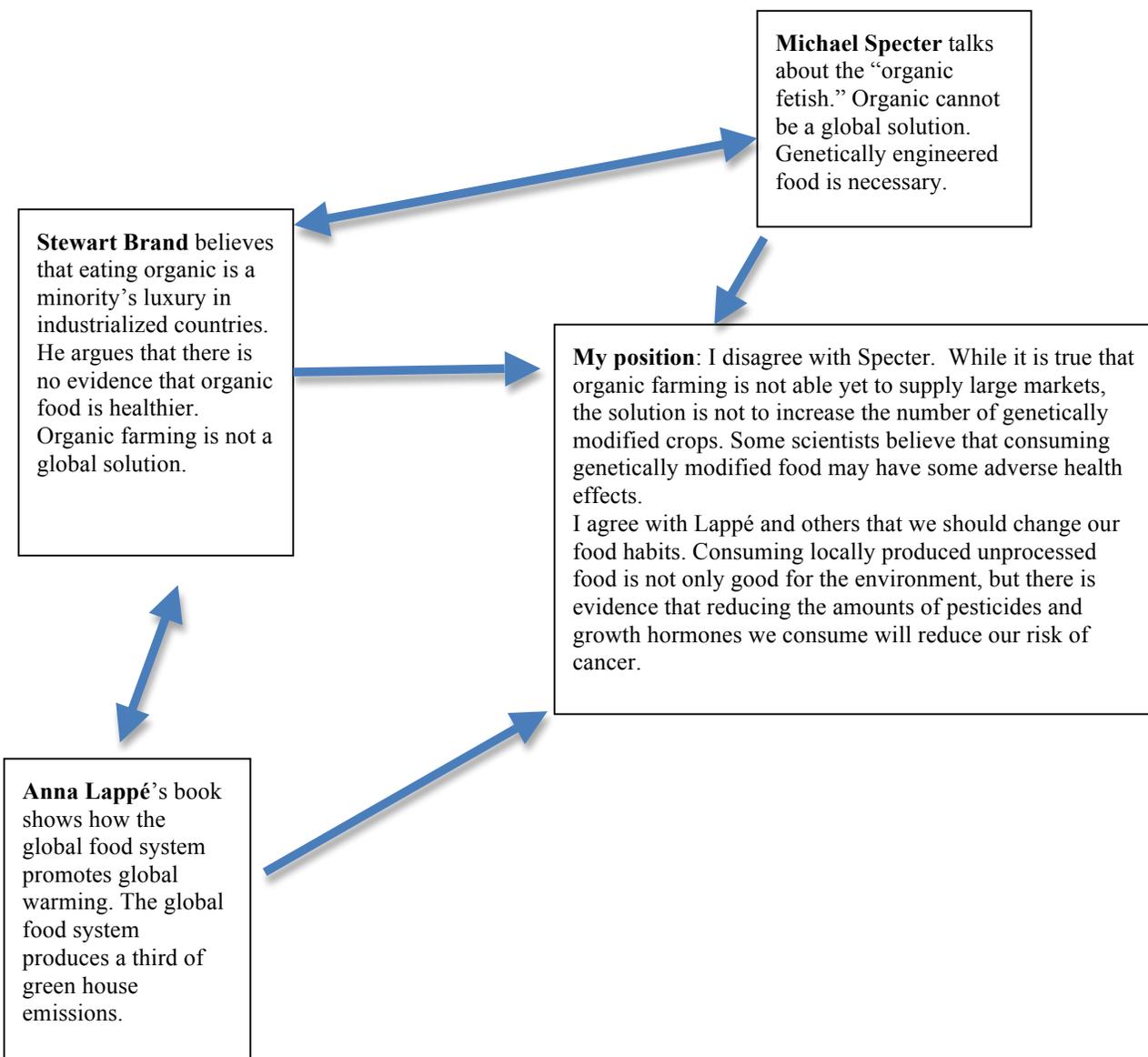
The President's Cancer Panel discusses a wide range of man-made chemical causes for cancer. It is scientifically sound and based on a great deal of research and data. Important for my paper, the section at the end of the study recommends that people reduce their intake of pesticides and growth hormones often found in non-organic foods. In other words, in order to reduce one's risk of developing cancer, the panel recommends eating organic food (among a number of other lifestyle changes).

Bring your annotated bibliography to class and hand it in to the professor.

Step 6: Create a map of connections and enter the conversation (in class, 30 minutes)

Take a clean piece of paper and write the names of the authors in different places on the page. Think about how these separate sources "talk" to each other. Do some of the books or articles cover the same material? Do they reach the same conclusion? Do they agree or disagree about a particular opinion or approach? Do they use similar data to prove their

points? Do they follow a similar method of investigation? Draw lines between sources that are connected in some way, or “talk” to each other in some way. Label each line with a description of the connection. Example (this can be hand-drawn):



Enter the Conversation

Look at the map you’ve created. Some of the connections you have mapped will be important for your own project, others will not. If you were going to place your own name (representing your research paper) within this network, where would this be? **Next to whom? Opposite whom?** Go ahead and write your name in the network and draw connecting lines between your own thesis and your sources. Label each of these lines of connection.

Reflection (10 minutes)

Think about the following in a free writing exercise (keep the pen moving on the page and don’t edit your thoughts). Write for 10 minutes. Looking at all sources together, what

general information have you learned about the field? What are some of the main problems within the field that the authors are grappling with? What is your own intervention into the conversation between authors? Explain how you are borrowing information and evidence from other sources in order to support your own *original idea*. Write about how you are responding to old information with new ideas.

Discuss your findings with the class.

Step 7: How to integrate source material (in class, 20 minutes)

Bring two of your sources to class.

In a research paper it is essential that you engage with and cite your sources. There are various ways of incorporating information from your sources into your paper: 1) transcribe the words in the source exactly as they appear on the text (quoting); 2) extract the main points of what somebody says (summarizing); or 3) restate what somebody says using your own words (paraphrasing). It is important that you become familiar with all these modes of citing information.

Select one paragraph from each of your sources that includes valuable information about your topic (something that you consider very likely to include in your paper) and fill out the following chart.

Source (name of author and title of book/article)	Quotation (verbatim)	Summarize the quotation	Personal response to the quotation

Reflection (10 minutes)

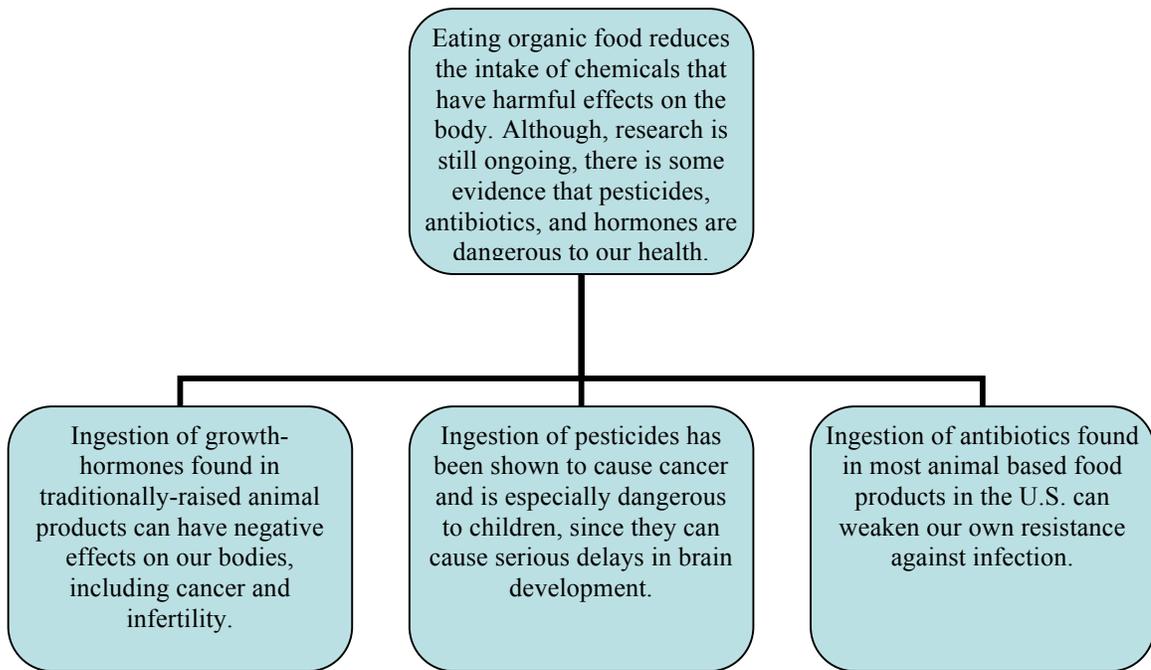
Share what you wrote with the class. Did you feel you understood the quotation better after summarizing and paraphrasing it? How do you think this exercise will help you incorporate sources into your paper?

Discuss your findings with the class.

WEEK 10 OF THE SEMESTER

Step 8: Identify main points (in class, 15 minutes)

Go back to your thesis paragraph and think what would be the best way to present all the information you have to prove your thesis? Begin by trying to describe the best way to organize your paper. Does your paper lend itself to a chronological organization? Or does your paper can be easily divided into sub-themes or topics? Write down the 2-4 main points of your paper *in complete sentences*, each of the main points developing out of, and connecting to, the main thesis of your paper. Follow the basic flow chart organization below:



Discuss your organization with a partner and receive feedback from students and the instructor.

Step 9: Refresh your thesis (at home)

Read the sources (articles, books, etc.) you have gathered and take notes. Do you have information that will help you answer your main research question? If not, keep looking. Did you find information that contradicts what you originally believed? If so, you can either include these changes in a new thesis, or try to refute this contradictory information with other evidence. If you are unable to find enough information to formulate an answer to your research question, and support each of your main points, you may want to rephrase the research question and the thesis at this point. The same is necessary if you found an article or book that already answers your question and you feel there is nothing you could add to it.

How does your reading of the sources change your thesis? Re-write your thesis.

Example of amended thesis:

Eating organic food reduces the intake of chemicals and hormones that have harmful effects on the human body. Although, research is still ongoing, there is some evidence that pesticides, antibiotics, and hormones are dangerous to our health and can lead to developmental delays in children, infertility, and cancer.

Step 10: Write an Outline (at home)

A. What is an outline?

To use an analogy, just as a human skeleton by itself suggests the entire silhouette of a human being, an outline provides the essential information so that you have a mental picture of an entire piece of writing. Ideally, an outline should work as a road map/guide when you write your paper.

The purpose of writing an outline is to identify and organize the content of the main parts of your paper. In a previous exercise you have already identified the main ideas of your paper. Each one of these will become a main section in the body of your paper. Writing an outline will help you have a detailed idea of how you want to organize and present each section.

B. Outline format

Traditionally, a series of numbers and letters are used to mark different items on an outline. For example, you could use numbers to identify the main parts of your paper and use letters to establish different subheadings or secondary ideas within each major part.

It really does not matter whether you use letters or numbers as long as you are consistent in your format. Use a bulleting or numbering system that allows you to distinguish between main sections and subsections within them. (See the example below).

OUTLINE

Name:

Title of paper:

Thesis:

Introduction

The introduction (1-3 paragraphs) needs an attention-getting sentence, your thesis sentence, an overview of the status of the literature in the field (making your own position in that field explicit), a description of sources and explanation of methods used to analyze information, and a brief preview of your main points.

Body

I. Main point #1. **Use main point sentences created in Step 8.** For example: "Ingestion of growth-hormones found in traditionally-raised animal products can have negative effects on our bodies, including cancer and infertility."

A. Sub-point #1. **Sub-points contain idea development, explanations, details, examples, evidence, testimony, quotes, statistics, citation of sources, etc.** Example: Although the scientific data documenting the effects of growth-hormones on human health is incomplete, the U.S. President's Cancer Panel of 2008-2009 states that the accumulation of data strongly suggests that human consumption of growth-hormones should be minimized. (Reuben 25)

B. Sub-point #2

C. Sub-point #3

II. [Main point #2] Example: Ingestion of pesticides has been shown to cause cancer and is especially dangerous to children, since they can cause serious delays in brain development.

A. Sub-point #1

B. Sub-point #2

C. Sub-point #3

III. [Main point #3] Example: Ingestion of antibiotics found in most animal based food products in the U.S. can weaken our own resistance against infection.

A. Sub-point #1

B. Sub-point #2

C. Sub-point #3

Conclusion

A. Restate thesis in a new way

B. Power punch ending

WORKS CITED

Follow MLA formatting style. Any combination of newspaper, magazine, and academic journal articles, books, reference material, and **valid** internet sources.

One thing to keep in mind after writing your outline: If while writing your paper you need to move things around, add information, or omit information, feel free to do so. Outlining helps you begin to envision the structure of your paper, but it does not need to confine you once you've begun writing the first draft. Good writers are always revising and are comfortable moving sections around when needed.

Hand in your outline to the instructor

WEEK 11 OF THE SEMESTER

Step 11: Write the first draft of the paper, 6-7 pages minimum.

- Typed using Times Roman, 12 point font; double spaced; 1 inch margins.
- Attach Works Cited page in MLA format.
- Write the body of the paper first (main points), and then go back and write the introduction and conclusion.
- Make sure verb tenses are all correct.
- Read it out loud and identify and fix major flaws in the argument, sentence structure, and grammar before submitting the draft. If you see a mistake, look for other places you might have made the same mistake.
- It is suggested that you show your work to a tutor at the writing center or to your professor during office hours in order to get feedback.

WEEK 12 OF THE SEMESTER

Hand in first draft of the paper.

- Professor will have a week to write comments on the drafts and return them to students.

WEEK 13 OF THE SEMESTER

Step 12: Read professor's comments and revise the final draft of the paper.

- Pay special attention to your professor's comments regarding sections of your argument that need more development (of your own ideas or by incorporating evidence you're your argument)
- Pay attention to your professor's comments about the organization of the paper.
- Re-read your own paper. Revision is more than correcting mistakes; take a fresh look at your work and be willing to change or replace specific words or sentences, move sections around, or cut sections that are repetitive or extraneous.
- Double- and triple-check for spelling, grammatical, and syntactical errors (capitalization and punctuation).
- Make sure to include your completed works cited page in MLA format.

Works Cited

- Bean, John C. *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1996. Print.
- Levine, Philippa. "The Trouble with Film." *Perspectives on History*. The Newsmagazine of the American Historical Association, 48.3 (March 210): 26-27.
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- Writing Tutorial Services. *How to Write a Thesis Statement*. Indiana University. 30 Jan. 2008. Web. 12 April 2010.

Step 3: Library Research Worksheet (in a computer classroom or at home) (3 pages)

DEVELOP YOUR KEYWORDS

Write your research question:

Write down related keywords, ideas, and subjects:

Write down synonyms (words that are related to or mean the same thing as your keywords):

GETTING THE BIG PICTURE

A good place to start your research is in a **specialized or general encyclopedia or reference work**. The **reference area** of the library has encyclopedias on many topics. The library also subscribes to the **Gale Virtual Reference Library** database where you can find many encyclopedias online.

Search for an encyclopedia or reference work that deals with the area you are researching and write down the title:

If you can't find an encyclopedia that has information on your topic, go to the library's reference desk and ask a librarian for help finding one.

Write down the **title and author of an article** in the encyclopedia you have found.

Title: _____

Author: _____

FINDING BOOKS USING CUNY+

Write down the citations to two books you have found that are relevant to your topic:

1. Citation

2. Citation

LOCATING SPECIFIC DETAILS – DATABASE SEARCHING

Choose a database from the library’s list of databases at:

<http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/library/hcc/dblist.asp>

The library subscribes to both general and more specialized databases that provide access to a variety of articles.

Using your keywords and search terms look for newspaper articles, magazine articles and scholarly journal articles.

Find three articles relevant to your topic or main points:

Database _____

Article Title _____

Author(s) _____

Date, volume number, issue number, pages _____

Database _____

Article Title _____

Author(s) _____

Date, volume number, issue number, pages _____

Database _____

Article Title _____

Author(s) _____

Date, volume number, issue number, pages _____

FINDING INFORMATION ON THE WEB

KEYWORDS: _____

URL: _____

Date accessed _____

What makes this websites useful? How do you know the information is trustworthy?

URL: _____

Date accessed _____

What makes this websites useful? How do you know the information is trustworthy?

Step 4: Write a thesis. Based on what you learned in researching your topic so far, answer the following questions (in class, 10 minutes)

1. The verb that best describes the purpose of my paper is (choose one, or write in another):

To clarify; to demystify; to increase the reader's knowledge of; to describe; to open the reader's eyes to; to stress the importance of; to argue for; to argue against; to make an entirely new point about an issue.

2. Now finish the sentence. What is it you are trying to describe, defend, clarify, or argue?

3. Share your work with the class. In class conversation, make sure each goal is clear and absolutely *doable* in an 8-10 page paper and with the resources available.

**[SEE THE MAIN TEXT OF THE PLAN FOR ADDITIONAL
STEPS IN THIS EXERCISE]**

Step 7: How to integrate source material (in class, 20 minutes)

Bring two of your sources to class.

In a research paper it is essential that you engage with and cite your sources. There are various ways of incorporating information from your sources into your paper: 1) transcribe the words in the source exactly as they appear on the text (quoting); 2) extract the main points of what somebody says (summarizing); or 3) restate what somebody says using your own words (paraphrasing). It is important that you become familiar with all these modes of citing information.

Select one paragraph from each of your sources that includes valuable information about your topic (something that you consider very likely to include in your paper) and fill out the following chart.

Source (name of author and title of book/article)	Quotation (verbatim)	Summarize the quotation	Personal response to the quotation

[SEE THE MAIN TEXT OF THE PLAN FOR ADDITIONAL STEPS IN THIS EXERCISE]

OUTLINE TEMPLATE (2 pages)

Name:
Title of paper:
Thesis:

Introduction

The introduction (1-3 paragraphs) needs an attention-getting sentence, your thesis sentence, an overview of the status of the literature in the field (making your own position in that field explicit), a description of sources and explanation of methods used to analyze information, and a brief preview of your main points.

Body

IV. Main point #1. Example: “Ingestion of growth-hormones found in traditionally-raised animal products can have negative effects on our bodies, including cancer and infertility.”

A. Sub-point #1. **Sub-points contain idea development, explanations, details, examples, evidence, testimony, quotes, statistics, citation of sources, etc.** Example: Although the scientific data documenting the effects of growth-hormones on human health is incomplete, the U.S. President’s Cancer Panel of 2008-2009 states that the accumulation of data strongly suggests that human consumption of growth-hormones should be minimized. (Reuben 25)

B. Sub-point #2

C. Sub-point #3

V. [Main point #2] Example: Ingestion of pesticides has been shown to cause cancer and is especially dangerous to children, since they can cause serious delays in brain development.

A. Sub-point #1

B. Sub-point #2

C. Sub-point #3

VI. [Main point #3] Example: Ingestion of antibiotics found in most animal based food products in the U.S. can weaken our own resistance against infection.

A. Sub-point #1

B. Sub-point #2

C. Sub-point #3

Conclusion

A. Restate thesis in a new way

B. Power punch ending

WORKS CITED

Follow MLA formatting style. Any combination of newspaper, magazine, and academic journal articles, books, reference material, and **valid** internet sources.