

# CLS 101/201US, *Knowledge and Community*

Fall 2014 – TR 1:40=2:55PM – Section 026 – Maher

## Mid-Term Paper and Oral Presentation

**Paper Assignment:** Each student will conceive, plan, and write a formal mid-term paper. The goals are for you to develop an interesting position, make connections between at least two of the course texts, and argue your case with solid reasons and evidence from the texts.

Your paper should be 3-4 pages (about 1000 to 1300 words), prepared with a word processor, double-spaced, and suitable for both electronic uploading to D2L and hardcopy printing. Put your name, date, course and section number on the first page. Don't forget to title your paper.

- **Mid-term paper assigned:** Tuesday, October 21, 2014.
- **DRAFT PAPER due:** Thursday, October 30, 2014. Bring TWO printouts of your draft paper to class with you on 10/30.
- **Mid-term paper due:** Submit final paper via D2L dropbox by 5PM on Thursday, November 6, 2014.
- **Oral presentations:** in class on Thursday, November 6, 2014, and on Thursday, November 13, 2014.

### **A strong paper will do the following:**

- Respond thoughtfully to course texts and class discussion
- Take a stance and support it
- Consider an objection to that stance and respond to it
- Suggest a solid understanding of the texts being discussed
- Take into account differing perspectives from the readings and from class discussion
- Explore new ideas and thinking
- Be ambitious and take risks
- Have few grammatical and spelling errors and meet the length requirement

**Strategies for organizing your argument:** Sometimes it is hard to know how to organize your ideas. The suggested form below may help you organize your paper.

*Introduction.* Give an introduction to your main idea. The purpose of an introduction is to get your audience interested in what you say and to give them the background they need to understand your claim. The audience needs to know why they should listen to you and you need to show your audience why your topic is interesting or important. Sometimes stating the conventional or opposing view can do this. For example: "Many people think . . . but a more reasonable view is . . ." The introduction could show how and why you became interested in your topic and state the question(s) you are exploring in your essay. Usually the introduction concludes with a statement of your main idea.

*Body.* The body of the paper, the longest part, should support your idea with reason and evidence. Often a summary, combined with interpretation of the text, is used as support. The body should answer the question "Why do you believe your idea is valid or a good answer to the question you asked?" It should be directed toward helping your audience agree with you, or at least helping them consider what you have to say. Think of an open-minded but skeptical audience. They will want good reasons and they will ask themselves why they should agree with you.

*Conclusion.* Every paper has an ending. You've already stated your main idea and given your argument in the body, and in a short paper, there's usually no need to summarize, but you can say why your argument is important or satisfying. You can define new and unanswered questions for further thinking. You can refer

back to your introduction, commenting on it in the light of your argument. Or, you can end with your best supporting argument and not have a conclusion separate from the body.

**Strategies for revising your argument:** Write a draft of your paper and plan to revise it. Revision works best if you leave some time between drafting and revising. Then you can reread the draft critically and try to imagine what questions your audience will have. As you reread your draft for revision, imagine an audience that will be asking, “I wonder why she thinks that?” If you ask yourself that question, you may get additional ways to develop your ideas and support your claim.

One of the most powerful tools for revising is *reading your draft out loud*. If you have never done this as part of the revision process, you will be amazed at how well this works. Don’t forget to proofread your paper and correct spelling and other errors.

**The Writing Center** has tutors who can go over your draft with you and help you develop, organize, revise and learn to edit it. The Writing Center also has computers you can use for writing papers.

The Writing Center is located in Wilson 1-114. Call 994-5315 for an appointment.

**Oral Presentation Assignment:** You will make a short presentation about your mid-term paper in answer to the question:

- “Why did you choose this topic?” and/or
- “What new ideas came to you while writing the paper?” and/or
- “Explain opposing views you considered in writing your paper.”

You should address your remarks specifically to the members of our seminar. You may comment on issues that have been raised in seminar discussions. You may use note cards or an outline, but do not write out your presentation and do not read a written text. Your presentation should be a continuation of your conversation in the seminar. Seminar members may ask you questions about the ideas you present.

The presentation should be two to four minutes long with an additional minute for questions from the audience.

**Criteria for Evaluating the Mid-Term Presentations:**

- Suggests a thoughtful answer to the question(s) under discussion
- Shows speaker commitment (interest, engagement, care)
- Uses a clear, straight-forward style to communicate (speaks in a clear, audible voice, looks at the audience, keeps the audience’s interest, and meets the time requirement)