

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CRITICAL ISSUES PAPER AND PRESENTATION
WGST 200: FEMINIST HISTORIES AND PRACTICES
SPRING 2022, WATSON

1. **Topic.** For this assignment, your job is to choose a contemporary issue or problem related to women's and gender studies that interests you and then research its history, context, and possible solutions. You will compile your information and analysis into a paper that is between 7-10 pages. Additionally, you will prepare a brief (approximately 5-10 minutes) presentation about your findings that you will be give during class on either Tuesday April 26th or Thursday April 28th. A sign-up sheet for presentations will be posted on eCampus later in the term.

This assignment has four main components, each with a separate due date.

- a. **Part 1: What's the problem? (60 points, due by 11:59 pm on Sunday February 27th)**

Your first task is to describe the issue that you have chosen. You will explain why this issue is something that is important to you, American society, to the field of women's and gender studies, and/or the feminist movement. You will also explain how this issue relates to some of the concepts, readings, conversations, that in our course.

I am happy to discuss your topics with you before your write this section, but I will offer a few pieces of general advice:

- Begin with a broad area of interest and then narrow it down
 - For example, maybe you are interested in professional sports. This is a place to start but then you have to begin the process of narrowing it down to a topic that is relevant for this course. Maybe you read an article about the differences in pay between women's and men's World Cup soccer teams.
 - Or maybe you are interested in current debates surrounding gender and restroom access and you want to understand more about why this issue has been getting so much attention recently.
- Take this interest and turn it into a question. For example:
 - Why are professional female soccer players paid less than men?
 - How are colleges and universities addressing the needs of transgender students regarding access to restrooms, locker-rooms, dorms, etc.?
- Then widen your focus again and consider how this specific question might relate to other social issues. In other words, once you have a narrowly focused question, step back and ask yourself why this question matters? Why is it worth exploring? What can it reveal?

This section should be at least 500 words long (roughly 2 double-spaced pages).

It is likely that this section will be revised heavily as your project grows and you have a clearer vision for your final project

b. Part 2: How did we get here? (70 points, due by 11:59 pm on Sunday March 27th)

In this section, you will address the historical context of your issue/question. Where did this issue come from? How did things get to be the way that they are? What historical events, laws, movements, etc. helped bring this issue about? In other words, you should describe the origins of the problem and clearly explain why this problem exists and where it came from. This section requires more direct research than the previous one. You will have to consult academic sources to adequately explain the historical and cultural context relevant to your issue. You **must include at least two academic sources** in this section (this can include readings assigned in this course). We will discuss what makes an acceptable “academic source” in class; but if you are not sure, you can ask me, and I can steer you in the right direction.

This section should be at least 700 words (2-3 double-spaced pages), not including your Works Cited page.

c. Part 3. What do we do about it? (70 points, due by 11:59 pm on Sunday April 10th)

Your job in this section is to research what is being done to address the problem that you are investigating. You should examine several organizations that are addressing this issue and analyze their tactics and strategies as well as consider the long-term consequences of the intervention that they propose. Depending upon your issue, you will likely need to include a discussion of legislation that has been passed or proposed.

You will analyze the various organizations, movements, pieces of legislation, etc. that you have uncovered and determine what you think are the most effective strategies for intervention in the topic that you have chosen. Be sure to discuss the long and short-term consequences as well as the difficulties inherent in the solution(s) that you propose. I do not expect you to solve the problem, but rather to think about ways that students of women’s and gender studies can use their knowledge and skills to analyze real world issues.

This section should be at least 800 words in length (roughly 3+ double-spaced pages)

d. Revision and Final Project (200 points, due by 11:59 pm on Thursday May 5th)

Finally, you will take each of the sections that you have written thus far and revise them based on my feedback and the direction of your project. You should also write a concluding section that summarizes your findings.

As a whole, your project should be somewhere around 1800-2500 words (7-10 double-spaced pages), not including your Works Cited page

e. **Presentation (100 points, during the last week of the course)**

The last week of our class will be dedicated to presentations of your research. Each of you will prepare approximately 10 minutes of content to discuss with the class. You are not required to use a visual aid (like powerpoint, prezi, etc.) but I recommend it.

2. **General Presentation:** Papers should be clearly and concisely written, well organized, and presented in your own words with few long quotes and a limited number of shorter ones. This essay should have an introduction, thesis, a main body, as well as a conclusion that sums up what you have said and assesses its significance. Your paper should be between 1800-2500 words (roughly 7-10 double-spaced pages)
3. **Audience:** Direct your paper to an audience of educated non-academics.
4. **Final presentation and mechanics:**
 - a. Papers are due by Thursday May 5th by 11:59 PM on eCampus
 - i. Late papers will NOT be accepted without prior approval or documentation of genuine emergency.
 - ii. Your papers must be between 1800-2500 (roughly 7-10 double-spaced pages) in length and include page numbers.
 - b. Proofread carefully. Sloppy papers with misspellings, typographical errors, and grammatical problems will weaken your argument and lower your grade.
 - i. This is a formal paper. Avoid contractions, abbreviations, clichés, and colloquialisms.
 - c. All data and information that is not common knowledge **MUST BE CITED**. You may use whatever citation format you would like (Chicago Style is my preferred style and I am happy to provide instruction on it) but you must be consistent and thorough.
 - i. You **MUST** include a Works Cited page. If you need assistance with citations, please see me.
 - ii. Failure to cite or provide a Works Cited page will result in an automatic “F”