

Signature School Senior Research and Publication Paper

The senior project is an individually written, original paper of 3,000 words that is an in-depth study of a focused topic of your choice. Your end result will be a major piece of formally presented, structured writing, in which ideas and findings are communicated in a reasoned and coherent manner, appropriate to the subject chosen.

The aims of the senior research paper are to provide students with the opportunity to:

- pursue independent research on a focused topic
- develop research and communication skills
- develop the skills of creative and critical thinking
- engage in a systematic process of research appropriate to the subject
- experience the excitement of intellectual discovery.

In working on the senior research project, students are expected to:

- plan and pursue a research project with intellectual initiative and insight
- formulate a research question
- gather and interpret material from sources appropriate to the research question
- structure a reasoned argument in response to the research question on the basis of the material gathered
- present their extended essay in a format appropriate to the subject, acknowledging sources in MLA format
- use the terminology and language appropriate to the subject with skill and understanding
- apply analytical and evaluative skills appropriate to the subject, with an understanding of the implications and the context of their research.

When you choose a research question for your senior project, it's important to select one that really interests you. The senior project is quite labor-intensive. You will spend the summer and first semester of your senior year working intensively on your project. If you are like most people, you'll feel especially motivated if you focus on a research question and subject that deeply interests you.

At the same time, try to choose both a narrow question and a question that can be answered with resources to which you have access.

It is *required* that students:

- choose a workable topic (Mrs. Sarol will help you narrow your focus if you need that help)
- meet deadlines (there will be grade penalties for missed deadlines)
- acknowledge all sources of information and ideas in MLA format

It is *strongly recommended* that students:

- start work early and be methodical in the work over the summer
- plan how, when, and where they will find material for their essay
- plan a schedule for both researching and writing the essay, including extra time for delays and unforeseen problems
- record sources as their research progresses (rather than trying to construct a list at the end)
- have a clear structure (outline) for the essay itself before beginning to write
- check and proofread the final version carefully
- make sure that all basic requirements are met.

Students should *not*:

- ignore the grading rubric
- collect material that is irrelevant to your topic (you must maintain focus)
- use Internet sources uncritically (consider reputable sources only!)
- plagiarize
- cite sources that are not used
- merely repeat the introduction in the conclusion
- merely describe or report (need to show some significance to your topic)
- procrastinate—it's the kiss of death on a project of this magnitude!

Formal Presentation of the Senior Research Project

Your project is to be an investigation of a specific topic that interests you. Projects may not exceed 3,000 words in length (word minimum: 2,500). Additionally, all projects must follow the following format. Please note that this is an assessment criteria on the rubric, and following the appropriate format is an easy way to get points:

1. Title page
2. Abstract (we will discuss as a class during 1st semester of senior year how to write these)
3. Table of contents
4. Introduction
5. Body
6. Conclusion
7. Works cited page
8. Appendices (if applicable)

General Timeline

These dates are not specific, but rather are meant as a guide for you to know ahead of time the upcoming due dates:

Before Spring 2010 semester ends- Topic must be solidified and reported to Mrs. Sarol

Summer 2010- ALL outlining, research, and writing is to be done independently by students. Remember, you don't have a summer reading assignment, so there is NO excuse for not having this done. I will answer e-mail questions throughout the summer.

1st day of school: FULL formal, detailed outline of your project (typed) is due to Mrs. Sarol. This will be taken for a grade. It should have been completed early in the summer to allow for writing time during the summer.

September 15th- Completed rough draft of 2,500-3,000 words (including works cited page, which is not part of the word count) due to Mrs. Sarol. This will be taken for a grade. Students will receive their drafts back by October 15th.

December 15th- FINAL draft of 2,500- 3,000 words (including all elements listed on previous page) due to Mrs. Sarol. This, of course, will be taken for a grade. Grades will apply to second semester of the senior year.

2nd semester of senior year: Submit paper for publication in a journal or other academic venture such as Teen Ink. Submissions will be monitored by Mrs. Sarol and required for completion of the senior research paper.