**Sample assignment sheet**

[note to instructors: items with an asterisk are explained on last page.

Additional notes appear in brackets and highlighted on this page]

**WHAT**: a paper ( \_\_\_\_ words long) in response to the prompt below. (Indicate the word count at the end of the paper, enclosed in parentheses.)

**WHY**\*: this paper is designed to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**WHEN**: the paper is due \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**HOW:** [the *nature* of the prompt—to critique an argument—is simply an example]

With the prompt in mind, read \_\_\_\_\_ and take notes accordingly.

Please respond to this prompt:

The author argues that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. In what ways do you agree with this argument? In what ways do you disagree?\*

Your paper should consist of\*:

* a 1-paragraph introduction that ends with a 1-2 sentence thesis statement, which sums up your response to the prompt.
* Several paragraphs in which you explain how and why you agree in some ways and disagree in others with the author’s argument.\* Use paraphrased ideas and quotations from the text to explain your position.\*
* A concluding paragraph in which you very briefly reiterate your thesis. Devote most of the conclusion to explaining the implications of your argument. For example, why is your position important? What insights does it yield? Is it relevant in any other situations?

**Additional directions:**

You [must use/should not use/may use] additional sources. If you do use any, be sure to cite them. Find appropriate sources using library resources [here](http://www.lakeforest.edu/library/). You may also make a [research appointment](http://www.lakeforest.edu/live/forms/304) with a librarian.

*Documentation*

Use \_\_\_\_ style to document your sources and to format your paper on the page. For help with documentation, check your Hacker guide, pages \_\_\_\_\_, or look [here](http://www.lakeforest.edu/library/cite/). You may also ask librarians for help. There will be a librarian at the reference desk, next to the circulation desk, Monday through Friday, 11am-3 pm and Sundays, 1-5pm and 6-9 pm [this is true for 2019-20]. You may also [email librarians](http://www.lakeforest.edu/library/ask.php) with questions at any time. **Writing Center tutors do not check or teach citation,** nor do I. The librarians are the experts.

*Writing Center*

I encourage you to work with Writing Center tutors, if you wish, on your writing for this course.\* Experienced, sensitive peer tutors can help you at any stage of your writing process. Schedule Writing Center appointments [here](https://writingcenter.lakeforest.edu/writing/login.php). You can learn how to use the scheduler [here](https://www.lakeforest.edu/live/files/2645-wcappinstructionspdf). There are also daytime and evening walk-in hours, as explained [here](https://www.lakeforest.edu/academics/resources/writingcenter/). The Writing Center is located on the lower level of Hotchkiss Hall on Middle Campus. An elevator is available.

Always take assignment sheets and relevant course materials (readings, notes) to appointments. In addition, take any writing you have done in connection with the assignment, such as: a draft of a thesis, an outline, a partial or complete essay draft, or even just some notes on possible evidence. The more you already have down on paper, the more you will get out of your appointment. If you have not done any thinking about the assignment before the appointment or do not understand it, tutors will refer you to your professor.

Tutors will send me a report on your appointment unless you request that they do not. I recommend that you do allow them to send me a report because it will give me insight into your writing process so I can best help you develop your writing. The report will not evaluate you or your work; it will simply describe what you and the tutor did at your appointment.

Finally, you can find many resources to help you at all stages of a writing process, from getting started through editing, on the Writing Center webpage [here](https://www.lakeforest.edu/academics/resources/writingcenter/students.php).

*Academic Honesty*

Remember that it is always your responsibility to know the College policy on Academic Honesty, which you can find [here](https://www.lakeforest.edu/academics/catalog/policies/honesty.php). You can also learn some ways to avoid unintentional plagiarism [here](https://www.lakeforest.edu/academics/resources/writingcenter/plagiarism.php).

If you ever have questions about Academic Honesty, please ask me.

Explanation (for instructors) of items on the assignment sheet

**I recommend that you always include the purpose of the assignment**. Its purpose may be obvious to you, but it may not be to students. With a clear purpose in mind, students can write stronger, more focused papers. Students also learn to analyze the purpose of anything they write. (Inclusion of the purpose also helps Writing Center tutors). Inexperienced students tend to think of papers as tasks to be completed rather than as a means of to communicating their ideas.

**To provide focus, phrase prompts as questions when possible and use specific verbs** like: argue, interpret, explain, summarize. Avoid verbs like: respond, discuss, analyze. If you do use them, be sure you explain your meaning.

**If your assignment includes a short summary** of a reading in some form, I recommend asking students to paraphrase, or mostly paraphrase. (Note: I am not saying that all assignments should include summaries. But, especially for newer students, and especially early in the course, learning to summarize is very useful.) Paraphrasing makes them work harder to comprehend a text and is a difficult skill that they need to begin learning.

In addition, they need to learn *when* to quote. The Hacker guide has some guidelines you can refer them to and use for classroom instruction. The resource [here](https://www.lakeforest.edu/live/files/4413-waysusepresentevidence52918pdf) is also helpful.

The sample includes **very explicit directions** concerning paper organization. For new college students, I recommend explicit instructions that accord with your expectations.

**Even if the paper requires just one source, require a bibliography**. Students need to get in the habit of documentation. Remember that you can, with enough advance notice, ask librarians to grade a bibliography. In addition, for any reading whose publication information is unclear, such as a source you post on Moodle, you can ask a librarian to provide the citation for you to post as well. The sooner the better, for asking librarians to do this. Contact Cory at [cstevens@lfc.edu](mailto:cstevens@lfc.edu) or Kim at [hazlett@lfc.edu](mailto:hazlett@lfc.edu)

**Please *do not require* Writing Center appointments** (except for those students assigned standing appointments) without consulting Kate Oakley. I also recommend that you read the [FAQ for faculty about the Writing Center](https://www.lakeforest.edu/academics/resources/writingcenter/faculty.php) at the top of this page.

Even though the Additional Directions portion of the assignment sheet is long, I recommend that you **include all that information on every assignment sheet** you distribute.

Finally, **on the day that you distribute an assignment sheet**, I recommend that before you discuss it, you ask students to read the sheet, take notes, and paraphrase the prompt. (Asking them to engage actively with the assignment helps them comprehend it more fully and teaches them that they should always do so, for all classes.) Then, ask to hear their understanding of the assignment prompt and purpose. You may be surprised! You can then clarify as necessary and answer questions. Finally, give students a few minutes to plan, in writing, their next steps, working backward from the due date. I also recommend giving them a minute or two to write some of their preliminary ideas and note relevant texts, lectures, and class discussions. Planning and brainstorming will help them avoid the dreaded “staring at a blank screen” moment the day before the paper is due.