

# Paper #4: Independent Project



**Due:** Monday, May 1, 2006

**Length:** 3-5 pages, typed, double-spaced

**Objectives:** (1) to practice and refine independent critical thinking skills; (2) to demonstrate your ability to blend or choose expressive, objective, and persuasive approaches depending on the specific context you create; (3) to carefully match your style as well as content to your projected target audience; and (4) to continue to practice drafting, revising, and editing in order to produce your very best writing.

Ideally, college students are at a stage in their educational careers when they undertake the challenge of becoming independent, critical thinkers. Instead of being dependent on others to dictate how they must think, they embrace the opportunity to think for themselves. Emerging from passive habits of dependency isn't always an easy or comfortable step to take, but it's a necessary part of the process of becoming fully educated. College students are therefore expected to form their own judgments about the information presented to them and the information they discover independently. It's this ability to present an informed, respectful, and reasoned discussion on any significant topic that distinguishes an educated person.

For this assignment, you are asked to bring all of your accumulated writing skills to the table. This semester you have had the opportunity to fine-tune your understanding of the distinctive goals of expressive, objective, and persuasive writing; we've worked at identifying when each type of writing is or is not called for, and what writing style is appropriate for each purpose. When and why will you find it appropriate and useful to write expressively, offering your own unique perspective and sharing your personal experience with readers? When is it most effective to gain objective distance and explore your subject analytically? What information do your readers need? What's the best way to present it to them? When you want to write persuasively, how do you anticipate disputes and how can you handle them when they arise? Will it be persuasive to simply acknowledge differences of opinion, or do you need to negotiate or refute those opposing views? These are all rhetorical decisions we have worked at defining and clarifying, and now I'd like to give you an opportunity to demonstrate how well you can take responsibility for these decisions when tackling a writing project that you choose yourself.

**Directions:** Select any current event, artifact, or text—any event, book, article, film, news report, television program, product, object, situation, or personal observation of the world around you—that provokes you to reflect meaningfully on and draw a carefully considered conclusion about some aspect of our larger (American) culture. Your discussion might be in the form of a memoir that connects your experience to the larger culture; or it may be a carefully considered response, analysis, interpretation, or argument about some aspect of the subject you've chosen. Once you've chosen your subject, you will choose the form of your presentation. Your discussion should be in the form of a carefully crafted essay, but the exact shape of your essay is your own choice. It can take the form of one of the genres we studied in *The Call to Write* (memoir, open letter, profile), one of the genres we did not study but which you can study independently (such as the "review" or the "commentary" in chapters 9 and 11). You can also choose to approach the issue of form generically—you may write an analysis, a comparison/contrast (synthesis), an interpretation, or an argument.

## *Some general suggestions for finding topics*

1. Consider these broad categories: college life, teen culture, current events, pop culture, modern trends. Is there anything that specifically provokes you to respond expressively, analytically, or argumentatively?
2. Consider choosing one the writing suggestions that Trimbur provides in *The Call to Write*. You can choose to write another memoir, open letter, profile, explanatory essay, or argument—or you can try one of the genres we didn't study together but which you can study individually, such as the review or the commentary. A commentary essay combines many of the expressive, objective, and persuasive goals we've studied.