

The EUA Research Paper Writing Plan!

1. Getting Started: Go Back to the Text

- As with any other paper, you want to start off by finding your topic of interest. Go back to the specific text(s) you'll be studying and recall what you found interesting, problematic, or strange about it/them.
- Find the passages that raise questions for you and examine them for formal features: what devices does the author use to achieve a certain effect? Diction, syntax, word choice, jumps in time, etc. How does a specific device produce that effect?
- From these questions, develop an area of interest to study in the text(s) as a whole and begin to think about what you think these formal features do. Once you have some ideas of your own, you can see what other people are thinking.

2. Research: Engage with the Critics

- Now that you've narrowed down your interests to a specific text and some formal features of that text, it's time to see what other people have to say about it. At this point, you want to research how critics in the field have discussed the issues you've raised in your text. How have they understood the formal features you find interesting? What arguments are they making about your text and how?
- The best place to start is our very own library: <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/>. From here you can search on your text to see what other people are saying about it. Once you find some specific critical commentaries, studies, or histories to use, you can access them in their physical form by checking them out from the library. Many are also available in their full form online. At this point, you'll want to set-up a Proxy Server so you can access library resources from home: <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/using-the-libraries/proxy-server>.
- There are also many other online resources, including: Google Scholar, archive.org, gutenber.org, JSTOR, and a multitude of databases provided through the library. If you ever have trouble, you can also chat with a librarian online and/or go speak with one in person.

3. Writing Your Paper: Putting It Together

- Now that you have some critical sources and your own ideas, you want to go back and compare them. Do you agree with the arguments the critics are making? Are they making them in different ways than you are? Are they looking at the text from a different perspective than you are? Do you have unique insights that the critics have missed? What are you thinking that they aren't?
- From this comparison you want to generate your own argument about the text, that takes a different stance than the critics, although it might be supported by them. The majority of the paper should be your own analysis and critical commentary, but the sources you've found should be incorporated to counter or bolster your arguments. Note that when you're making your claims, you should be sure to consider counter arguments. Looking at contradictory evidence or imagining how your own evidence might be interpreted differently can help you strengthen weak or unconvincing elements of your own initial argument.
- Because research papers are generally longer, outlining and drafting will be essential. Be sure to think in advance about how you want to structure your paper - breaking it up into sections can be helpful.
- And now it's time write! Be sure to give yourself the most amount of time you can to think, draft, write, and edit, so that your paper is the best it can be.