**Exploring Research**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this assignment is to expand your understanding of research methodology and to expand your understanding of a given author or poet.

**Assignment:** Write a biographical essay on either an author or a poet whose work(s) we have examined this semester. You must utilize a number of outside/secondary sources, and you must include an "Annotated Works Cited" page with your final essay that includes all of your primary and secondary sources cited in the paper.

**Ways to Proceed:** You are conducting a biographical analysis of one of the poets or authors from our readings this semester. As a matter of course, you must find a number of sources that will function to inform you about the life of your subject poet or author.

This essay is no different from any other essay that you have written for this class. It will have an Introduction, a Body, and a Conclusion. It will be Thesis-Driven. It will be focused and cohesive, with an appropriate pattern of organization and an adequate level of development.

The primary difference between this essay and the others that you have written is that you are required to find and incorporate a minimum of four (4) secondary sources into the body of your essay so that they inform your subject author/poet in a purposeful and appropriate manner. In other words, you have to find sources that work well together, that enlighten the reader about your chosen subject of research.

Not all sources are meant to be used together, nor are all sources good sources. Encyclopedias, Wiki sources, in fact, almost everything that you can Google is off-limits for this research paper. The ONLY online sources that you may use must come from the El Camino College list of online databases. ALL OTHER electronic sources are off-limits. Moreover, AT LEAST two (2) of your sources must come from a printed source (e.g., newspaper, magazine, journal, book).

You must use at least four (4) secondary sources in addition to any primary sources that you may use for this essay. A primary source is something written by the author. For instance, if you were writing on Ernest Hemingway, then "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" would be a primary source because it is written by Hemingway. A secondary source is something that is written about the author or poet on whom you are writing. For instance, the Mark Spilka biography, Hemingway's Quarrel with Androgyny, would be a secondary source because that is a text written about Hemingway, not by him. No matter how many primary sources you use for this essay, you must have at least four (4) secondary sources in addition, and two (2) of them must come from print media.

You need to write an "Annotated Works Cited" for any sources that you cite in your essay. An Annotated Works Cited is just a regular works cited, but for one important distinction: after you finish your Works Cited entry, you must then include a 50-250 word summary of the source.

Here is an example of an Annotated Works Cited entry on a short story by Ernest Hemingway; it is a primary source:
Hemingway, Ernest. "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place." *A Pocketful of Prose: Vintage Short Fiction*. Vol. 2. Ed. David Madden. Boston: Heinle, 2006. This is a Hemingway short story in which two waiters, a young one and an older one, discuss the last customer of the evening, an old man. The young waiter hates the old man to the point of being rude to him, notes that the old man tried to kill himself the week before, and wishes that the old man would go home. The older waiter suggests that sometimes one needs a clean, well-lighted place to make sense of oneself. The old man walks home with dignity; the young waiter goes home to his wife; and the older waiter goes to another café where he notes that the place is clean, but is not so well-lighted. The story comes to a climax with the older waiter saying the Lord's Prayer with the word nada in place of almost everything in the prayer. Then the older waiter stays up until dawn, when he can finally fall asleep.
The preceding example of an "Annotated Works Cited" page shows a Works Cited entry containing an annotation with 156 words. Please note that this is ONLY a summary of the story. It does not contain any quotations, nor does it evaluate the source in question. It merely provides a summary of the work that has been cited in the body of the essay. This entry may seem a little lengthy, but it is better to err on the side of caution and be too wordy in such an instance than to be too brief and risk not summarizing your source well enough.

As long as you write a coherent essay centering on one author or poet that we have covered in class, and as long as you have four secondary sources about your author/poet, I am totally fine with whomever you choose as your research subject. If you're in doubt regarding whether you have an appropriate author/poet for your essay, see me BEFORE you begin writing!!! Other than that, you are only limited in this assignment by the texts you utilize as your secondary sources (you must necessarily examine texts on which your paper centers-this is a research-driven assignment), and by your own imagination.

**Criteria for Evaluation:** Your paper should be typed, double-spaced, one-inch margins (top, bottom, left, right), twelve point font (Courier New, Arial, etc.). Your essay should be approximately eight to twelve (8-12) pages in length, including your Annotated Works Cited. You will need to have a minimum of four (4) secondary sources in addition to any primary sources that you use for this essay. Proper MLA citation and documentation-including parenthetical citations in the text of the paper and an "Annotated Works Cited" page-is an absolute necessity for this paper. No matter how good your essay is, any paper turned in without an ANNOTATED Works Cited page will automatically receive a failing grade for this project. An Annotated Works Cited page is not optional; it is not a suggestion. It is a mandatory requirement. No paper shall receive a passing grade without one.

Good luck on this assignment!