

**THE RESEARCH PROJECT** (See also the class website [www.andrew.cmu.edu/course/48-340](http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/course/48-340) for resources)

**Goal:** The goal of the semester “term paper” assignment is for you to produce an excellent, college-level research paper that builds on previous scholarship, and that contributes to a new or revised understanding of your subject. You are not writing a “report” that merely summarizes facts, knowledge, and other people’s ideas about a topic, but instead are to ask a good research question and create an original interpretation or point of view of your own about an existing subject.

**Methods Overview:** Your research work and the crafting of your argument should build on the methods and skills developed in your first year “Interpretation & Argument” course (76-101), a course “that teaches students to read arguments as parts of larger conversations so that they can become authors within those conversations. Those conversations are about *issues*, comprised by contested perspectives and by multiple voices. The major course assignments assume that academic authors make particular moves for entering a conversation about a contested area, and those moves are based upon authors’ abilities to read the literature within the academic conversation in which they are participating,” and then develop their own argument that contributes to the conversation or discourse.<sup>1</sup>

To do that, you will need to choose a general topic of interest (in 76-101 you were handed a topic). Then find sources on that topic by reading broadly to understand the various arguments proposed by other authors on that subject. Then assemble your own list of divergent and authoritative sources (in 76-101 you were given a reading list). Then formulate a specific research question that allows you to explore a problematic issue raised by the sources, one that begins to address a particular problem within the conversation of the other authors. Finally, you will need create your own response to the question and issues by developing a thesis and a paper-length argument that will allow you to enter their conversation.

If you have not written many research papers, you should consider using the required book by Sylvan Barnett, *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*, for help on formulating a comparative topic and a thesis, formatting the bibliography, and how to go about writing a college level research paper.

**Process:** The semester-long work for the research project will be divided into discrete, REQUIRED, phased sub-sections in order to help you produce a first rate project, as follows:

**I) Pick a Focused, Comparative Topic:** Pick a FOCUSED TOPIC on any aspect of *non-American modern architecture (not urbanism), 1900-1945*, and then do a preliminary search of sources about your idea.

To find a small enough topic, and enough good sources, you will need to FOCUS beyond your initial comfort level. One way to do this is to ask yourself a good, thought-provoking question in relation to your early subject choices, and begin to develop it into an interesting, original thesis idea (or main point).

Remember, you are doing a *focused research paper* and not a *report*. There is no way you can research everything there is to know about any topic in 10-12 pages; you can, however, write perceptively about one aspect of a subject if it is focused enough, to show your point of view in a discussion of issues.

One good way to find divergent sources is to consider writing a COMPARATIVE essay, comparing 2-3 items (architects, buildings, theories, places, functions, clients, etc.) related to your subject or topic.

If you’re stuck, try flipping through the Curtis textbook and starting with a favorite building, or architect, or housing project... Then think about which ideas or aspects of the work interest you the most (materials, space, color, siting, landscape, economy, etc.)... And then find some other some other building, architect, or housing project to *compare* to your main topic. Finally develop a thesis about how and why they are different.

The most popular architects and buildings will often have the most sources, and the most divergent positions established by other authors, and can often lead to excellent papers. Focusing only on one well researched topic such as Bauhaus or Gaudi can also make it hard to overcome the “report” syndrome, which produces a report that summarizes existing knowledge, rather than a research paper with a new understanding of your topic.

Some general topics researched by CMU students in past years:

\* Women at the bauhaus \* German Expressionism: Mies vs. Höger \* Nietzsche & Modern Arch. \* Evolution of Cubist Space in Architecture \* Expressionism vs. De Stijl Space \* Painting into Architecture in De Stijl vs Le Corbusier \* Mass Production Housing: Törten vs. Pessac \* Nazi Architecture: Munich vs. Nuremberg \* Giuseppi Terragni: Genius or Copyist? \* Stilts in Le Corbusier \* Housing Individualism in Pessac and Kiefhoek \* Futurism, Mendelsohn and Rietveld: Concepts into Architecture \* Aalto’s Humanism in the Villa Mairea \* Theory vs. Experience in Mies’ Houses \* What makes the Rietveld House ‘Dutch’ \* Austrian Modernism: Wagner vs. Loos \* Le Corbusier vs. Sant Elia’s Ideas of Space \* Craftsmanship in Morris vs. Gropius \* P. Behrens and the Villa Savoye \* Idea of the Mask in Le Corbusier and Loos \* Aalto vs. Chareau \* Fascist Ideal Forms \*

**II) Advising Appointment & Topic Form:** Come see me after class, or make an appointment to discuss and OK your topic with me (during office hours or by appointment) in order to insure a viable topic as soon as possible.

Then fill out the “Paper Topic” form. A first draft of the form is **due Wed. Sept. 7** in class.

<sup>1</sup> The summary of CMU course 76-101 quoted here and some of the language below is based on D.S. Wetzel, “Core Concepts for Teaching Interpretation and Argument,” MS, Fall 2009, as well as assignments from the course.

**III) Revised Topic Proposal:** Based on my comments, additional research, and additional meetings with me, revise your ideas and write a ½-page typed summary of your topic and potential thesis and beginning bibliography. Revised topic proposal **due Mon. Sept. 19** in class.

**IV) Annotated Bibliography - 10 Sources:** Keep looking for more sources, and do extensive RESEARCH to find *authoritative sources* from which to write your project. Try to find *good, reputable, current* sources that together can be seen as a “conversation” of divergent viewpoints about a particular issue or topic.

Work to find sources with many different finding aides. Start with CAMEO to find some appropriate books at CMU. Then look in the bibliography and footnotes in those books for more specific and on-target sources. Try to find those sources as well as more sources in CAMEO, or AVERY INDEX, or WORLDCAT or RILA or JSTOR or READER'S GUIDE or NEW YORK TIMES INDEX... Don't just look in recent magazine indexes, consider looking through old ones from the time period you are studying to get at “primary sources” from the period. Avoid general textbooks, encyclopedias, coffee-table, books older than 20 years, or general articles.

Then prepare a thorough, properly formatted ANNOTATED bibliography of AT LEAST 10 GOOD sources on your topic. You must include at least TWO “PRIMARY SOURCES” and TWO JOURNAL ARTICLES (at least one must be from the last 10 years).

All bibliographies must be properly formatted according to CHICAGO STYLE, the most popular format for architectural historians (this is likely different from other classes, where you may have used MLA style or scientific notation). There will be in-class help sessions and handouts to help you prepare the annotated bibliography. For a quick guide, see: [www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)

All bibliographies must be “ANNOTATED” with a brief summary of the book or article, the overall argument used by the author, and what specific aspect of the book you will use for your paper. Bibliographic annotations are typically indented and immediately under each citation, often in smaller font.

The properly formatted annotated bibliography, along with a 3<sup>rd</sup> revision of the topic statement, will be **due Mon. Oct. 3**.

**V) Thesis & Argument:** As you begin to focus your topic and do the research to find good, authoritative sources, you should begin to develop a **thesis** or primary point-of-view for your paper. It should explain why, in your opinion, the positions taken by other authors on your chosen issue are unresolved, and should summarize or hint at your own position and the argument in response. One good way to generate ideas is to think of a question that one author would want to ask another author. This thesis, much like a “hypothesis” in a science experiment, will determine the sources you use, the argument you make, and the organization of your paper.

Remember that for any paper we write, this thesis begins in a preliminary way. Do not be surprised if you find that you must reshape your question(s) and thesis as you begin to work through the different arguments you've read. Good writers allow for flexibility and change in their thesis as they develop their ideas. Expect to spend time re-reading material as you think through this project. Most good questions evolve over time as you work with the readings, and you'll want to do a lot of re-reading for this assignment.

**VI) Write the First Three Pages and Updated Bibliography:** Write the first three pages of your project, including a THESIS STATEMENT and introduction, which includes a *summary* of the topic and some of the *questions* you hope to answer, as well as the *argument* you will make.

Be sure to include a PAPER TITLE, and a revised ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY. These fully formatted first pages + bibliography will be **due Mon. Oct. 24**, and give me further opportunity to help direct your research effort.

**VII) Final Project Due:** Do more research as needed, then write an 10-12 page DRAFT of your entire term paper. There will be an in-class help session on paper formatting and writing in class. Have a friend read it, and/or put it aside for a few days, and then come back to the paper to revise, to be sure the arguments are clear, to remove any extra information, and to polish your prose and formatting. The final paper must be neatly presented, formatted correctly, and contain a fully developed thesis argument as per the 76-101 model.

\*\* The paper will be **due Fri. Nov. 18**. This due date for the final paper is NON-NEGOTIABLE. You will have known since the beginning of the semester about the deadline, and should work carefully all semester to get there. See the “Policies” section of the syllabus for lateness penalties. \*\*

I will be grading the paper and offer substantive feedback on your thesis, the evidence, the conclusion, and your writing skills. If you are satisfied with your first grade, you're DONE!

**VIII) Rewrite and Revise:** If, and only if you submitted a “Final Paper” by Nov. 18, and you are NOT satisfied with the grade, you will have a chance to revise and rewrite the paper based on my comments, and improve your paper grade. The final rewrites will be due after the last day of classes, exact date TBA.

\*\* It is essential that you stay “on track” and follow this phased writing process in order to develop a good paper topic and argument over time, and to produce the kind of high-end, college-level research paper I expect of students at CMU, one of the best colleges in the country.