

Critical Thinking Research Project
Real-World Problem-Solving
A Collaboration between the Philosophy Program and LaGuardia Archives

OVERVIEW

For the Research Project, each student will select a compelling problem confronting New York City and will analyze it using the problem-solving approach described in Chapter 3 of Thinking Critically. Research on the problem will begin in the LaGuardia Archives and be continued with digital sources and field research in the city. The final product produced by each student will be a research paper proposing solutions to the problem they have chosen.

ARCHIVES VISIT (E238)

The project will begin at the LaGuardia & Wagner Archives (Dr. Richard Lieberman, Director) during a class visit on March 20th at 2:15pm. As a repository for documents pertaining to NYC (Mayors, City Council, Housing Authority) the Archive collection deals with many problem issues that affect the lives of New Yorkers, including **environmental protection, LGBTQ rights, sex education, gun control, housing discrimination and gentrification, anti-immigrant policies and bias, domestic abuse, homelessness, responses to police brutality, gang violence, and animal welfare..** The staff of the Archives will introduce you to its collections and suggest ways to research your topic in the Archives, in the library, and on the Internet.

TOPIC SELECTION

Following the visit to the Archives, students will select a problem on which they would like to work. A list of possible topics will be given to you at your Archives tour. Once a topic selected, students will create a one-page description of their topic and an explanation of why they chose it. This document must be uploaded to our Blackboard discussion group by noon on March 22nd.

FIELD RESEARCH

In addition to traditional research (the next step), students will also engage in real world investigations in NYC. For example, exploring the funding (and budget cuts) for AIDS programs might include a visit to an AIDS clinic and interviews with clients, staff, and city officials. In addition to written notes, student research can be recorded through photographs, tape recordings, video recordings, and notes from interviews. Collecting historical documents such as photographs, letters, brochures, or memorabilia discovered during field research is encouraged. A field memo describing this research is due in the Blackboard discussion group by noon on April 12th.

TOPICAL RESEARCH

Students' exploration of the issue should involve conducting research with a number of sources. The Archives is a good place to begin, followed by the library. They can then broaden their research to include news sources and scholarly articles accessible on the internet. Students should take notes based on their explorations, and critically evaluate the sources in terms of reliability, bias, relevance, and accuracy. An annotated bibliography of the sources students have chosen is due in the Blackboard discussion group by noon on April 26th.

EXTENDED OUTLINE

Students will then construct an extended outline for their problem issue, noting where the various research findings will fit in their outline. Students should upload their outline to our Blackboard discussion group by noon on May 10th for the purpose of receiving reactions and suggestions from their colleagues.

PAPER

Students' papers should synthesize their problem-solving research in a 1500+ word paper that employs the problem-solving approach described in Chapter 3 of Thinking Critically. Students should identify at least three alternatives for solving the problem and develop a plan of action to implement the solution deemed to be the most promising. Outstanding students' papers will be invited to be included in the permanent collection of the Archives. Finalized papers are to be turned in as hard copies on June 4th and uploaded to the Blackboard discussion group for full credit.