

ONRAMPS RHETORIC SUMMER ASSIGNMENT

2019-2020

Welcome to OnRamps Rhetoric! In this course, you will learn about effective techniques of persuasion, first by analyzing real-world arguments about a variety of contemporary controversies, and then by crafting your own original arguments based on extensive research that you will conduct over the course of the year.

To prepare for this course, your summer assignment is to read the following editorials and write a research summary over one of the articles using either the play-by-play method or the argument breakdown strategy. The full assignment is listed below. Briefly summarizing what other people have said is one of the most important writing skills that you can learn in your first year of college. In school and elsewhere, you will spend a lot of time telling someone what other people believe.

In college classes, you'll have to tell your professors what experts say. In professional settings, you'll have to explain to your coworkers what experienced professionals do. In public writing, you'll have to say what other citizens believe. Even in scientific reports, when presenting a completely new discovery, you will have to summarize existing "literature" to show why your discovery is relevant to other people's primary research. Fairly and accurately summarizing someone else's argument is clearly important, and it can also be challenging, especially maintaining neutrality if you have strong opinions about the topic.

OnRamps teaches two main approaches to summarizing an argument, the play-by-play method and the argument-breakdown method. Read the following information about each method, and then carefully review the instructions for writing a research summary.

PLAY-BY-PLAY SUMMARY:

A play-by-play narrates each step in an argument. This can be done by summarizing each paragraph or by summarizing each major section (sometimes a paragraph, sometimes a whole chapter) in one or two sentences.

The play-by-play summary shows how the argument progresses: What comes first? What comes second? What comes last? The play-by-play summary also guarantees that the summary will accurately present the order that the writer intended. Finally, the play-by-play summary catches all of the major parts of the argument. Nothing significant will be left out.

In order to write a play-by-play summary, we recommend that you first read through an article and mark all the places where the topic changes or where the writer seems to stop doing one thing (such as introducing the main idea) and starts doing another (such as giving background information).

Play-by-play summaries show you how an argument unfolds. Play-by-play summaries also give a good sense of how much attention the writer affords to particular topics and subjects. Finally, play-by-play summarizing allows you to capture the feel of the article.

Since you're offering a miniature, paraphrased version of the argument, your summary may well appear to be a short version of the article itself. Carefully inserted direct quotes will additionally capture the author's voice and tone.

ARGUMENT-BREAKDOWN SUMMARY:

The argument-breakdown summary tries to take the argument apart and emphasize both its key components and their relation to one another. You point out, for example, the main claim and the key reasons supporting that claim without exactly repeating the argument's arrangement. We suggest breaking the argument down into its principal claim, its main reasons, and its evidence. Later in this class, we'll explore these parts of an argument in much greater detail. For now, however, a few simple definitions will suffice.

The principal claim is the main idea, the feeling, or the action that an author wants the audience to believe, to feel, or to do after reading, hearing, or seeing an argument.

Reasons are things that we come up with when we're trying to convince someone. Reasons can usually be expressed after the word "because" and help to support the principal claim.

Evidence is the information we find when we're trying to convince someone. Types of evidence include testimony, statistics, and examples. Specific mention of particular people, statements, events, and quotes--all these things count as evidence. And all this evidence can support either a reason or a principal claim.

In order to write your argument breakdown summary, we will suggest the following steps:

1. First label (underline or highlight) the principal claim. If the author doesn't state the principal claim explicitly, summarize the claim in your own words. What is the author trying to get across?
2. Then, label all the evidence—the specific examples, statistics, real people or events that are used in the article. Reasons are how many authors organize their arguments. For instance, if I want you to lend me 5 dollars, a reason might be that I let you borrow money in the past.

You will find the last step the hardest because people rarely say how they're trying to convince an audience. If people announced their plans to persuade, audiences would rarely be persuaded. You might say to someone, "Now I'm going to persuade you by mentioning these three reasons and these five pieces of evidence." But when you say something like this, you put the audience on guard. They will likely try to resist your efforts at persuasion. The better strategy is to simply say what you believe and to give your reasons and your evidence in clear and plain language. Since the person who argues will rarely label the parts of her argument, the person summarizing must find and label these parts.

Article 1: From the Houston Chronicle

Big Oil must choose: bad guys or good guys on climate change [Editorial]

By The Editorial Board March 14, 2019 Updated: March 14, 2019 6:08 p.m.



Massachusetts Institute of Technology professors and associate professors participate in a Frontiers of Science and Innovation: Future Technologies to Meet the Energy and Climate Challenge talk during the final day of IHS CERAWeek at the Hilton Americas in Houston Friday, Feb. 26, 2016. (Michael Ciaglo / Houston Chronicle) Photo: Michael Ciaglo, Staff / Houston Chronicle

There is no better place to be in the energy industry than the United States. EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler made that much clear during his opening statement at CERAWeek.

“If you are looking to buy energy on the open market, look to the U.S.” he said Monday. “If you are looking for energy technology or technical assistance, look to the U.S. If you are looking for reliability, certainty, and security, look to the U.S.”

Left unsaid: If you want leadership in the fight to confront climate change, look somewhere else.

The White House has withdrawn from the Paris Accord, rolled back the Clean Power Plan and appointed bad-faith climate change deniers to a federal climate panel. The United States needs to claim this leadership mantle, not only for the sake of saving the planet, but also to ensure that we remain the best place in the world for the energy industry.

Oil and gas executives get this. Talk to the experts who have descended upon Houston for the annual CERAWEEK energy conference, named for consulting firm Cambridge Energy Research Associates, and they'll tell you the truth: Global warming is real, man-made emissions are a key cause, it is a threat to humanity and the U.S. government has to step up for the future of our children and grandchildren. That's the message we heard this week during editorial board meetings with Jeff Shellebarger, president of Chevron North America Exploration and Production, and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Chairman Neil Chatterjee.

“You can't have that conversation from two polar opposite perspectives where people are just driving fear and nobody's talking about what's possible, what's really going to happen with climate change and what are the real solutions that are viable and what trade-offs are going to have to take place,” Shellebarger told us.

Other major oil and gas companies sent similar messages to President Trump this week. Fossil fuel giants Shell, Exxon and BP all said that Obama-era rules regulating methane leaks from oil and gas operations needed to be maintained and even tightened. Houston-based EOG Resources Inc. also announced its support for regulating methane. The Trump administration has been trying to undo these rules, which are designed to target a greenhouse gas that's 20 times more powerful than carbon dioxide.

Shell U.S. President Gretchen Watkins said Tuesday she wasn't in the habit of telling governments how to do their jobs, but: "I am breaking that rule today to request that the Environmental Protection Agency continue the direct regulation of methane emissions."

That's a good start, but oil and gas companies have a bad habit of announcing one thing to the public and another behind closed doors. The American Petroleum Institute — the trade organization that represents the major oil and gas companies — has dedicated its lobbying efforts toward undermining methane rules. BP was specifically caught advocating for weaker regulations. It's hard to take the industry seriously on climate change when their lobbyists don't listen to the CEOs.

Meanwhile, experts and analysts at CERAWeek were clear : Now is the time for industry to act. During a press scrum, the International Energy Agency's Fatih Birol said industry is taking some steps, but not enough.

It is time to put a dollar amount on the damage that greenhouse gas emissions can inflict — it is time for a carbon tax. The longer the industry demurs and delays on putting its full force behind a carbon tax the less trust people will have in the industry's input once time finally comes for federal policy. Oil executives should come to the table before their industry becomes the menu.

U.S. energy companies have already proven how technological innovation can address climate change. Think reducing carbon emissions by replacing dirty coal with fracked natural gas. Think wind energy, now an economic boon for Texas. The home of the next big, scalable breakthrough in battery storage, carbon capture or clean energy production will become the Energy Capital of the World for the 21st century.

It's a title that Houston risks losing to — gasp! — Beijing if we don't keep up. Houstonians are witnesses to brilliant engineers who can drill miles beneath the seabed, transform unproductive shale into the world's largest oil play and turn plastic waste into everyday pavement. We have little doubt that, if their companies are given the proper market incentive and federal support, they'd find a way to capture and sequester carbon emissions, clean the tailpipes of cars and trucks, and confront the environmental harms we all want to prevent.

We also know that if oil and gas companies continue to pay nothing more than lip service to global warming solutions, consumers will figure it out. It's time to act. There may be no better place to be in the energy industry than the U.S. today. Leaders must plan for tomorrow.

Article 2: NOTE: This article contains several photographs which should be included in the summary. I printed the black and white ones but you should look up the full article for the entire picture.

Time to Panic

The planet is getting warmer in catastrophic ways. And fear may be the only thing that saves us.

By David Wallace-Wells

Mr. Wallace-Wells is the author of the forthcoming "The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming." Feb. 16, 2019

The age of climate panic is here. Last summer, a heat wave baked the entire Northern Hemisphere, killing dozens [from Quebec to Japan](#). Some of the most destructive wildfires in California history turned more than a million acres to ash, along the way melting the tires and the sneakers of those trying to escape the flames. Pacific hurricanes forced [three million people in China](#) to flee and [wiped away almost all of Hawaii's East Island](#).

We are living today in a world that has warmed by just one degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) since the late 1800s, when records began on a global scale. We are adding planet-warming carbon dioxide to the atmosphere at a rate faster than at any point in human history since the beginning of industrialization.

In October, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released what has become known as its "[Doomsday](#)" report — "a deafening, piercing smoke alarm going off in the kitchen," as [one United Nations official described it](#) — detailing climate effects at 1.5 and two degrees Celsius of warming (2.7 and 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit). At the opening of a major United Nations conference two months later, David Attenborough, the mellifluous voice of the BBC's "Planet Earth" and now an environmental conscience for the English-speaking world, put it even more bleakly: "If we

don't take action," [he said](#), "the collapse of our civilizations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon."

Scientists have felt this way for a while. But they have not often talked like it. For decades, there were few things with a worse reputation than "alarmism" among those studying climate change.

This is a bit strange. You don't typically hear from public health experts about the need for circumspection in describing the risks of carcinogens, for instance. The climatologist James Hansen, who testified before Congress about global warming in 1988, has called the phenomenon "scientific reticence" and chastised his colleagues for it — for editing their own observations so conscientiously that they failed to communicate how dire the threat actually was.

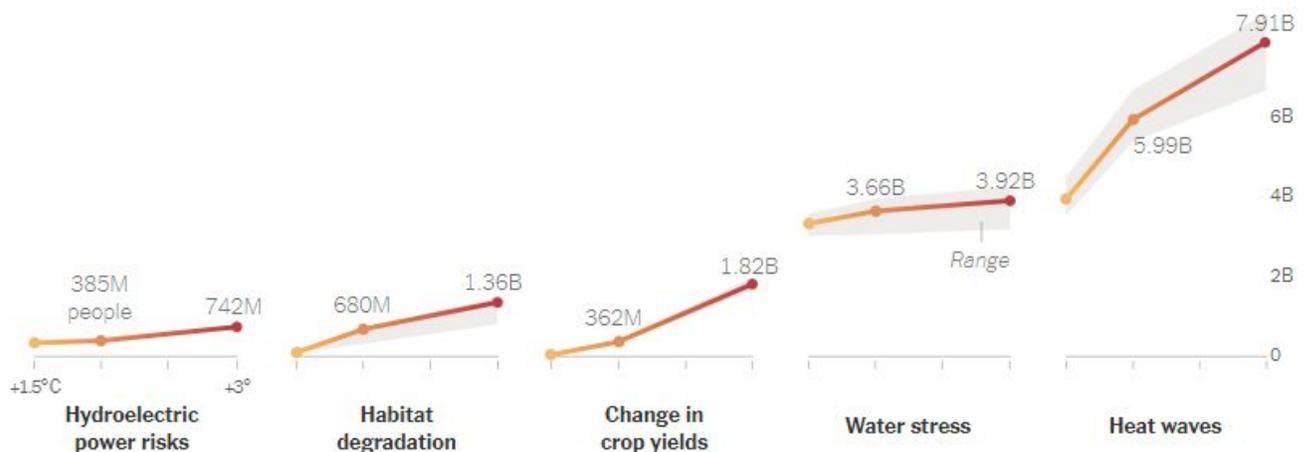
That tendency metastasized even as the news from the research grew bleaker. So for years the publication of every major paper, essay or book would be attended by a cloud of commentary debating its precise calibration of perspective and tone, with many of those articles seen by scientists as lacking an appropriate balance between bad news and optimism, and labeled "fatalistic" as a result.

In 2018, their circumspection began to change, perhaps because all that extreme weather wouldn't permit it not to. Some scientists even began embracing alarmism — particularly with that United Nations report. The research it summarized was not new, and temperatures beyond two degrees Celsius were not even discussed, though warming on that scale is where we are headed. Though the report — the product of nearly 100 scientists from around the world — did not address any of the scarier possibilities for warming, it did offer a new form of permission to the world's scientists. The thing that was new was the message: It is O.K., finally, to freak out. Even reasonable.

This, to me, is progress. Panic might seem counterproductive, but we're at a point where alarmism and catastrophic thinking are valuable, for several reasons.

The Difference a Degree Makes

The number of people projected to experience heat waves, water stress and other climate events by 2050 rises sharply as the global mean temperature increases.



Note: Temperature change relative to pre-industrial baseline. Source: International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis from a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change | By The New York Times

The first is that climate change is a crisis precisely because it is a looming catastrophe that demands an aggressive global response, now. In other words, it is right to be alarmed. The emissions path we

are on today is likely to take us to 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming by 2040, two degrees Celsius within decades after that and perhaps four degrees Celsius by 2100.

As temperatures rise, this could mean many of the biggest cities in the Middle East and South Asia would become lethally hot in summer, perhaps as soon as 2050. There would be ice-free summers in the Arctic and the unstoppable disintegration of the West Antarctic's ice sheet, which some scientists believe has already begun, threatening the world's coastal cities with inundation. Coral reefs would mostly disappear. And there would be tens of millions of climate refugees, perhaps many more, fleeing droughts, flooding and extreme heat, and the possibility of multiple climate-driven natural disasters striking simultaneously.

There are many reasons to think we may not get to four degrees Celsius, but globally, emissions are still growing, and the time we have to avert what is now thought to be catastrophic warming — two degrees Celsius — is shrinking by the day. To stay safely below that threshold, we must reduce greenhouse gas emissions by [45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030](#), according to the United Nations report. Instead, they are still rising. So being alarmed is not a sign of being hysterical; when it comes to climate change, being alarmed is what the facts demand. Perhaps the only logical response. This helps explain the second reason alarmism is useful: By defining the boundaries of conceivability more accurately, catastrophic thinking makes it easier to see the threat of climate change clearly. For years, we have read in newspapers as two degrees of warming was invoked as the highest tolerable level, beyond which disaster would ensue. Warming greater than that was rarely discussed outside scientific circles. And so it was easy to develop an intuitive portrait of the landscape of possibilities that began with the climate as it exists today and ended with the pain of two degrees, the ceiling of suffering.

In fact, it is almost certainly a floor. By far the likeliest outcomes for the end of this century fall between two and four degrees of warming. And so looking squarely at what the world might look like in that range — two degrees, three, four — is much better preparation for the challenges we will face than retreating into the comforting relative normalcy of the present.

Fire in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest in California last summer, when more than a million acres burned in the state. Scientists cite climate change as a factor in California's increasingly destructive wildfire seasons. Credit Noah Berger/Associated Press

The third reason is while concern about climate change is growing — fortunately — complacency remains a much bigger political problem than fatalism. In December, a national survey tracking Americans' attitudes toward climate change found that [73 percent said global warming was happening](#), the highest percentage since the question began being asked in 2008. But a majority of Americans were unwilling to spend even \$10 a month to address global warming; most drew the line at \$1 a month, according to [a poll](#) conducted the previous month.

Last fall, voters in Washington, a green state in a blue-wave election, [rejected](#) even a modest carbon-tax plan. Are those people unwilling to pay that money because they think the game is over or because they don't think it's necessary yet?

This is a rhetorical question. If we had started global decarbonization in 2000, [according to the Global Carbon Project](#), we would have had to [cut emissions by only about 2 percent per year](#) to stay safely under two degrees of warming. Did we fail to act then because we thought it was all over already or because we didn't yet consider warming an urgent enough problem to take action against? Only 44 percent of those surveyed in a [survey last month](#) cited climate change as a top political priority. But it should be. The fact is, further delay will only make the problem worse. If we started a broad decarbonization effort today — a gargantuan undertaking to overhaul our energy systems, building

and transportation infrastructure and how we produce our food — the necessary rate of emissions reduction would be about 5 percent per year. If we delay another decade, it will require us to cut emissions by some 9 percent each year. This is why the United Nations secretary-general, António Guterres, believes we have only until 2020 to change course and get started.



In “Silent Spring,” published in 1962, Rachel Carson exposed the harm the pesticide DDT inflicted on wildlife and criticized the chemical industry for spreading false assurances of safety. Credit Bettmann Archive/Getty Images



In 1972, the Environmental Protection Agency banned DDT after mounting evidence of its adverse environmental and toxicological effects. Credit Associated Press

A fourth argument for embracing catastrophic thinking comes from history. Fear can mobilize, even change the world. When Rachel Carson published her landmark

anti-pesticide polemic “Silent Spring,” Life magazine said she had “overstated her case,” and The Saturday Evening Post dismissed the book as “alarmist.” But it almost single-handedly led to a nationwide ban on DDT.

Throughout the Cold War, foes of nuclear weapons did not shy away from warning of the horrors of mutually assured destruction, and in the 1980s and 1990s, campaigners against drunken driving did not feel obligated to make their case simply by celebrating sobriety. In its “Doomsday” report, the United Nations climate-change panel offered a very clear analogy for the mobilization required to avert catastrophic warming: World War II, which [President Franklin Roosevelt called](#) a “challenge to life, liberty and civilization.” That war was not waged on hope alone.

But perhaps the strongest argument for the wisdom of catastrophic thinking is that all of our mental reflexes run in the opposite direction, toward disbelief about the possibility of very bad outcomes. I know this from personal experience. I have spent the past three years buried in climate science and following the research as it expanded into ever darker territory.

The number of “good news” scientific papers that I’ve encountered in that time I could probably count on my two hands. The “bad news” papers number probably in the thousands — each day seeming to bring a new, distressing revision to our understanding of the environmental trauma already unfolding.

I know the science is true, I know the threat is all-encompassing, and I know its effects, should emissions continue unabated, will be terrifying. And yet, when I imagine my life three decades from now, or the life of my daughter five decades from now, I have to admit that I am not imagining a world on fire but one similar to the one we have now. That is how hard it is to shake complacency. We are all living in delusion, unable to really process the news from science that climate change amounts to an all-encompassing threat. Indeed, a threat the size of life itself.

How can we be this deluded? One answer comes from behavioral economics. The scroll of cognitive biases identified by psychologists and fellow travelers over the past half-century can seem, like a social media feed, bottomless, and they distort and distend our perception of a changing climate. These optimistic prejudices, prophylactic biases and emotional reflexes form an entire library of climate delusion.

We build our view of the universe outward from our own experience, a reflexive tendency that surely shapes our ability to comprehend genuinely existential threats to the species. We have a tendency to wait for others to act, rather than acting ourselves; a preference for the present situation; a disinclination to change things; and an excess of confidence that we can change things easily, should we need to, no matter the scale. We can’t see anything but through cataracts of self-deception.

The sum total of these biases is what makes climate change something the ecological theorist Timothy Morton calls a “hyperobject” — a conceptual fact so large and complex that it can never be properly comprehended. In his book “Worst-Case Scenarios,” the legal scholar Cass Sunstein wrote that in general, we have a problem considering unlikely but potential risks, which we run from either into complacency or paranoia. His solution is a wonky one: We should all be more rigorous in our cost-benefit analysis.

That climate change demands expertise, and faith in it, at precisely the moment when public confidence in expertise is collapsing is one of its many paradoxes. That climate change touches so many of our cognitive biases is a mark of just how big it is and how much about human life it touches, which is to say, nearly everything.

And unfortunately, as climate change has been dawning more fully into view over the past several decades, all the cognitive biases that push us toward complacency have been abetted by our storytelling about warming — by journalism defined by caution in describing the scale and speed of the threat.

So what can we do? And by the way, who’s “we”? The size of the threat from climate change means that organization is necessary at every level — communities, states, nations and international agreements that coordinate action among them. But most of us don’t live in the halls of the United Nations or the boardrooms in which the Paris climate agreement was negotiated.

Instead we live in a consumer culture that tells us we can make our political mark on the world through where we shop, what we wear, how we eat. This is how we get things like The Lancet’s recent [dietary recommendations](#) for those who want to eat to mitigate climate change — less meat for some,

more vegetables — or suggestions like those published in The Washington Post, around the time of New Year’s resolutions. For instance: [“Be smart about your air-conditioner.”](#) But conscious consumption is a cop-out, a neoliberal diversion from collective action, which is what is necessary. People should try to live by their own values, about climate as with everything else, but the effects of individual lifestyle choices are ultimately trivial compared with what politics can achieve. Buying an electric car is a drop in the bucket compared with raising fuel-efficiency standards sharply. Conscientiously flying less is a lot easier if there’s more high-speed rail around. And if I eat fewer hamburgers a year, so what? But if cattle farmers were *required* to feed their cattle seaweed, which might reduce methane emissions by nearly 60 percent [according to one study](#), that would make an enormous difference.

That is what is meant when politics is called a “moral multiplier.” It is also an exit from the personal, emotional burden of climate change and from what can feel like hypocrisy about living in the world as it is and simultaneously worrying about its future. We don’t ask people who pay taxes to support a social safety net to also demonstrate that commitment through philanthropic action, and similarly we shouldn’t ask anyone — and certainly not everyone — to manage his or her own carbon footprint before we even really try to enact laws and policies that would reduce all of our emissions. That is the purpose of politics: that we can be and do better together than we might manage as individuals.

And politics, suddenly, is on fire with climate change. Last fall, in Britain, an activist group with the alarmist name Extinction Rebellion was formed and immediately grew so large it was able to paralyze parts of London in its first major protest. Its leading demand: “Tell the truth.” That imperative is echoed, stateside, by Genevieve Guenther’s organization End Climate Silence, and the climate-change panel’s calls to direct the planet’s resources toward action against warming has been taken up at the grass roots, inspiring, by Margaret Klein Salamon’s Climate Mobilization project.

Of course, environmental activism isn’t new, and these are just the groups that have arisen over the past few years, pushed into action by climate panic. But that alarm is cascading upward, too. In Congress, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York has rallied liberal Democrats around a Green New Deal — a call to reorganize the American economy around clean energy and renewable prosperity. Washington State’s governor, Jay Inslee, has more or less declared himself a [single-issue presidential candidate](#).

And while not a single direct question about climate change was asked of either Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump during the 2016 presidential debates, the issue is sure to dominate the Democratic primary in 2020, alongside “Medicare for all” and free college. Michael Bloomberg, [poised to spend at least \\$500 million](#) on the campaign, [has said](#) he’ll insist that any candidate the party puts forward has a concrete plan for the climate.

This is what the beginning of a solution looks like — though only a very beginning, and only a partial solution. We have probably squandered the opportunity to avert two degrees of warming, but we can avert three degrees and certainly all the terrifying suffering that lies beyond that threshold.

But the longer we wait, the worse it will get. Which is one last argument for catastrophic thinking: What creates more sense of urgency than fear?

Research Summary Assignment

Assignment Overview: Write a one-page (8.5 x 11) paper summarizing one of the preceding articles.

Format: Put your name in the top left-hand corner, and list the writer's name and the full citation information of the piece you're summarizing; set margins at 1 inch, spacing at single, and font at 12 pt. Do not exceed one page in length.

Specifics: Introduce the controversy and give background information that the reader will need to understand why people are debating this question.

Introduce the writer, and explain why this person is a stakeholder in the controversy. If necessary, introduce other stakeholders, and explain how this writer and his/her viewpoint relate(s) to these stakeholders and their viewpoints.

Offer a concise but thorough summary of the position this source is advocating. This summary may include a mixture of both play-by-play and argument-breakdown summary.

Stay as close to the text as possible, quoting the writer's exact words at times to tie both you and your readers to the original text itself. Where necessary and appropriate, cite paragraph numbers (in lieu of original page numbers) for any quotations in parentheses after the quote (par. ____). Your aim is to hand your readers your understanding of WHAT this text is arguing for. Attributions and signal phrases such as "Smith says/notes/states," or "according to Bell," etc., will help you designate what is called intellectual property. You will not have room to cover all the points a writer makes, so you will need to synthesize the information for us, tell us what position the writer is advocating, and then offer quotes from the text itself to demonstrate (to show us) that the writer is arguing what you say she or he is arguing. Do not offer your own commentary, opinions, or arguments about what the text says, and do not offer a rhetorical analysis of the writing. Stick to content: What is the writer saying in this text? What position is he or she advocating?

Use proper MLA 8 parenthetical citation, and include a works-cited entry (formatted according to MLA 8 guidelines) at the top of the page.

Lastly, be aware that academic integrity is of the utmost importance in this course. The three high school instructors teaching OnRamps will be working together closely, and any kind of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will result in harsh academic and disciplinary consequences.