

Writing 20, Sections 20, 86

Prof. Gretchen A. Case

Fall 2009

Major Essay 2: Finding the Historical Significance in the Story

Historical significance does not necessarily involve praise, fame, or fortune (although it might). In fact, some of the most significant events and experiences have not yet made it into the written record. Your assignment for this essay is to recognize a story of historical significance in the oral history you conducted with a Duke medical professional. You might find this person's experiences or accomplishments to be significant; his or her story might lead you to uncover different stories through additional research. In this essay, you will not only identify or describe this story but also argue for its significance. You should be adding to the academic conversation already in place—where does this story fit into a larger history of medicine?

You will use the oral history interview you conducted as one of your sources for this essay. You may also use any or all of the oral history interviews conducted by your classmates (this includes both Sections 20 and 86). All interviews should be posted and available on our wordpress site at: <http://blogs-dev.oit.duke.edu/storiesofmedicine/wp-admin/>

You may take one of two possible approaches to this essay:

1. Focusing your essay on your interviewee, argue for the historical significance of this person's contributions to medicine at Duke or in Durham. You might concentrate on the entire sweep of your interviewee's career or on one aspect of it. If you choose this option, make sure that you have a research question and that you build an argument that adds to the scholarly conversation already taking place. Remember Alexandra Minna Stern's article about Melissa Richter: Stern did not simply present a biographical sketch of Richter, but argued for the historical significance of Richter's new program in genetic counseling.
2. As you did in Major Essay 1, use your oral history interview as inspiration for a research question you would like to explore. You might end up writing about something entirely different than the subjects discussed in the interview. You should explain this inspiration and the process of developing your research question; you may do so in the body of your essay, as an informational footnote, or as an addendum.

Other approaches are certainly possible, but must be cleared with Dr. Case before you proceed.

Writing Goals: Collecting oral histories and assessing oral sources. Addressing the differences between oral and written sources. Conducting library research and using several complementary sources to support your argument. Acknowledging your role in creating and defending an argument in writing. In Harris' terms, you will be *coming to terms* and *forwarding*, possibly *countering*, and definitely *taking an approach*. This assignment also offers practice at *revising* in each draft stage.

Elements to Include:

1. Your argument must articulate clearly how your sources relate to each other and why they should be discussed together. If you can't see a relationship between your sources, you will have trouble developing an interesting argument.
2. Properly cite all oral history interviews you use and include them in your Works Cited.
3. Use at least two peer-reviewed, scholarly sources that are not included in our course readings. (You absolutely may use our course readings as additional sources.) The total number of sources you employ is up to your discretion, but you will probably want to use more than two. Oral history interviews are NOT peer-reviewed!

***Note:** Wikipedia and other encyclopedias are not considered generally to be scholarly sources. Likewise, unless you are exploring the etymology of a word, dictionaries and dictionary definitions do not serve academic arguments well. You must consult your instructor before using these types of sources in your research.

The Fine Print: Total length should be 5-7 pages. Your first draft will not be graded, but will be reviewed by your instructor. **First draft is due on Blackboard (Group Pages) by midnight on Friday, November 6.** Your second draft will not be graded, but will be reviewed by your peer editors. **Second draft is due on Blackboard (Group Pages) by midnight on Friday, November 20.** You will submit your final version to your instructor for a grade. **Final version is due on Blackboard (Assignments) at midnight on Tuesday, December 8.** Your grade on the final version will equal 30% of your overall grade for the course.

Reminders:

*As always, check your syllabus (available on our class Blackboard site) under "General Requirements for Written Assignments" for details pertaining to formatting standards, grammar and spelling expectations, and guidelines for citation and documentation of sources.

*Sign up for a session with our Undergraduate Writing Tutor (Case/Yoder for Section 20, and Case/Miller for Section 86) through the Writing Studio website.