

The purpose of this project is to give you practical experience in these areas:

- working constructively and efficiently in a group of 4-5 people
- doing library research—finding a variety of viewpoints on an issue
- evaluating sources
- summarizing information from research without plagiarizing
- planning and delivering a brief oral presentation in which all group members speak.

These skills are listed among the “Competencies” for Reading 96 and are a standard part of the curriculum for Reading 96, as well as for many college level courses.

TOPICS: A good presentation topic meets 2 criteria: (1) it should be an issue that people care about; and (2) it should be one that has triggered enough debate in the last 10 years to have a lot written about it. Here are some examples that turned out to be good topics for successful presentations in previous reading classes.

- **The death penalty**: Should it be applied to teenagers? Should it be applied to anyone? When—if ever—is it justifiable? Is it fairly administered? (That is, are all groups—regardless of race or ethnicity, social class, wealth or poverty—treated the same?)
- **Gay marriage**: What are the current laws in various states? What is a civil union? How many states—and which ones—recognize civil unions between same-sex partners.
- **The safety of our foods**: pesticides, Mad Cow disease, Salmonella, & other dangers. Is the food we eat as safe as it could be?
- **Stem-cell research**: What are the potential benefits? Why do so many people oppose it? Should our government support it?
- **Gas prices**: why are the current prices so high?

The **goal** of your presentation can be one of these:

- (a) to inform class members about an issue that we need to know more about, or
- (b) to present both sides of a controversial issue, such as capital punishment or gay marriage, or
- (c) to persuade the audience of the strength of one side of such an issue (for instance, why no one under the age of 21 should be executed).

This project is worth **100 points**, total. Points are assigned as follows.

1. 5 points: **Project Proposal**. Each group will turn in a proposal that answers these questions: What is the issue or topic? Why is it important—that is, why do people need to be informed about it? What particular aspects of the topic will the group focus on? (Limit your topic. If it's too broad, you'll have trouble organizing a focused, coherent presentation.)

2. 20 points: Article Summary. Each individual must write a summary of a 1-2 page article on your topic. There is no set length for the summary; it will depend on how long your article is. A good summary paragraph contains the most important point (main idea) of the article and gives an idea of how the writer supports that point by including only the most important supporting details. Use your own words as much as possible. A good summary contains little, if any, quoted material (never whole sentences; usually just a phrase.) You summary must be typed, double-spaced, with a copy of the article attached. (I have to be able to read the article to evaluate your summary!)
3. 20 points: Article Evaluation. Each of you—individually—must find an article on your topic that you judge to be a reliable source of information. This has to be a separate article from the one you summarized—ideally, somewhat longer and more complex . Write an evaluation of this article, explaining what makes you think it's reliable. Write this in paragraph form, using complete sentences, and attach a copy of the article to your evaluation. This paper must be typed, double-spaced. Expected length: 1 to 1 ½ pages.

Helpful Tips:

- Choose your article carefully. You will get highest points for using an article that would be considered a reliable source according by college professors and librarians. If you're confused about which article to choose, bring several that you're considering and show me.
 - Download the "Questions for Evaluating Sources" and the Sample Article Evaluation on Electronic Reserves. Read these and use them as guides.
4. 50 points: Oral Presentation. This should be limited to 15-20 minutes of presenting, with a question and answer period at the end. All group members must speak. Class members will evaluate each presentation, and the group's grade will be the average of how your peers rate you and how I rate you. To earn high scores from your audience, you need to practice speaking in a loud and clear voice. I strongly recommend using some kind of visual aids (posters, charts, overhead projections) to reinforce the most important information. Remember: All your research and planning will be futile if the audience can't hear you or if the information goes by too fast for us to take notes on.
 5. 5 points: Self and Group Member Evaluation (I'll give you the form for this after you do your presentation.)

KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL PRESENTATION: Don't panic! We're all in this together We can support each other and provide a safe, comfortable, respectful audience for everyone's efforts.