

Cerritos College Library

In the Wilford Michael Library & Learning Resource Center

RESEARCHING A CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE

Researching a controversial issue requires that you look at both sides of the issue and take a position on one side or the other. As a writer, you will take a stand on an issue and defend it against opposing points of view. Therefore, your argumentative research paper involves advocacy and persuasion. After you select your topic, you should research the issues surrounding the topic and read other writers' arguments for and against. You should present supporting evidence in favor of your position on the topic as well as anticipate and deflect arguments against your position. In other words, you should to make your case persuasively and also defend against possible opposition.

Getting Started

The Library can provide you with a list of interesting topics, but this list is by no means conclusive. Select a topic of interest to you. Below are some general handbooks and websites that will help you work through the process of writing an argumentative research paper.

Guides to Writing Research Papers – Reference Books

A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations

Reference LB2369 .T8 2007

A Guide to Argumentative Writing

Reference PE1431 .S73 1996

MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers

Ref Desk LB2369 .G53 2003

MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing

Reference PN147 .G444 2008

Using Sources Effectively: Strengthening Your Writing and Avoiding Plagiarism

Reference LB2369 .H37 2002

Writing Argumentative Essays

Reference PE 1431 .W67 2001

Writing Arguments: A Rhetoric With Readings

Reference PE1431 .R33 2001 (2004 ed. on reserve)

Form & Style: Research Papers, Reports, Theses

Reference LB2369 .C3 2007

Guides to Writing Research Papers – Books You Can Check Out

Elements of Argument: A Text and Reader

Reserve X4080

The Little, Brown Guide to Writing Research Papers

South Stacks LB2369 .M42 1994

Good Arguments: An Introduction to Critical Thinking

South Stacks BC177 .M57 1995

Writing the Modern Research Paper

South Stacks LB2369 .D44 2000

Internet Guides to Writing Research Papers

A+ Research and Writing for High School and College Students

<http://www.ipl.org/div/teen/aplus>

MLA Style

<http://www.mla.org>

OWL: Online Writing Lab at Purdue

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/>

Citing Sources (Duke University)

http://www.lib.duke.edu/libguide/works_cited

General Guides, Citation Styles, and Style Guides

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Style.html> (not updated)

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Getting Background Information on Your Topic

Once you have selected a topic for your paper, use the general reference resources available in the library to get background information on your topic. Reference books such as encyclopedias are a good starting point for your research because they help you become better acquainted with your topic. The [Gale Databases](#) and [Facts on File](#) databases are online resources that provide useful background information as well. These are all available via the [Library Home Page](#). The library also has several series that focus on current newsworthy and/or controversial issues. The following series are available directly behind the Reference Desk.

**At Issue
CQ Researcher**

**Current Controversies
Information Plus**

**Opposing Viewpoints
Taking Sides**

The series listed below are available at the Periodicals Desk.

**Editorial Research Reports
Editorials On File**

**Facts on File
Issues & Controversies**

Getting More Information on Your Topic

Once you have done your background research you will be ready to conduct more comprehensive research using books, journals, magazines, newspapers, and the Internet.

Books

Use the Cerritos College [Library Catalog](#) available on the [Library Home Page](#) to find books available in the Cerritos College Library. Books can provide a broad overview of a topic or in-depth information.

You can search for books by *Author*, *Title*, *Subject*, or *Keyword*. It is often best to do a *Keyword* search to find books on your topic. If you find one book that is useful to your research, click on the *Subject* links to see others on the same subject.

Newspaper and Magazine Articles

Journals and magazines usually provide the most current information on a topic. Journal articles are more scholarly or professional while magazine articles tend to be shorter and more general. Newspaper articles, while not usually scholarly or professional, can give you the most current news and some additional facts on your topic.

To find articles on your topic, use one of the online databases listed below. These databases usually provide full-text articles on almost every topic. They are available via the [Library Home Page](#). For historical research, the Library also has print indexes that must be used to find older articles, generally anything published before 1985.

**CQ Public Affairs Collection
EBSCOhost
ERIC**

**Ethnic News Watch
Facts on File
Proquest Newspapers**

**Gale Databases
Gender Watch
Project Muse**

For remote access to the library databases, login to the [Library](#) using your Cerritos College ID number. See the [Database Page](#) or handout for a complete description of the Cerritos College Library online resources.