

## Meaning of...Paper (150 points)

**Due Date: Sunday, April 18 at 11:59 p.m.**

### Assignment Overview

The first major assignment in COMM 100W required that you write a paper consisting entirely of statements of fact. This second major assignment will also include statements of fact, but the goal of this paper is to establish something that cannot be empirically verified: the meaning of a word.

As you may have experienced when composing the Fact Paper, our ability to make an argument is limited when we cannot appeal to values. Value are what most people would agree are fundamental to our society, even if we cannot agree on their definition. Examples of cultural values are: freedom, happiness, efficiency, maturity, ingenuity, independence, health, security, life, criminality, responsibility, and sustainability.

This assignment is designed to give you practice in another technique of persuasive writing, that of defining a cultural value or other key term in such a way that seems credible to your reader. Your ability to credibly define your terms will help you to contribute to a range of public discourse in influential ways.

### Instructions

- 1) Identify an instance in a document, broadcast, or conversation in which the meaning an author assigns to a word is debatable. You are looking for an instance in which a person applies a word to an object or situation, and you disagree with the person's evaluation of that object or situation.
- 2) When you have your example, then answer for yourself the following question: Why is it important to dispute the meaning of that word? Your answer to that question will eventually become the thesis of your paper.
- 3) Begin your paper by summarizing your example, presenting your thesis, and previewing your definition of the disputed word. Following your introduction, present your research on your word that supports the usage for which you advocate.
  - a. You can trace the etymology of your word in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which is available electronically via the university library: <http://catalog.sjlibrary.org/record=b1879016~S1>
  - b. legal: <http://www.legal-dictionary.org/>
  - c. medical: <http://www.online-medical-dictionary.org/>
  - d. philosophical: <http://www.philosophypages.com/dy/index.htm>
  - e. slang: <http://www.urbandictionary.com/>
- 4) Next, you'll establish the meaning of a term is to show how others use it, even if that usage is common only to a certain group of people. To do this, you will need to compile examples of others using your word in the manner for which you advocate. This research might include reference to the term's equivalent in other languages.
- 5) After establishing a precedent for your preferred meaning, explain the difference it will make to use that meaning over another. In this section of the paper, you will want to provide specific examples of how the word's meaning can or will influence decision-making and social action.

- 6) Conclude your paper with a brief summary of your argument and re-statement of your thesis.
- 7) Your paper will also need to include **three specific statements** weaved within your paper:
  - a. A statement that makes specific **value claims**. For example: "SJSU's EOP *advances an equity-minded approach* to education." Or, "The Mineta Institute *dedicates* its resources to *promoting sustainable* forms of transportation."
  - b. A statement that makes an **interpretive claim**. For example: "Her letter suggests that she equates 'political' with 'corrupt'."
  - c. A statement written in the **passive voice**. For example: "The Governor's speech was delayed an additional month while further policy details were finalized."
    - i. Remember to **highlight** or **bold** or **underline** and **label in parentheses** which one is which to ensure there is no confusion and I know which statements to evaluate. *Failure to do this will result in a zero for that portion of the rubric.*

### Formatting guidelines

- Your paper should be 1000 words in length not including endnotes and citation page. Citations should be formatted in accordance with either MLA or APA guidelines.
- Even when you reference a dictionary available online, be sure to provide a complete citation for the text, including the names of editors and publishers.
- Remember to underline or highlight the three required statements within your paper.
- You will need to cite at least 5 sources in this paper, but no more than 10.
- Drafts and final paper must be typed, double-spaced with one-inch margins.
- Use 12 pt. font, and a professional font.
- Make sure you **name, class, section, date, and word count** are typed at the top of the page. No cover page.
- Only PDF copies will be accepted.
- Extra Credit (10 points): Make an appointment to see a tutor in either the Writing Center or COMM Center. After you finish your appointment ask the tutor to forward an email with proof of your visit.

### Grading Rubric

Inciting Incident	10 points
Background & Definitions	20 points
Examples & Explanations	20 point
Discussion of Importance	30 points
Solutions & Preferred Meaning	30 points
3 Different statements	20 points
Formalities	10 points
<u>Citation Page</u>	<u>10 points</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>150 points</b>