

## Sample Library Research Assignment

### Paper Requirements:

- This is an **analytical paper**. An analytical paper must have a *thesis* that makes a claim about something being represented and support this *thesis* with *connotative details*.
- This paper must use **at least 5 research sources** in addition to the films we have been examining in class.
- This paper must be 8-10 pages in length.

### Research Source Requirements:

Your 5 research sources can be taken from the following areas:

- Books
- Critical essays or journal articles found in print or through *electronic library databases*
- Newspaper articles from major newspapers (i.e. *The New York Times*, not *The Hoosier Times* or the *IDS*)

### Tips & Advice:

- **What sort of topics do people tend to write about for this assignment?**

For this essay, you will examine two films that exemplify different approaches to an issue. *The more focused and specific your thesis statement, the better the essay will be.* Therefore, it's better to have a thesis about "teenage rebel stereotypes" in the films *Life as a House* and *Crazy/Beautiful* than to have one about "teenagers in film." The latter thesis is too broad, making it hard for you to provide much more than an overview in 8-10 pages.

- **What do I look for when finding research sources?**

The goal in a university research paper is not to find the *most* sources or utilize the *first* sources that sound remotely like your topic, but to find a

**large number of sources and choose the ones that will best support your argument.**

When you are writing a college-level essay, weak sources will reflect *negatively* on your argument. **Internet sources** (unless drawn from official government or university websites) are generally considered less credible than print sources, because anyone can publish on the Web. Similarly, popular newspapers and magazines (i.e. *USA Today*, *People* and *Time*) that write to a 6<sup>th</sup>-grade reading level may be a fair source for popular opinions about certain topics, but they are not well respected when it comes to critical analysis.

**When evaluating academic sources to use, look at the following:**

- *When was this published?* (The older the material, the more likely it's out-of-date.)
- *Who was it published by?* (University presses are usually respectable, as are big publishing houses. A vanity press, where the author had to pay money to publish is not.)
- *Is this peer-reviewed?* (A peer-reviewed journal or book is one that has been read and approved by experts in the field of study.)

▪ **What do I do if I can't find sources on my topic?**

The goal of a university essay is to produce an *original argument* not put together a research report showing "What I Have Found out about Teenagers in Film." If you want to write about the representation of teenage rebels in *Life as a House* or *Crazy/Beautiful*, and you find a book called *Teenage Rebels in Life as House*, that's going to hurt your essay unless you can find a way to disagree with the book's argument and use it to launch your own.

However, it is very unlikely that you will find a book or an article titled *Teenage Rebels in Life as a House* because it has most likely not been studied and written about. You will be able to find many popular sources of information (i.e. film reviews, actor/filmmaker interviews, etc.), but true academic analysis of a film can be rare.

Therefore, it is more likely that you will not find a source that matches your topic. If (or when) this happens, you need to find sources **around**

**your topic** that can be **adapted** to suit your argument.

For example, with the above topic, you could look for:

- Sources on the representation of teenage rebels/teenagers in film/motion pictures (not just *Life as a House* or *Crazy/Beautiful*)
- Sources on the representation of teenage rebels/teenagers in mass media or popular culture
- Sources on a particular film genre that typically utilizes teen rebels (i.e. horror, action, etc.)