

Paper 1 – Problematizing a Topic

Due: 8 September 2006

Length: 2 pages

Purpose: To show your ability to engage an idea in complex ways and to resist rushing into easy answers and pursuing one thesis alone.

This paper should demonstrate initial work with an idea that you might think about developing in other, longer papers over the course of the semester. You will not be required to pursue the same questions in all of your papers, but a good test of your question will be whether it's one that would be worth pursuing through several papers—and more importantly, one that it would sustain such lengthy consideration.

In the past, you may have been instructed not to write papers in first person. In this class, you must do so. These papers will all be written from your own point of view, and you won't try to disguise this behind some supposed “objectivity.” With that in mind, your first job in this paper will be to articulate how you are personally engaged with the problem you are posing—why is this important to you?

Your second task will be to indicate why the question is problematic. Why is it that the answer is not known or agreed upon? What are some of the answers that have been proposed? Don't try to be exhaustive here—you're not trying to list every possible answer to or opinion on the question, just to show that many possible answers exist.

Your third task will be to suggest the significance of the question. This is where you answer the question, “So what?” Why should readers care about this question? Why is it a question worth grappling with? What is at stake?

There are a few things you should NOT do in this paper:

- Do not answer your questions with definitive statements.
- Do not make any overt knowledge claims—leave the questions open-ended.
- Do not attempt, by tone or content, to “prove” anything other than that your question is a good one.
- Do not attempt to be objective.

Format your paper according to MLA standards (see Allyn & Bacon p. 673-674). As always, you should adhere to the rules of Standard Written English. Edit and proofread your paper carefully before turning it in. Please staple your paper at the top right-hand corner **before coming to class**. Your paper is due at the beginning of class on Friday, 8 September 2006.