

Research Project Part Two: Advocacy

The second half of your quarter-long research project, the AP asks that you **1) introduce and evaluate one or more significant efforts to address the problem you described in your CP;** and then **2) develop an argument about which of the efforts to address the problem work best, explain why, and offer possible next steps; OR make the case that none of the efforts to address the problem works, explain why, and offer possible next steps.** Unlike the CP, an expository essay that asks you to use your research to describe the problem, the AP requires you to stake out a clear position in a thesis statement that you must defend through deeply engaged research.

An advocate takes a position in a debate or conflict and works to solve problems. Social justice advocates, for example, aim to give voice to the marginalized and defend the vulnerable from harm by forging resolutions among stakeholders where intractable problems persist. To advance their aims, advocates must be strategic: they must consider whether or not various modes of redress will effectively mitigate or resolve the problem at hand. And to be strategic, they must also be informed. You, too, must be deeply informed about the advocacy landscape and ongoing conversations concerning your topic and the problems associated with it.

Your initial research for the AP should explore the various efforts to shape public opinion through the media; to change policies; to institute new laws or amend existing ones; or to pursue litigation. As you examine these efforts, you should assess their short- and long-term outcomes; their costs (in a variety of senses: cultural, economic, personal, moral, institutional, to name a few) and benefits; their relative fitness in comparison to one another; their ability to produce equitable outcomes; and the obstacles that stand in their way.

Thinking about obstacles necessitates thinking about rhetorical context. The role of public opinion, for example, has always been instrumental (for better and worse) in shaping advocacy efforts. Advocates must consider the values expressed through social affiliations—political, institutional, religious, cultural, and regional. Sometimes these considerations involve compromise (advocates have terms for these compromises: “respectability politics” is one; “matters of expediency,” another). Where there is compromise that bends to corporate interests or public opinion, there may exist other kinds of compromise, such as short term solutions that satisfy demands in the present but fail to address damaging consequences in the long term. You should account for similar dynamics in the representation of advocacy efforts you examine.

Some questions that might help to direct your research include:

Is the problem you addressed in your CP well-known to the public? If so, has public opinion influenced efforts to address it? If not, how are advocates working to raise awareness?

How do scholars in various disciplines study and write about efforts to address the problem?

Who or what informs the positions and proposals of reports on the problem from government agencies, think tanks, or other organizations?

Indeed, you will learn that few advocacy efforts enjoy universal support, and accounting for the range of attitudes toward and characterizations of your chosen efforts—some you may agree with, others you may strongly contest—will strengthen your advocacy analysis.

By the time you complete the AP, you should be able to:

- Write a developed thesis statement that clearly and concisely articulates the central claims of your argument.
- Strengthen your argument by analyzing the positions of academics and other experts, including those who offer perspectives that differ from your own

You should continue to practice the major skills from the CP:

- Develop effective research note-taking habits through source annotations.
- Practice information literacy in the research process by locating and critically evaluating relevant and credible evidence from a variety of sources and genres.
- Understand research as a part of the larger composition process of prewriting, drafting, and revision.
- Collaborate with fellow researchers to give and receive constructive feedback on the work in progress.
- Plan, draft and revise an essay with organization and style appropriate for addressing a general academic audience.
- Arrange and integrate evidence—primary-source, secondary-source, and multimodal—intentionally, with particular attention to its argumentative purpose and rhetorical effect.
- Integrate and cite evidence in a transparent and ethical manner, using a standard citation system. Learn how and why to avoid plagiarism and patch-writing.

Assignment Requirements

Process work is required to be eligible to submit a final draft for a grade. This may include but is not limited to a proposal or prospectus and multiple essay drafts. Late or incomplete process work may result in a grade penalty on the final draft.

At a **minimum** the argument in your AP should integrate evidence from **6-8 new sources**, at least two of which should involve complex, comprehensive arguments that substantively consider the obstacles at work in solving the problem you addressed in your CP. You may continue to use relevant sources that you found while researching for the Contexts Project. *Keep in mind that the total number of sources for the entire project's bibliography is 12-20 sources.*

Your final submission for Part Two should be an approximately **2000-word multimodal composition**. It should be formatted in **MLA style**, with parenthetical citations, a Works Cited page, and a descriptive academic title.