ENG 100 Major Paper Assignment:

Identifying the Problem

In preparation for your final project this semester, you will prepare a proposal that explores the paper topic to which you think you're ready to commit. That topic will morph (and become more focused), no doubt, as you work through each stage of the writing and researching process, so at this point, I'm not asking for your thesis statement. In fact, asking for a thesis statement before you've done any research would stifle your engagement with outside material: you'd be forced to cherry pick quotes/claims that conform to your thesis, instead of really working with the material to allow it to shape your thinking on the topic.

So, without having done any outside research but having begun to explore potential topics through our engagement with *Feed,* you will begin where any good scholar begins: with a topic that has arisen in that engagement and about which you are passionate and curious (ideally, both). In the end, that curiosity will likely prove your most important motive. If you are driven by questions about the topic, then you will find the research interesting and rewarding (instead of an exercise in checking off the boxes).

This proposal will be a relatively informal writing assignment, not because you don't have to revise or proof it (make sure you do both, please!), but because it does not require outside research,[1] because it asks you to start with yourself, and because it is explorative. To explain:

1. You will start the paper by talking about your personal relationship to the topic you've chosen. You might start with a story (one moment in time, not the whole story) that reveals some important part of your relationship to the topic. For example, if I were to write my proposal about the topic of human abuses of the nonhuman/natural world, then I might start with a story about watching a trainer "break" a young horse (it's a difficult and complicated story, but it had a profound effect on my thinking about human-animal relations).

2. Then, flash forward to today, to this moment, as you're writing your paper, and tell us a bit about why the issue/topic still matters to you (e.g., you might bring in your ICW from class the other day on how the issue shows up in *Feed*).

3. You should then – and this is really important – explain why you think that the issue is one that other people should pay attention to. Where have you seen the issue play out in the world beyond your personal experience? Whom does it affect? Why should it matter to others?

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[1] You are welcome, of course, to do some research to further brainstorm your topic and to find out if it is a viable topic, but if you decide to use any of that source material in your proposal, please contact me to let me know. I will give you some easy and quick guidelines for incorporating that material properly so that you can avoid plagiarizing it by mistake.

4. Define the issue. At this point, you will have done enough work to explore your investment in the topic, where you've encountered it and why it matters, to pin down exactly what issue you want to tackle in your final project. What is it, exactly, that you want to find out more about and, eventually, advocate for (as best you can tell at the moment, of course)?

Part of the exercise, here, is for you to practice using writing to help you think through an idea. It's clear to me, from reading your diagnostic essays at the beginning of the course, that a few of you do this already. Others of you are clearly planners, who do your thinking before writing. We're compromising a bit in this piece. I'm asking you to think-on-the-page, but I'm also offering you a format to help structure that thinking. As we move through this course, you should see that one of the most important capabilities that will be honed and tested is your ability to analyze. The best way to get at an analysis is to simply *show me* how you are thinking – how you get from one idea or insight to another. That's much of what I'm asking you to do here.

When we workshop drafts of this paper, you may find that I and your peers ask you to reorganize, even to break with the format that I'm offering you above. That's okay. It's always all for the sake of the work – to make it stronger, more effective. But, for now, for the first draft, I'd like to see you really work through some of these questions, to explore in writing your interests and experiences. We'll see where you end up and work, together, in the workshops to help you cohere the draft so that it is a tightly wound, highly effective machine.

LOGISTICS

Drafts should be at least 1000 words long (that's about 3 double-spaced pages).

If you end up incorporating outside material (by paraphrase or direct quote), please see the footnote on the first page of this document. Contact me as soon as you even start thinking about using the material, and please do so well ahead of time (I try to check my email just once/day and not on Saturdays).

DUE DATES & REMINDERS

Your proof-read, complete draft of this, the *Identifying the Problem* paper, is due Friday, September 16th at the beginning of class. **Please bring 20 copies.** Make sure that the copy for me conforms to the "Formal Paper" guidelines in your syllabus; the other 19 copies can be 1.5 line-spaced and in no smaller than 11-point Times New Roman font**.** Producing enough copies for us on the due date is part of the draft grade (see the syllabus for the rest).

NOTE: If you use the library's printers (at .11/page), you shouldn't spend more than about $7 on copies. However, keep in mind that the library won't print more than 50 pages at a time for you, so you will have to break up the copies (maybe print 10 copies and, then, another 10 copies). Please don't wait until the last minute to make your copies; the copiers may be crowded with students.

Also, please don't forget to list the word count for the body of your draft (so, not including the header or title).

We will workshop each draft over the following week. Bring a clean copy of your draft to your workshop so that you can make notes on it, while we're giving you feedback. If you don't, if you just listen to our comments and then look over our written comments when you sit down to revise, you will find the following: 1. That you can't remember everything that was said; 2. That you will get unproductively contradictory feedback in the written comments and you won't know what to do with it (because you won't remember what we said about it in class). Trust me on this. I'm speaking from years of experience with students in workshops.

<u>You will submit your final, revised paper one week after we workshop your draft</u>. So, for example, if we workshop your paper on Monday, September 19th, then your final will be due Monday, September 26th. <u>Please put a hardcopy of the final paper in my hand at the beginning of class on the day it's due</u>. Feel free to email me for confirmation on your due date, if you're worried.

And, feel free to set up a meeting with me or swing by my office hours to talk about the paper at any stage.