

English 102, English Composition II
Dr. Harry Newburn
Paper One Assignment Sheet
Final Essay Due: Friday, February 10th

Definition of a Spiritual Belief System thru Comparison

Your assignment for the first paper is to select a religious denomination or system of belief (I can give some lee-way here if you have alternative ideas) that differs from your own in some way. Then, you must define the basic tenants of this belief system. You should accomplish this definition using hands-on (field) research methods that you perform yourself. This should most definitely involve interviews and observation, and may also include surveys or other research ideas you might come up with (these other ideas should be cleared with me beforehand, however). As we make our way through the Krakauer book, be sure to pay attention to how he conducts and implements his own methods of hands-on research.

We will work in class on coming up with effective interview questions. You should strive to interview a person of authority within the religious belief system you choose. Your roommate, for example, will not exactly qualify (unless, of course, your roommate happens to be ordained). Thus, you will have to contact the person, explain your project, set up the interview, prepare your questions, and execute the interview with appropriate professionalism. The usefulness of your interview will likely depend upon the amount of preparation you put into it, obviously. We will take one class period to work on this preparation as a class, but you might also meet with me individually during office hours (at the coffee shop) if you need extra assistance.

Another part of your research will involve observation. You should visit at least one worship service of the belief system you choose. Be sure to note, so that you may describe in your paper, the formal and aesthetic qualities of the service and how these specific details coincide with or contribute to the ideas presented in the theology.

Finally, this paper will also involve using comparison; namely, use the details of your own spiritual value system to define, through comparative contrast, the belief system you're choosing to define. First, use your own belief system to help you construct your interview questions. Discovering how you define your own spiritual beliefs will help you ask the right questions in order to define a separate system of belief. Second, consider your audience for this paper to be those who share your spiritual worldview, be it Baptist, Methodist, Druid, or Atheist. Your job then, for this paper, will be to define for this audience (using your fieldwork) a different spiritual worldview. Assume your audience is interested, and always maintain a respectful, objective tone when discussing these topics.

Keep in mind that I'm expecting these papers to be logically and tightly organized, with a sophisticated writing style and a concise statement of your ultimate conclusion. This thesis should be supported by strong rhetorical evidence, part of which will involve using your research. These papers should be **at least** three pages in length, in MLA format, typed and double-spaced in 12pt. Times Roman font, with appropriate margins (one inch) and a Works Cited entry at the end. This assignment will be worth thirty (30) points. Enjoy.