

Which one is better?

<p>Assignment Option 1 Write an eight- to ten-page research paper on therapeutic touch. Follow APA conventions for documentation.</p> <p>...</p>	<p>Assignment Option 2 You are a staff nurse at a large urban hospital. Recently the hospital became embroiled in a major controversy when several nurses were discovered to be practicing TT on patients without the permission or knowledge of their supervisors or of attending physicians. The hospital governing board reprimanded the nurses and issued a general statement forbidding the practice of TT, which they called "non-scientific quackery." Research the professional literature on TT, looking especially for evidence-based studies. Then write a four- to five-page argument, addressed to the hospital governing board, supporting or attacking the board's decision to forbid the practice of TT. Support your position with reasons and evidence based on the professional literature.</p> <p>...</p>
<p>Assignment Option 3 Assume that you and several colleagues seek grant funding to do a controlled research study on the efficacy of TT for reducing anxiety and pain in surgery patients. Research the current professional literature on TT and then write the "review of the literature" section of your grant proposal.</p>	

- Assignments leading to closed-form thesis-governed writing
- Microtheme assignments for writing-to-learn (includes an analysis of student microthemes in physics)
- More open forms: alternatives to the thesis-governed paper
- A portfolio of other kinds of alternative assignments

Assignments Leading to Closed-Form Thesis-Governed Writing

Chapters Two and Four provide a rationale for closed-form, thesis-governed writing—the prototypical structure for most academic prose. Because thesis-governed writing does not come naturally to students, teachers need to encourage it. The following strategies suggest ways that you can teach students to write closed-form prose that addresses a problem with stakes.

Present a Proposition (Thesis) for Students to Defend or Refute

In this strategy, the teacher's task is to develop arguable propositions that engage students with disciplinary controversies.

In recent years, advertising has (has not) made enormous gains in portraying women as strong, independent, and intelligent. [Cultural studies]	
The overriding religious view expressed in <i>Hamlet</i> is (is not) an existential atheism similar to Sartre's. [Literature]	
Prescribing Ritalin and other psychotropic medications is (is not) an appropriate treatment for behavioral problems of children. [Nursing]	
This proposed bridge design does/does not meet the criteria set forth by the city in its request for proposal. [Civil engineering]	
Schizophrenia is a brain disease/schizophrenia is learned behavior. [Psychology]	

Assign a Thesis-Governed Paper Requiring Analysis of Raw Data

Another effective way to guide students toward thesis-governed arguments is to give them raw data (such as lists, graphs, tables) to analyze and have them write a thesis-governed paper based on the data. The meaning induced from the data becomes the writer's thesis. Selected pieces of the data serve as evidence.

<p>To what extent do the attached economic data support the hypothesis "Social service spending is inversely related to economic growth"? First create a scattergram as a visual test of the hypothesis. Then create a verbal argument analyzing whether the data support the hypothesis. [Economics]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">. . .</p>	<p>You and your friend are looking over the attached table and note that in 1998 the median income for all families was \$33,400 but the mean income was \$53,000. Your friend was confused about the difference between median and mean and didn't see any significance in this difference. Send your friend a well-structured email message, about one screen in length, that explains the difference between median and mean and then gives your answer to the following question: What can we say about the distribution of income in the United States if we know that mean income is considerably higher than median income? [General education mathematics]</p>
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Create "Strong Response" Assignments Based on One or More Scholarly Articles or Other Readings

For this strategy ask students to read one or more scholarly articles or other texts. Then ask them to summarize each article's argument and provide a "strong response" that speaks back to the texts through closed-form prose. This strategy teaches skills of academic reading while showing students how to position themselves within a conversation of alternative views.

<p>Do animals have rights? Read the assigned article by Peter Singer. In a short essay that sets up the question about whether animals have rights, summarize Peter Singer's argument in response to that question and then set forth the strongest objection that a naysayer might make to Singer. Don't for this paper reveal your own view. [First year seminar]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">. . .</p>	<p>Read the speech President Barack Obama delivered at Cairo University in Egypt on June 4, 2009. Summarize the main argument of his speech and then analyze the rhetorical strategies he used to appeal to Muslim listeners and readers. [Communication]</p>
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(continued)

A Potpourri of Other Kinds of Alternative Formal Assignments

Many other kinds of assignments remain. What follows, in no particular order, is a potpourri of ten different kinds of alternative assignments. Each of these asks students to wrestle with a disciplinary problem or disciplinary ways of thinking, but in styles and genres different from closed-form, thesis-driven prose.

- A psychology professor asks his students to write a poem from the perspective of a schizophrenic. The teacher claims that students learn a great deal about schizophrenia in their attempt to walk in a schizophrenic's shoes. The best poems are moving and memorable (Gorman, Gorman, and Young, 1986).

- A religious studies professor asks students to write a dialogue:

Write a dialogue between a believer (in God) and an unbeliever, in which the main issues that we have raised in class are debated. Each participant will be a spokesperson for a whole range of ideas and arguments, whatever serves to advance his or her basic position. As you write the dialogue, draw on the strongest ideas and arguments for each side that we have seen in this course. Wherever relevant, include your own responses or arguments. The point of this dialogue is not to have a clear victory for one side or the other; rather, the point is to engage the issues in an active and critical manner.

- A literature teacher has students rewrite the ending to a short story or retell a story from the perspective of a different narrator; a history teacher asks students to rewrite a historical narrative from a different point of view.
- A social psychologist requires students to interview someone who has a job, lifestyle, or worldview very different from the student's and then to write a "profile" of the person interviewed. The idea is for the student to encounter an "other" whose sphere of experience differs extensively from the student's.

- A women's studies professor asks students to create myths or parables to express their personal understanding or vision of the role of the feminine.

- A mathematics professor asks students to write their own "math autobiography" in which they reflect on their past math history and experiences. She reports getting very useful insights into the mathematical

Paper #1: Recommendation Memo

Background: You take an internship with the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) as a research economist to help inform Elizabeth Canon, the director of SDOT, on the implications of Seattle's Community Parking Program. Like most cities, Seattle is dealing with large budget deficits, and city council members are interested in finding new sources of revenue. One option under consideration is to significantly raise parking meter fees.

Your Task: Canon has asked you to write a two-page memo on whether to increase parking meter fees. The memo must summarize the pros and cons of your recommended position, giving both supporting and alternative views. Fortunately, another intern (who has since been let go for not following directions) has performed the background research and found the sources that follow. You need to review these sources, make calculations regarding the fee increase and potential revenue, determine your position, write a two-page memo, and develop a graph that helps support your position. Not all pros and cons are quantifiable. It is important that you give quantitative and qualitative information so Canon can justify her position. There are public organizations and city council members on both sides of this issue, so it is imperative that your work is complete so Canon is well prepared.

Format: Canon prefers the following standard memo format:

1. A paragraph orienting Canon to the purpose of your memo and summarizing your recommended position
2. Bullet points giving reasons in support of your recommendation, based on your analysis, calculations, and relevant information from the sources provided
3. Bullet points giving reasons opposing your recommendation
4. A graph that you must develop to support your own position, which should be referred to in the bullet points (Canon loves to show graphs to the media, so clarity is critical)
5. An appendix with supporting calculations that are clearly described
6. An annotated bibliography, because Canon wants to know which sources you use, which you do not use, and why.

(Note: Canon, who is not an economist, is extremely busy. All writing has to be clear, concise, and accurate. The probably will not read your appendix describing your calculations, but she may ask another economist—me!—to do so.) The maximum length for the memo is two pages (not counting the graph, the annotated bibliography, or the appendix showing your calculations).

Provided Sources: [The assignment lists seven articles provided on the course website. Articles range from peer-reviewed articles on the pricing of parking spaces to newspaper articles.]

Grading: The memo will be graded using the following rubric