Questions regarding “National Identity” and what that is or should be have regularly flared. Arguably, it was one polarizing subject during the last presidential campaign and continues to be a matter of debate. It is also this quarter’s research theme.

Everyone will write Essay 1, an inquiry into the significance, if any, of National Identity. That will provide a foundation to build upon for Essays 2-4. Having said that, I will repeat what I said in class: this mandatory Essay 1 is mandatory with an asterisk: if you do not write Essay 1, but write two other research essays, you won’t have deductions. However, I strongly insist everyone write the first essay because it will make the writing of the later essays easier. That is, failing to write Essay 1 will make Essays 2-4 more difficult.

ESSAY 1: INQUIRING (300 pts). Due at the start of class on 4/24. 4-6 pgs. At least 5 authoritative sources required. MLA or APA. No late work accepted for credit. This first essay is required for everyone.

- At least two of your sources must come from conservative publications, at least two from liberal publications. See Page 2 of the Research Packet for examples.

- For Essays 2-4, at least one scholarly article will be required. For Essay 1, none is required, but you are welcome to use one or more.
  - Remember: all scholarly articles are authoritative, but not all authoritative articles are scholarly.
  - Authoritative sources are ones that are considered generally trustworthy as demonstrated by rigorous standards (e.g., fact-checking and going through an editing process) and a pattern of sound reporting.
  - Scholarly articles are written by experts in the field and typically are printed in academic journals that are peer-reviewed (i.e., evaluated by other experts).
  - Again, however, authoritative (as well as scholarly) does not mean infallible. The risk of such information being fake is diminished.

- Be sure your proposed issue of the subtopic is approved before finalizing Essay 1. Feedback will be provided no later than the start of Week 3.

- ESSAY 1 WRITING PROMPT:
  - What is or should be the national identity (“NI”) of the United States? Is or should the NI be the foundation, the core, the aspiration, the limitation, or none of these for Americans? Be specific. Provide at least one refutation.
    - You may narrow to an aspect of national identity. For instance, perhaps you want to zoom in on the principle of due process for the people as a core right of what the United States is.
    - You may use the class readings as sources. However, you would still need to use at least five additional authoritative sources. For instance, if you use Roger Kimball’s
“Institutionalizing Our Demise” (on the calendar for 4/19), you must cite it and use at least five additional sources.

- Use specific, concrete details to help convey your meaning. For instance, rather than “white culture,” which is broad and vague, you can get more specific and concrete by indicating, say, “White Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture.”

- Because the target audience for arguments to inquire is yourself or people like you, brainstorm what is important to you to help you determine your direction (e.g., due process).

- You are writing an argument in the rhetorical sense: claim, warrant, and at least one supporting reason. Those are the three necessary elements. For a strong argument, more elements will likely be necessary (refer to the Toulmin Model). NOTE: if you are reading this before Week 2, you may not yet know what the Toulmin Model is. You can read ahead for information.

- Rhetorical arguments are not necessarily combative (the everyday usage and connotations of “argument”). In particular, an argument to inquire is cooperative, not competitive. This aim is about trying to make sense of information, not about overcoming someone else’s views.

- Inquiry is truth-seeking and comparing perspectives: finding the best, most reasonable conclusion extrapolated from authoritative research. NOTE: Please check Page 1 of your research packet, Step 4 below, and/or and of the reference librarians for reminders about what counts as authoritative.

- Inquiry is not about trying to find the definitive answer (ideally, that may be nice, but in reality, there is insufficient time); it’s about the most reasonable answer based on the research conducted thus far. Whatever conclusion you reach based on the research for Essay 1 may change tomorrow with additional research. Your claim with this essay is the most reasonable claim at this time.

  - Again, for arguments to inquire, the target audience is typically you, the writer, or people like you (i.e., a college audience). This means that you should select your subtopic and issue carefully. Go beyond the obvious and avoid circular reasoning (e.g., do not address an issue like “the United States’ national identity an American identity?”) or issues that yield “yes” or “no” answers only (e.g., Is the American national identity in debate?).

  - Though the audience for inquiry is you or people like you, the reality is also that you are writing a college paper. So, please stick to standard grammar, spelling, and MLA or APA style even if you hate grammar.

  - Remember: thesis is narrower than claim because thesis is tailored for a specific audience and occasion. However, because the audience is you, it’s likely that the thesis for an inquiry will be similar to or the same as your claim.

  - The thesis for an inquiry will be a specific answer to the prompt (your proposed issue).

- Expository college writing is typically in third person. However, if you think a different point of view would be more effective, you may use that. Be consistent.

- Cite according to MLA or APA rules. Select one and be consistent throughout the essay. Avoid hybrids. This is a common mistake for students fresh from English 101 who likely just wrote both MLA and APA papers. Avoid conflating the two styles.
• The page length noted above is a guideline. So long as the essay is roughly 4-6 pages (text pages), double spaced, 12-point font, it’ll be fine. So, if your essay is shy of the minimum or a little more than the maximum, it’s okay. Be reasonable (e.g., a single page is too short; a dozen is too long).

SUGGESTED STEPS:

STEP 1: Review the information about arguments and about arguments to inquire. Then read and reread the Essay 1 assignment. Ask for clarification as needed.

STEP 2: Use the writing prompt to guide your research as you inquire. That is, research to compare perspectives and to find the truth. In this case, that means determining the most truthful (i.e., accurate) answer to the issue.

STEP 3: Be sure to write down citation information as you take notes in case you forget where you found the sources. Also, get in the habit of printing out (or copying and pasting onto a flash drive) electronic sources other than those found in TCC’s database. That way, if the source disappears or changes between the time you use it and the reader looks for it, you have proof.

STEP 4: Remember that the sources you use must be credible (i.e., authoritative) ones: generally, anything from ProQuest, Ebsco, The New York Times, a .gov or .edu site, some .org sites, or any of the specialized encyclopedias in the reference section of a library, for instance, would count. Remember: general encyclopedias may be used but do not count toward the minimum five sources. Specialized encyclopedias do count.

STEP 5: Critically read your gathered sources. Read for understanding rather than plunder for flashy quotations or hoard sources.

STEP 6: Use prewriting strategies to generate ideas before drafting your argument.

STEP 7: Draft your argument, including textual support and citations. The form will resemble your English 101 research essays (assuming that they were written in MLA or APA form). Remember: you’ll need claim, reason (at least one), and warrant for an argument. So, since the thesis is a specified version of your claim that is tailored for audience and purpose, consider what support will prove the thesis.

Evidence (supports the reasons) and other elements provided in the Toulmin Model beyond the necessary claim, reason, warrant will likely be essential for a strong argument. Aim for writing a strong argument. Use evidence (e.g., statistics, expert testimony, scientific data, explanation) to help bolster your reasons.

STEP 8: Revise and edit. Use the checklists at the back of your research packet. Repeat as necessary.

See following page for example.
EXAMPLE (NOTE: for all examples used in essay prep handouts, I will fabricate data for illustrative purposes, though the broad premise of pay inequality is true. Obviously, you should not fabricate data.)

Topic: National identity, United States of America
Subtopic: Women’s rights in the U.S.
Audience: Me and/or people like me
Issue: Does the United States meet its aspirational identity of being a nation of gender equality?
Position: No
Claim: On average, American women are paid less than men.

Draft thesis: Considering the United States’ lofty principles of equality, the reality is women—as evidenced by being paid 20% less than men—stand at a lower status than men.
[This is still broad—more stance than thesis—but it’s a draft, so it doesn’t have to be perfect. It is enough for me to start developing my ideas. I can go back and revise later.]

I. Introductory overview of gap between ideal and actuality
II. Context: historical examples of inequality
   a. Example
   b. Example
III. National attempts to provide more equal rights to women
   a. Example
   b. Example
IV. Such attempts indicating a direction (i.e., an aspiration) that the nation wanted to move toward
V. Modern reality of disparity, specifically related to pay
   a. Failure to ratify Equal Rights Amendment
   b. Current data on wage disparities
VI. The reality points to stalled aspiration or fake aspiration
VII. Refutation
   a. Objection: Phyllis Schafly’s mobilized opposition to the ERA
   b. Rebuttal: However, . . . .
VIII. Conclusion

The above is an example, not a model. Your organization may differ. So long as it makes sense, that’s fine.
- It simply shows one possible ordering of information.
- The brevity of a notation in the rough outline doesn’t suggest the breadth of each section. For instance, V and VI would be the longest, most developed sections in the paper since they go to the heart of the assignment.