

“I Wish I Had Said” Essay



Assignment Summary:

I developed and assigned this essay as the second of four major assignments and the first of two major essays in my RHET 1030: Rhetoric course at the University of Iowa. At this point in the semester, students are enhancing their practice of “rhetorical analysis,” or the critical interpretation of visual and verbal arguments. Students are working toward a final paper and speech for which they will need to present pieces of “informed persuasion,” researched and thoroughly-developed arguments of their own.

This assignment acts as a bridge between rhetorical analysis and informed persuasion by providing students with the opportunity to link a moment in which they “wish they’d said something” to a belief or value they hold. The students then must relate this belief or value to a recent debate or conversation in the public sphere.

In completing this assignment, students engage in a multi-step process, including an in-class pre-writing activity, an organization and planning workshop, a rough draft workshop, and a polished draft workshop. The following document includes the:

- Pre-writing activity
- Assignment sheet, timeline, and rubric
- Organization and planning guide

Task #3: Now, here is the tricky one. Think of a recent debate in the public sphere. **Make sure this debate is situation-specific. For example, instead of covering “sexual harassment,” discuss “the administration’s response to sexual assault offenses on the University of Iowa campus.”** Bring in four sources (we will discuss methods for choosing appropriate sources in class) that speak to different opinions/viewpoints concerning this debate. These sources should *not* all represent your perspective on the issue, but rather provide a map of the different ways of seeing the issue at hand.

Situation-Specific Controversy:

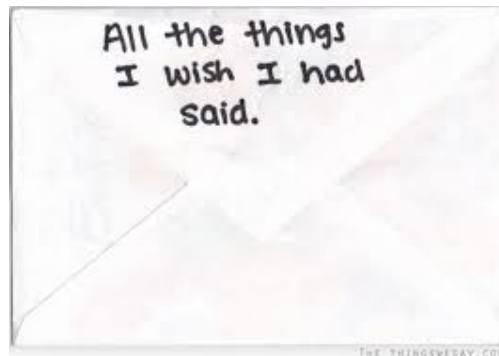
Did your event take place at a certain time and place? _____

Involve specific people, institutions, or companies? _____

If you answered YES to these questions, then your debate is “situation-specific.”

I Wish I Had Said...

Essay #1: Rhetorical Analysis and Description



Assignment Calendar:

Wednesday, February 25th: Outline Workshop, bring 2 hard copies

Workshop Goal: Leave with feedback on your thesis and outline

Monday, March 2nd: Rough Draft Due, bring 3 hard copies

Workshop Goal: A plan for structural and content-level revisions

Thursday, March 5th: Polished Draft Due, bring 2 hard copies

Workshop Goal: Sentence-level and stylistic revisions

Monday, March 9th: Final draft due by 6:30 pm to ICON Dropbox

Today, you were asked to bring to class a moment when you wished you had said something—a moment that offended you, made you angry, or inspired you—a comment or conversation that you felt demanded a response.

This essay will provide you with an opportunity to respond—not necessarily with a sassy retort, but with research and reflection. This assignment asks you to investigate the intersections between this experience, your personal beliefs, and current debates in the public sphere. Furthermore, consider a “wish I’d said something” moment as an opportunity to

- a) explain a personal belief or value,
- b) explore how that value or belief affects how you view a current debate,
- c) consider the rhetoric surrounding the debate’s media coverage and public response, and
- d) respectfully consider how alternative perspectives would lead to different opinions concerning that debate.

Finally, in your conclusion, you will have the chance to articulate a hypothetical response—the something you “wish you’d said”—informed by your research and reflection.

Formatting Requirements

Length: 4-6 pages

Font size: 12 pt. Times New Roman

Format: Double-spaced with one-inch margins

Citation style: You may use whichever citation format you prefer (MLA and APA are the most common). You must include some form of in-text citations and/or footnotes, as well as a Works Cited or Resources page at the end of your essay.

We will spend class time on citation formatting and expectations. The best resource for citation is Purdue's Online Writing Lab:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

I Wish I Had Said...
Essay #1: Rhetorical Analysis and Description
Organization and Planning Guide

A successful essay will:

Provide an **introduction** that includes your “I Wish I Had Said” moment and explains how that moment relates to both a belief/value of yours, as well as a situation-specific debate in the public sphere. This introduction should close with a **thesis** that states your position on this debate in relation to a belief/value.

Map the public conversation surrounding this debate by describing and analyzing a variety of positions, approaches, and opinions. This is where your four sources come into play. This description and analysis could include

- A respectful explanation of the position held by its author (s)
- A consideration of the author’s/authors’ rationale or reasoning
- An evaluation of the source’s currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose (CRAPP test)
- An detailed examination of the source’s language and methods of persuasion

Note: These sources do not need to be academic, peer-reviewed sources. In fact, you can use Twitter posts, blogs, and opinion articles. When you use these sources, however, consider how the author, the medium, the time of publication, and the purpose of the source influence its message.

This portion will comprise the body of your paper. We will discuss ways to organize and outline the paper together in class.

Offer an **articulation of your own opinion** on the debate at hand, as well as an explanation of your reasoning (this could include responses to or critiques of positions mapped in your essay).

Want examples? Check ICON for sample essays from previous semester:
Content→Assignments→Essay #1: I Wish I Had Said→Sample Essays

Crafting a Thesis Statement:

Remember, a thesis statement makes a claim that is **specific, unique and arguable**. It also provides an opportunity to foreshadow the contents of your paper.

For this paper, an appropriate thesis will articulate your position on a situation-specific controversy in relation to a personal belief or value.

This assignment encourages us to see our opinions as stemming from larger beliefs or values that we hold as individuals, therefore, it is okay (and even preferable) to use “I believe” or “I think” here.

Example:

Because I value individuality and self-expression, I do not think the University of Iowa should allow employment discrimination based on piercings and tattoos.

Try out a couple of practice thesis statements of your own:

1.

2.

3.

Outlining Your Essay:

The outline is a place to play with the structure of your essay before spending a lot of time writing it.

Topic Sentences: I like to start drafting with potential **topic sentences** for each of my paragraphs. These are the first sentence of each paragraph, and function as a “mini thesis” for that paragraph, summarizing its content and oftentimes making a claim that you will support in the upcoming sentences.

a. b. c. The following lowercase letters allow you to plan out the points you hope to make in that paragraph or the information you plan to give. This is also a place to jot down quotes or information from sources that you are thinking of using in a paragraph

Everyone writes differently. Some people find outlines to be extra work with little pay off, while others rely on outlines for structure. Since Rhetoric 1030 encourages process-based writing, peer workshops, and feedback before the final draft, take this class as an opportunity to experiment with outlining and planning your essay, even if it’s not your preferred approach to writing.

Your Outline:

Introduction:

Thesis:

I. Topic Sentence #1

a.

b.

c.

II. Topic Sentence #2

a.

b.

c.

III. Topic Sentence # 3:

a.

b.

c.

IV. Topic Sentence #4:

a.

b.

c.

V. Topic Sentence # 5:

a.

b.

c.

Conclusion:

Questions for Kate: