

Argument/Research Essay: Is the American Dream Dead or Alive?

CP American Literature—2019

Final Draft Due: Monday, 5/6, by 4:00 p.m. to Turn It In

Whether or not the American Dream is still alive is a subject of much debate and controversy; it is even an issue that came up repeatedly in our last presidential election. Your task is to explore the topic of the American Dream—through research and even a text we have read in class—and arrive at a conclusion as to whether or not the American Dream is still alive in 2018.

In order to form your opinion/argument about the American Dream, you need to look at the history of the American Dream (this might be where some of the texts we have read for this class might come in) as well as the current status of the American Dream by researching current credible sources, including articles, non-text-based sources (see below), and the opinions of others.

A good place to start is by watching this recent PBS program that debates whether the American Dream is alive or dead. (You can use the link below this sentence)

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/point-taken/american-dream-dead-alive/#watch>

Here are some links to a few articles that might help you get started as well (links also available on my website):

<https://www.thebalance.com/what-is-the-american-dream-today-3306027>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/05/opinion/american-dream.html>

<https://www.rd.com/culture/how-the-american-dream-has-changed/>

<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/a/american-dream.asp>

SOURCES

You will need to use at least 3 sources for your paper, and they need to include different *types* of sources.

- **1 text-based “news” or “history” source:** This can be a news article found online or in print, a history source (such as a textbook, a book you find in the library or elsewhere, etc.). *You may use one of the articles listed above if you wish; however, there are plenty of articles out there about the current state of the American Dream.*
- **1 “literature” source:** You need to discuss one text you have read over the course of the year in terms of what it suggests about The American Dream. It can be a novel, play, poem, short story, etc.
- **1 “non-text-based” source:** This can be an interview that you conduct with other people you know (if you go this route, you should choose a “good” source, someone with an interesting story—we will talk about this in class), a podcast, a TV program, a critically acclaimed movie or documentary, a political cartoon, etc.

SO, WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS ASSIGNMENT? WHAT IS THE GOAL?

After researching this topic and considering all the information from your sources, your job is to form an argument in which you state your opinion on whether you think the American Dream is alive or dead. Then, you need to support your argument with your own discussion and your findings from your research. You should also address the counterargument at some point in your essay (you might want to consider that when looking for your sources).

THE FINE PRINT (a.k.a. “Other Important Details”)

- **Your paper needs to be in MLA format, with 1-inch margins, double spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font. You will need a Works Cited page, and you will need to use proper citation for your sources within your paper. Your paper must also be between 500 to 750 words. This word count does not include your MLA headings or your works cited page.**
- You will be uploading this paper to Turn It In.
- You will be turning in assignments such as source sheets/index cards by certain due dates (see below) to ensure that you are finding good sources AND that you are not procrastinating with your research.
- It is highly suggested that you save this paper as a Google Doc so that you can access it both from home and school.

POSSIBLE ORGANIZATION OF PAPER

(Note: There is more than one way to organize this paper; this is just a suggestion in case you need help getting started.)

- I. Introduction (1 paragraph): Provide an overview of the American Dream (maybe when the concept originated, or perhaps what most people consider to be “The American Dream”). You could possibly use a source here. You should also introduce the controversy surrounding the American Dream—why is there a debate over whether it is alive or dead? *Your introduction should end with a thesis statement that argues what YOU think about the American Dream, along with an indication of WHY (supports) you believe this about the American Dream.*
- Your introduction should be very similar to any introduction for an argumentative essay.
- II. American Literature (1-2 paragraphs): What does the literature that we have read suggest about the American Dream? You should include a quote from the text you are using to illustrate your point. You should also discuss plot/character situations that illustrate the message each text sends about the American Dream.
- III. Support for Your Opinion (2-3 paragraphs): What information have you found that supports your argument that you express in your thesis? What facts, figures, professional opinions, opinions from those around you, and perhaps even your own observations support your viewpoint? Make sure that instead of just listing fact after fact, you comment on and explain the information that you have found as it relates to your argument.
- IV. Counterargument (recommended, but not required): What does the other side suggest, and why? Again, this is where you should use some source information to help develop your point. Even more importantly, how do you address those counterarguments?
- Rebuttal: You should use your research to negate or dispute the point that “the other side” has made.
- V. Conclusion (1 paragraph): Emphasize your main points; end with a strong statement that provides closure and reinstates your viewpoint.

Teachers: Dills, Heindel, Lister, McClure, Beach
Dates:
Course: CP American Literature
Unit: The American Dream Research Paper
Materials: Source Sheets, pencils, pens, folder for keeping material together

Unit Outline:

Th 4/25	American Dream Overview / Discussion & Response/Finish Milestone review
F 4/26	Introduce research, source sheets, plagiarism
M 4/29	Research
T 4/30	Research
W 5/1	Research
Th 5/2	Research 3 Source Sheets Due + Thesis Statement due by end of class (25 points / daily grade)
F 5/3	Write essay
M 5/6	Write essay (due by 4:00 pm)

VALUABLE RESOURCE: The Writing Center offers one-on-one assistance from experienced, solid writers and is open Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday mornings and Monday and Wednesday afternoons. Schedule an appointment (it’s easy!) at bhswritingcenter.weebly.com.

**Final draft due on Monday, May 6, 4:00 pm.
(NO EXCEPTIONS!)
Must be turned in to turnitin.com!!!**

NOTE: Writing a research paper is a requirement of this course. This research paper is worth 50 points and fits in the Writing category. The majority of the work will be done in class, but you are still held accountable for the due dates. Use Google Docs while also working on this paper at home as well. **You must have a minimum of THREE sources for this paper. All requirements noted above in bold will be counted as daily/quiz grades and must be turned in.**

This unit outline is subject to change if the teacher deems necessary; however, you will be notified of any changes and be expected to make note of changes.