25% of the course grade will be based on successful completion of a researched argument, which will focus on your attempting to fix some aspect of a serious problem in America based on the best available evidence from your research. The idea here is for you to orchestrate an argument using sound reasoning and logic while appealing to your values and beliefs as well as those of your readers, and to essentially convince those who might not normally agree with your position by presenting new information while anticipating any objections they may have. Remember, this is an argument and not a report, so your position must be on a debatable topic as far as what to do about the problem is concerned. Also, try to supplement your own thinking by using sources sparingly but deftly to enhance your argument with expert testimony, statistical evidence, logical reasoning, and facts. You must also include three opposing views from research and then counter these arguments fairly in order to boost your credibility.

The essay must be based on one of the topics from the researched assignment list, be MLA formatted and 1000-1300 words in length, use a variety of seven or eight sources, which may include college catalogued books, e-Books, or database-generated periodical or Web articles (three of which must address significant opposing views), with the rest of the sources providing facts, statistical evidence, and expert testimony. No more than two citations may come from any one source and you should use only brief direct quotations or paraphrases, none back to back. In addition, papers must include signal phrases with proper credentialing of authors in advance of source information, along with certain allowed information inside parentheses and comments on the significance of the source information you have included so as to prevent confusion as to what belongs to you or the source. You must also have a Noodle Tools-generated works cited page and a standard outline approved by the instructor. The essay must be at least 1000 words in length and contain a word count at the end of the conclusion. Students will upload their initial completed draft with their works cited page and outline in Safe Assign, which will help to diagnose plagiarism concerns should they exist. I will show you how to do this and give you the necessary written instructions. Your final draft, however, after you receive my typed comments and revise the essay and perhaps meet with a librarian or me, will be a hard copy. **Students must pass the researched essay assignment to pass the course! A non-passing grade on the final draft will result in a zero for approximately eighty percent of the researched essay grade.**

The paper will not be accepted either after the final deadline for the assignment, resulting in a zero for this portion of the assignment and an automatic F for the course. In order to pass the course, students must write a satisfactory, structured argument with approved sources (and without plagiarism concerns) and include substantial opposing views **which they must counter.** The majority of the sentences written, moreover, must be grammatical, and the majority of textual citations must be done correctly. This includes both direct and indirect quotations. Students with a zero grade on the first submitted draft, assuming it was submitted on time, will be required to meet with their instructor after initially revising the graded research paper draft and will be expected to show substantial improvement in the overall quality of the paper to achieve a passing grade on the assignment and in the course.

Certain milestones will exist for the research paper assignment:

A topic proposal in 150 words will be required early in the course, along with a research question taken from a list of possible research topics I will distribute shortly after the non-researched argument. These will coincide in part with three films we will later watch and discuss in groups.
A research proposal with thesis statement will come next following your research, which will answer your research question and generate the thesis statement.

Your preliminary outline will come next, followed by

An annotated bibliography including your sources with parenthetical notes beneath each Noodle Tools-generated citation in your Works Cited page showing how the sources are used. For example, sources suggesting specific support points from your outline, which you will need to explain, or opposing views countering them in some way, which will also require explanation, will be included, along with sources providing expert testimony, statistical or factual information, and so on. You must have a minimum of seven sources and no more than eight. (5 points each=20 points or 20% of researched essay overall grade)

Then you will complete your initial draft with works cited page and outline, in that order; however, if you fail to complete any of the previous milestones by the final deadline for each milestone or fail to make the final deadline in Safe Assign for the initial draft, you will not be allowed to complete the assignment.

However, assuming you have submitted everything on time, after you receive my typed comments on your submitted initial draft in Safe Assign, you will then complete the final draft and receive your final grade for this last component.

You should type, double-space, and MLA format your essay using the Times New Roman textual style, a size 11 or 12 font, and black ink. I would strongly suggest you keep a sample essay out and use the “classic double-spaced” or “researched essay” Word document blank to ensure proper margins and spacing. You will also need to use the “insert” feature in Word correctly to set up your last name and page number in the upper right to begin the paper. The instructions for this are in the syllabus packet, although you may also visit the English Writing Lab in TC214 for help with formatting. You may type on both sides of the page.

There will be only one revision allowed, assuming you have turned the initial draft in on time and followed the basic instructions of the assignment. The revision must also be turned in on time or will not be accepted. A passing researched essay is required to pass the course in addition to a passing overall course average.

Here are the prompts for the assignment; choose only one and be sure to answer it completely in your thesis statement at the end of your introductory paragraph which should be no more than a half a page in length. (I have added some possible support ideas, here and there, for your research topics which you are welcome to use anyway you see fit but try to use the research questions essentially as I have written them. Be sure to limit your support points to three and to list only the sources you have actually cited in the text of your paper and on your final works cited page so that you have a one-for-one match between what you’ve used in the paper and what appears on the works cited page.)

1. What should be done about gun laws on the federal level in the wake of yet another school massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL, and how might this be argued convincingly in light of the NRA’s influence.
2. With the resurgence of anti-semitism and hatred toward minorities in general in this country, what can be done to promote equality and fair-mindedness? What are the arguments opposing what you propose, and how would you counter them?

3. Assuming that not enough is being done currently to significantly reduce the dangers of global warming in this country, what more can reasonably be done in the schools or businesses or residential areas remedy this problem in the long term (you might pick just one area as your focus—schools, businesses, or residential areas), and what opposition might there be to the remedies you propose? How would you counter these arguments fairly?

4. What can be done about sexual harassment in the workplace, something that is not currently being done universally? Present three positive steps, along with opposing views from research.

5. How should the United States prepare to thwart a possible nuclear attack by a rogue nation or terrorists? Include opposing views and your argument against them.

6. How should America best protect itself again cyberwarfare attacks? Include researched opposing views and counter them, but explain the science in layman’s terms so that everyone can understand what you’re suggesting be done.

7. What should America do about the resurgent heroin problem in this country, in light of the fact that deaths by drug overdose now exceed automobile accident fatalities? Include and counter researched opposing views.

8. How should this country facilitate public financing of Congressional and presidential campaigns? Include opposing views based on research and your counter-arguments.

9. How might America better regulate the Food and Drug Administration’s policies toward prescription drugs with an eye to reducing consumer costs and improving product safety? (Consider the following: placing caps on profits—knowing how much it costs to make a drug will help to determine how much a pharmaceutical company may charge for it, but also review the caps that other countries have placed on prescription drugs and the logic behind them; disallowing patents for public research or for new forms of existing drugs to extend the life of their original patents, which typically run for twenty years, which will give competing companies the opportunity to produce generic drugs which will further reduce consumer costs; if comparisons of new drugs are made not just with placebos but with existing products on the market effectiveness, this will enhance fair pricing, product safety, and effectiveness; another possible support point might suggest that employees with the FDA should be reviewed periodically to ensure ethical practices within the public agency.) (Formulate your answer as a process consisting of three steps in the most logical order possible, leading up to the most important point. You may borrow my suggested support points or add or subtract from them in any way you see fit as you conduct your research, and don’t forget to include the opposing views from corporate America.

10. What are the best ways to regulate the health insurance providers, by that, I mean, the health insurance companies? (Consider ending the monopoly by breaking up the conglomerates while promoting greater competition on the state level; placing caps on profits and regulating administrative and advertising costs so that a greater percentage is going toward improving
patient care; standardizing the electronic health information technology system and providing federal government incentives for other cost saving measures; requiring health care providers to abide by doctor-based decisions as to what is medically necessary; paying doctors more for their results while reducing health insurance premiums for policy holders whose health has improved; pick only three, and find and counter opposing views.)

11. How might we save the present healthcare system in the United States, in light of Fareed Zakaria’s estimate that healthcare expenditures will grow from one-fifth to more than two-fifths of the American economy by 2050? (In Global Lessons: The GPS Road Map for Saving Healthcare, Fareed Zakaria points out that presently 5% of patients in this country create 50% of the costs. Because of this, he argues, incentives should be given to healthcare providers who provide better care. He also suggests that more competitive markets be created for a variety of medical procedures. He also points to a special project among a group of physicians in Camden, New Jersey, that seeks to treat patients frequently who would otherwise visit only the emergency rooms for care, and how doing this has improved patient health while reducing medical costs significantly for the community. At the end of the program, Zakaria suggests the need for systemic healthcare cost reduction through preventive medicine, physician incentives, and paperless medical record keeping, which is something the Portable Healthcare Act (Obamacare) espouses as well, though the legislation that was passed did not include all of these things. And again don’t forget the opposing views of those who might disagree.

12. An idea I came up with recently after watching a Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company advertisement about their not having stockholders was to open the health insurance marketplace to health insurance companies comprised solely of consumers and perhaps doctors and hospitals to provide incentives for reducing consumer health insurance costs; how might this work, citing three ways, and what objections might there be to it.

13. How might America balance its budget? (In a recent episode of the HBO series Real Time with Bill Maher, Bill Maher suggests that the current deficit is the result of two wars and a recession and that the cure requires that America raise taxes, cut corporate welfare, slash the defense budget, tax the rich, support the unions, and take the profit out of healthcare.) (You’ll certainly get an argument from somebody here. You might focus on just three of these things or take one of these ideas and suggest three basic steps.)

14. What are the best ways to stimulate job growth in America? (We might consider some of the global lessons Fareed Zakaria discusses in the CNN special Global Lessons: Putting America Back to Work. In this program he discusses, first of all, government support for specific industries to create jobs. Both Germany and South Korea have done this in the recent past with auto manufacturing and shipbuilding, substantially improving their respective economies in the process. (Obama did this, too, in bailing out the auto industry in this country.) Private industry has also become more innovative in its collaboration with colleges and universities involved in the science of the 21st century. The nanotechnology program at the University of New York at Albany is mentioned while Siemens Corporation in Germany has been at the forefront of an innovative apprenticeship program in manufacturing offering free training and employment. Two-thirds of Germans are involved in such programs. And the concept of flexicurity has come about in the Netherlands in which employees are trained to do more than one job so that if one position is phased out, employees may still be retained instead of laid off, reducing overall unemployment and its costs. Generally speaking, at least in this country, the widespread
collaboration between private industry and colleges and training schools is something that is only in its infancy. Other areas Zakaria mentions as promising areas for potential job growth are the tourism industry (which requires fewer visa restrictions for tourists and infrastructure rebuilding.) In a related program, former President Bill Clinton suggests in an interview with Larry King on 9-24-08 extending tax cuts, fostering unemployment compensation crossover training for unfilled job listings, and creating small business incentives to create more green technology jobs—see the new Clinton Global Initiative. You might also look at President Obama’s American Jobs Act and Jon Huntsman’s unemployment plan. Pick just three support points and acknowledge and counter researched opposing views.

15. In the wake of the recent financial crisis and investment portfolio losses, the looming number of home foreclosures, the increasing credit card debt of Americans, and the inadequacy of current bank lending practices, what measures should be taken to regulate the banking industry? Consider the questionable bank lending practices that created the foreclosures in the first place and possible rate regulations on how much credit card companies can charge. (See what else you can find.)

16. What can be done to flag and erase terrorist or hate propaganda in cyberspace on Facebook or Google or another Internet platform? Don’t forget to address three opposing views.

17. What are the best three ways to restructure the American tax code in fairness to all, eliminating in the process unnecessary corporate loopholes while providing incentives to small businesses. What steps should be taken, and what arguments might be put forth by those opposed.

18. Consider rebuilding America’s infrastructure through a federal public works project, tax incentives to new companies with innovative “green” technological approaches, and incentives to private investors as well, something Rahm Emmanuel, the mayor of Chicago, has tried to implement through an “Infrastructure” bank, an idea engendered by former President Bill Clinton.

19. You might want to consider ways in which to promote lower tuition for college students or a loan forgiveness policy for students by joining a volunteer civilian workforce, much like the Peace Corps or by agreeing to serve as medical doctors or lawyers in rural communities after students have finished their education, or by pursuing certain high-skilled, high technology occupations that are in great demand by American employers and then agreeing to work for a set period of time . . .

20. Certainly, the issue of excessive police brutality in this country and what should be done about it is an important one, in light of what happened in Ferguson, Missouri, and the question many people have raised about police accountability and cover-ups. You might want to focus on a solution comprising more female patrolmen involved in making arrests, more foot patrolmen to help to foster relationships with communities, and a civilian review board to be implemented for the purpose of hiring or reprimanding or firing police. These are only ideas, but you may use them if you can find the research, or you may come up with something else.

21. Other topics might include reforming congress (limiting terms, eliminating super PACs and government support for for-profit businesses and schools, and creating incentives for
compromise), examining the plight of returning veterans and three things the country should be doing for them, along with the opposing views against some aspect of what you propose; or you might focus on how to restore the middle class, according to the experts. Or you might focus on a local problem like sexual trafficking, the toxic blue algae crisis in Florida and how to fix it, or the problem with congressional gerrymandering and redistricting. Certainly, the issue of immigration reform is another important issue, with respect to the Syrian refugee crisis and the many illegal immigrants that are already in this country or trying to come in. Human rights is another important issue in this country, though you would need to more narrowly restrict your focus to perhaps just one of these: discrimination against people of color, or women in the workplace, or you might research other problems facing women or minority groups. If you have other ideas, let me know, and I will consider them as well; but contact me first for approval before preparing your outline. Remember, you cannot simply suggest passing legislation and why it should be passed. This is not a single-fix essay but a three-part-solution essay, the topic must be debatable, and you must have opposing views from research.

Make sure I approve your outline before you get started and be sure to write from your approved outline to ensure proper structure and organization in your research paper, though you may change it later to reflect any necessary changes in the essay. But try to connect your ideas in such a way that you are building momentum as you go as you head toward your conclusion. Finally, remembering in your choice of topic that you will need to acknowledge researched opposing viewpoints and to counter those arguments is imperative. This is an integral part of any good research paper since you are first trying to find out what you should think and then convince those who would normally not agree with you to consider your viewpoint.

Best of luck on your research paper and do a masterful job!

Prof. Beck