

Department of Writing Arts

iCCI/CCI Signature Essay

Spring 2011

What the Signature Essay Is

The Signature Essay is the one, mandated essay in your ICCI/CCI portfolio, which will also contain two other essays. The Signature Essay is designed by the department and incorporates all seven of the First-Year Writing Core Values.

As with the other essays in your portfolio, you will be expected to (and need to) revise this essay for the final portfolio and include all drafts and revisions.

Signature Essay Requirements

- Length: Minimum 750 words
- Sources: Three required
- Citation: Informal in-text citation/formal bibliography
- Due Dates: Will be provided by your instructor

The Topic

For the Signature Essay you are required to write about a specific topic. The topic for the essay this year is the effect/change digital technology is having on individuals who rely heavily on the internet. However, you have many options in how you individually develop this topic for your essay.

A successful response to the assignment will be thoughtful in that you recognize the complexities of the issues, show careful consideration of the sources/readings, and articulate your ideas clearly and in a well-organized fashion.

Your instructor will provide significant class time for course discussions and course activities to help you determine how you can shape your essay based on your individual insights, interests, concerns, and experiences.

Source Requirements

You are required to incorporate three articles in your Signature Essay:

1. The Foundation Article, which is provided to you
2. A Supplemental Article, which you choose from a list of provided articles
3. An article that you locate using a Rowan Library database, preferably Academic Search Premier.

By using these sources to develop and support your ideas, you will demonstrate your ability to critique, evaluate and incorporate sources into your writing.

Successfully using these sources in your essay means...

- Showing that you understand that there are different types of information and different ways to interpret information
- Deciding what information is needed based on audience, purpose, and context
- Showing that you can find information and can evaluate its quality
- Incorporating information into your response effectively, in this case using informal citation with a bibliography.

Your instructor will discuss the use of sources for this essay with you in more detail and help you meet these objectives through course discussion and course activities.

About the Topic

The Foundational Article for the Signature Essay, “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” written by Nicholas Carr, appeared in *The Atlantic* magazine in the July/August 2008 issue. Despite the title, however, Carr’s question involves more than just our increasing use of Google. He questions the price we pay for being connected 24/7 to the abundance of information we have at our fingertips through a host of digital media sources. This price, according to Carr, is our ability, or willingness, to concentrate and contemplate, to read deeply, to focus, and to remember.

Some of the issues that Carr explores in this article are how digital technology is shaping...

- how we think
- how we read and write
- our identity
- how we define intelligence

Any one of these issues/concepts could offer the direction for where you take your Signature Essay.

Where to Begin with this Assignment

The Signature Essay is a complex writing assignment. The Signature Essay Map will help you get started.

MAPPING THE INVENTION STAGE OF ICCI/SIGNATURE ASSIGNMENT

STEP 1: Students are provided the Foundation Article for the Signature Assignment. Students must use this article in their essay,

Instructors should engage their students in a close analysis of this article (summary and analysis activities) before proceeding to STEP 2.

Foundation Article for fall 2010: This must be used in the essay

["Is Google Making us Stupid?"](#)

from *The Atlantic* magazine

STEP 2: Students, guided by their instructor, then choose at least one article from the supplemental list of articles. One supplemental article must be used in the essay.

The goal of the supplemental article is to provide a student with insight into the issue to develop an individual approach to the essay.

Supplemental Articles: One must be used in the essay

["Attached to Technology and Paying a Price"](#) (*New York Times*).

["Getting Smarter"](#) (*The Atlantic* magazine).

[Excerpt from Everything bad is good for you](#) by Steven Johnson

["The Ugly Toll of Technology: Impatience and Forgetfulness"](#) (*New York Times*)

Note: A successful Signature Essay requires significant work to develop a college-level approach/thesis that is complex and successfully incorporates the three required sources.

STEP 3: Students develop options for their approach and a potential thesis in the form of a question, argument, or position. The working thesis will reflect the individual student's interest, understanding, and/or experiences.

This working thesis may undoubtedly need revision or refinement.

Working Thesis

Step 4: Students now find the additional third required source. Armed with their potential approach for the essay, students determine what type of information is needed to develop their essay and move to searching for this information using a Rowan Library academic database

Rowan Library's Academic Search Premier

Note: while Academic Search Premier is the preferred database for this project, students may use another with their instructor's guidance.

Note: Students may need to loop back through Steps 2, 3, and 4 to fine tune their response to the assignment and to find/select the sources that best develop that response.