

The Gladwell Project: Nuts and Bolts

So we have read some articles, briefly discussed the idea around subtle persuasion and rhetoric; now it's time to get down to business. Your task is to come up with an idea you would like to explore in an essay. I suggest that you choose a topic for which you have a passion / interest / knowledge. Otherwise this task will become onerous.

Okay, have you got an idea? Good. Now you have to come up with an angle, an entrance, if you will, that will allow you to narrow your topic into something manageable. Gladwell uses seemingly disparate ideas to create a seeming truth (it's a paradox, people). For example:

- *The Sports Taboo* uses race and athletics to explain and unlock the myths surrounding the variability of gender-based math scores.
- *Most Likely to Succeed* uses the NFL's quarterback problem to explore the ineffective and possibly outmoded method we use to select and train teachers.
- *The Creation Myth* explodes the myth that Steve Jobs stole the personal computer from XEROX, and uses the development of military intelligence to explain how the computer mouse was came to be, and uses all of it to confront the problems facing the creative genius in the corporate world.

Whew.

Once you have an idea, you need to find a way to explore your topic using something else as a tool. Remember, this essay is ultimately a work of persuasion- you need to create something arguable. Once you see the path, you need to do research; if you hope to be successful, you need you essay to have a backbone. We will spend one period in the library learning to, and doing research. You must look for experts to quote, statistics, and anecdotes- anything that will add an air of authority to your argument.

Once you have your information, it is time to write. This is not a purely academic paper, so you'll have some leeway with formalities, but you still must write well. Ultimately, you will be assessed on both your ideas and on your ability to present them. You will have a period to workshop your essays.

Due date: _____

Marks: 35 (but really 10-15% of term 1)