What if? Essay: Explore the possible results IF some event in history had not happened or if it happened differently. Support your theory with logical reasons and facts. (A book of this type of essay was published in 2005: The Collected What if?: Eminent Historians Imagining What Might Have Been: Essays, ed. by Robert Cowley)

Hot Topic Comparison: Identify three experts on a contemporary issue. Make a chart comparing their viewpoints and qualifications.

Scholarly/Popular Comparison: Compare an article in a scholarly journal with an article on the same topic in a popular magazine. Make a table or chart identifying your comparison points.

Political Cartoons: Locate a political cartoon relevant to the course, explain the meaning, and put it in historical context.

Book, Movie, or Performance Review: Write a review of a book, performance, or film. Students will need to learn how to write a critical review.

Class Journal Club: Select an article from disciplinary research journal or magazine, examine the author’s authority, and present the article to the class for discussion.

News Media Bias: Find coverage of an event in the news from several different media sources and show how each exhibits bias or objectivity.

Art Investigation: Examine a painting or other work of art related to a theme or a specific time period. Brainstorm questions and theories as a group and then research possible answers.

Nobel Prize Nomination: Suppose you were invited to nominate someone for a Nobel Prize? Learn about the various prizes, selection criteria, and jury, and then write a letter in support of your choice.


Let's Create: Prepare a creative presentation dealing with a course topic. Media, artwork, games, plays, poems, and songs are among the possibilities. Students present their work to the class.

Thirty-three smaller projects and activities for use in almost any course to help students navigate the research process and hone their critical thinking skills. Many will include a bibliography (references or works cited list).
♦ **Interview a Historical Figure:** Learn about a famous dead person and create an “interview” with that person that shows the context of the time and place in which the person lived. Cite sources for facts.

♦ **Public Service Announcement:** Create a 60-second PSA in audio or video format that addresses an important issue. Determine audience, message, and call to action.

♦ **Grant Proposal:** Write a proposal stating why a certain project, problem, etc. deserves research funding, supporting your proposal with documented evidence.

♦ **Editorial vs. Scholarly Article:** Examine an editorial and discuss what evidence would be necessary to turn it into an academic argument for a scholarly audience. Locate and analyze evidence and write a response to the editorial.

♦ **“Ignorance” Presentation:** Given a disease or contemporary issue, find out and report on what is NOT known about this topic, supporting your conclusions with appropriate sources.

♦ **Lies, Damn Lies, and Statistics:** Find a current news article that uses statistics. Locate the original source of the statistics and determine if they were interpreted correctly. Find other sources to support or refute the argument made in the original news article.

♦ **Discipline Tour:** Plan a 5-day tour based on a theme relevant to the course (Yellowstone Geology, British Authors, Local Revolutionary War Sites, etc.). Create a brochure with background reading, plan of activities, guide notes, photos, etc.

♦ **Infographic:** Ask a research question, determine the audience, state the problem, present choices, and organize the information into a visual format. (Free online infographic tool: Canva.com)

♦ **Twitter Feed:** Find people relevant to topic or course who use Twitter and follow them. Are the tweets useful on their own, or do they lead to more detailed information?

♦ **Letter to the Government:** Write a letter to a government official about a local issue. Students will need to learn about the format of a formal letter and gather persuasive evidence.

♦ **Controversial Issue Thesis Statements:** Choose a controversial issue and write thesis statements for both sides of the issue.

♦ **Evaluate a Charity:** Develop criteria and evaluate a charitable organization or fund-raising event for the purpose of making a donation. Is this organization’s approach effective?

♦ **Important People:** Compile a short descriptive list of the significant people in your discipline and why each is important. Use biographical resources, scholarly articles, and subject encyclopedias.

♦ **Program Notes:** Write program notes for a play, recording, or concert, to increase the audience’s understanding and enjoyment.

♦ **Organization or Company Information:** Assemble background information on a company or organization in preparation for a hypothetical job interview.

♦ **Opinion Poll Analysis:** Analyze a topic or issue using two or more opinion polls and compare poll demographics and findings.

♦ **International News Comparison:** Find journal, magazine, or newspaper articles from different cultures or countries about a particular event or topic. Compare and contrast the various views.

♦ **Extreme Websites:** Find websites that present extreme viewpoints on a topic, some that mislead, and some that are objective and credible. Students create a website evaluation rubric together.

♦ **Annotated Bibliography:** Create an annotated bibliography of credible sources for a topic, including for each: the author’s qualifications, thesis (main point), and how the information might be useful. *Variation:* Choose sources to help a specific group (diabetics, video gamers, car shoppers, job applicants, etc.).

♦ **Professional Organizations:** Identify the most important professional organizations in your field, describing the focus of each and how the organization might be useful to a new member.

♦ **Professional Periodicals:** Determine the most important periodicals (scholarly journals and trade publications) in your field and describe the audience and focus of each and how an aspiring author would be able to get an article published.

♦ **SWOT Analysis:** Conduct a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) comparing two companies, two courses of action, two strategies to accomplish a goal, or two of anything related to your field.