

## Research Project

**Basics:** You will be researching the story of one of the California prisoners on death row listed at the end of this assignment sheet. Three people will work on one prisoner and are welcome to share research about the prisoner, if they choose. The three of you will also make a group power point presentation. However, each person in the group will write his/her own essay and select his/her own contextual issue. (NB: You are not arguing for or against their death sentence in this essay!)

**Essay:** Largely an expository essay, the paper will be a journalistic, objective essay on the circumstances of your prisoner's crime, including such factors as when, where, why, and how; the trial and outcome; and subsequent appeals, if information is available. Everything must be carefully documented.

It will also include research on a contextual issue that illuminates the case. Some possibilities are: The effect of extenuating circumstances, like a disability, abuse as a child, or mental illness; racism in the justice system; women and capital crimes; poverty and the death penalty; exemplary behavior in prison; clemency; doubt about the evidence; and poor legal representation. You should select only one of these to focus on and really understand and present thoroughly. You may use material that we have read for class or that you have found in creating your portfolio. I do have an expectation, however, that you will enrich our class materials with more information found through your research. As above, everything must be scrupulously documented.

To be clear, then, there are two research streams that you will be following: the story of your prisoner AND research into some important area that provides context. I am happy to discuss any options with you in office hours.

**Length:** 8 pages (2400 words) minimum) to 10 pages (3000 words) maximum

### Process:

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| T, Oct. 10             | Research Project and paper introduced; time in class to review the cases and submit to me your top five choices for a prisoner story you want to research.   |
| R, Oct. 12<br>by 2:30. | Library research workshop in Copley Library. Meet in the lobby of the library<br><br>I will let everyone know of the prisoner assignments on this day.   |
| T, Oct. 17             | Research project progress report due in class. I will give you a format to follow.   |
| T, Oct. 24             | Same as above.   |
| T, Oct. 31             | In-class workshop with your team on your research power point presentation on your prisoner's story. People should bring to this workshop their computers, a strong body of research, and a potential outline for the presentation based on your research. (Anyone who comes unprepared or without significant research will be subject to a lowered grade on the paper itself.) We will use class time for you to begin work on the presentation. You can decide what information you will present and decide how to organize it. You will also decide how to present your information, as each team member is expected to speak. You may |

have time to start designing the slides. You should find time to work together once more and do a rehearsal. I will circulate amongst the teams to answer questions.

Please note: the power points are only on the case, not on the contextual issue.

**Power point guidelines:** You may have no more than 10 slides with text and 5 slides with pictures. You are limited to 4 bullet points of **five words** each on a slide and/or a maximum of **33 words** per slide. The power point is designed to be an aid to a verbal presentation, not a substitute for it. Use font that can be read from the back of the room. Each presentation should last no longer than 15 to 17 minutes, so time yourself in your rehearsal.

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| T, Nov. 7  | 4 team power point presentations   |
| R, Nov. 9  | 3 power point presentations  |
| T, Nov. 14 | Research paper workshop; bring 3 copies of a well-developed draft (at least 5 pages) to class (one copy is for me). Please print these out well in advance of class, as drafts on the computer will not be acceptable. |
| T, Nov. 21 | Research paper due; submit to Blackboard Turn it in by 12:30 PM.   |

Make use of the writing center for this paper. The assignment is complicated, and the tutors can help you at all stages.

### California Cases

#### Kevin Cooper

Currently on death row, Cooper was convicted of the death of a family, but has strongly maintained his innocence. He has become a strong and articulate critic of the judicial system and its biases against African American men. Because of the many questions concerning the legitimacy of his conviction, he has won much outside support for his claim of innocence. He will be amongst the next group of prisoners executed.

#### Joseph Danks

Known as the "Koreatown Slasher," Danks killed several transients in the mid-1980s, then murdered his cell mate shortly after being incarcerated. Severely mentally ill, Danks remained untreated until 2011 and is waiting for the California Supreme Court to hear his appeal that he is mentally unfit for execution.

#### Susan D. Eubanks

One of the few women on California's Death row, Eubanks murdered her four sons from 2 different fathers. Angered when her current boyfriend tried to move out, she shot the children to get revenge on her ex-husbands. Eubanks shot herself in the abdomen, claiming that she was attempting to commit suicide.

### **David Lucas**

Lucas, a San Diego carpet cleaner, was convicted of 3 murders but suspected of five. One of his victims, Anne Swanke, was a USD honors student whose father was a professor in the philosophy department. One of his appeals was heard and denied three years ago.

### **Scott Peterson**

Peterson was convicted of killing his wife Laci, who was 8 months pregnant. Initially much pitied because of what seemed to a tragic end to a storybook marriage, Petersen's secret life of infidelity and debt changed the narrative. The case attracted has much national attention, due in part to Peterson's good looks. He maintains his innocence, a stance supported by his family, and family resources help fund a website and continued attention to his case.

### **Richard Ramirez**

One of California's most notorious rapists and serial killers, Ramirez was convicted of 13 murders and condemned to death. Beaten frequently as a child, Ramirez's behavior on death row became increasing erratic and violent before his death from lymphoma in 2013. At the time of his death, he had been on death row for 23 years.

### **David Westerfield**

Westerfield was a successful San Diego engineer who was accused of sneaking into a neighbor's house, kidnapping their 7 year old daughter, and murdering her. After a month long search by hundreds of people, the child's body was finally discovered discarded in an East county roadside grove of trees. Westerfield's prosperity, lack of a criminal record, and the "swinging" lifestyle of the murdered child's parents created a media storm.

### **Stanley Tookie Williams**

Williams was a founder of the Crips, a Los Angeles street gang. Convicted of the murder of 4 people, he was given the death penalty. During his time on death row, he became an ardent critic of gangs and wrote a number of books on eradicating gang culture. Many protested his execution, but he was not granted clemency and was executed in 2005. He was the subject of a documentary: *Redemption*.