

Point/Counterpoint
Fall 2007
Position Paper Handout

In this 4-5 page paper, you should pick a position on one of contentious issues related to reproductive rights/choice, work/equality or family values/patriarchy. In addition to clearly and persuasively presenting your position, you must provide an effective account of the issue (what the issue is, why it is contentious among feminists).

Some examples of possible topics:

1. The freedom to choose whether or not to have a child is the most important freedom for women.
2. The pro-choice movement should expand its scope to include reproductive justice and not just choice.
3. Narrowing the wage gap between men and women is the most important way in which to achieve equality in the workplace.
4. Affirmative action, while not ideal, is still necessary.
5. The ability to marry is an essential freedom that must be extended to gays and lesbians and should be a big focus of the feminist agenda.

In your first paper on feminism, the goal was to communicate your understanding of feminism to a friendly audience (a family member/close friend). For this paper, you need to be able to present your own, well-informed and well-developed position on a contentious issue to an audience that may or may not agree with you. Imagine your reader as someone who has a different opinion (maybe a strong one) on the issue you are discussing. Your goal is to present your position in a persuasive and compelling way that makes your reader critically think (and maybe rethink) their own position.

Some things to think about:

1. Your paper must have a clear introductory paragraph/s in which you present your thesis statement and inform your reader about what you will be discussing. As your primary reader, I should be able to read your first paragraph or two and know exactly what your paper is about and where your paper is going.
2. Your paper must contextualize your own position by giving some background on the issue under discussion. For example, if you are taking the position that the pro-choice movement should broaden its focus to include more than abortion, you must offer some discussion of why this is necessary (how has the pro-choice movement failed to do this? At whose expense?).
3. Your paper must also respond to both the pros and cons of the issue. In presenting your position, you must explain how your position is better than the alternative (or at least how your position addresses some of the concerns of alternative positions).
4. Your paper should draw upon some of the readings from class. **You must include a discussion of at least two readings from class.** You can also bring in class discussion or any films that we watched and discussed.
5. Your paper should avoid over-generalized statements. Don't make any claims on behalf of all of feminism (as we have already discussed, there is no *one* feminism but feminisms) or on behalf of all women (also, as we have discussed, women have many different experiences). Instead, make your comments/analysis specific and grounded in concrete examples.
6. Prove and explain your points. Don't assume that your reader will readily get the point that you are trying to make implicitly. Be explicit with your argument.

Please note that your paper may not be on the same topic as your roundtable presentation. So, for example, if you are giving your roundtable presentation on some topic related to the issue of reproductive rights, you may NOT write your position paper on reproductive rights.

Section W: This paper is worth 20% of your grade.

Section V: If you are writing a 10-page position paper, this paper is worth 20% of your grade. If you are writing an additional 10-page research paper, this position paper is worth 15% of your grade.

DUE: Either 10/24, 11/14 or 12/12