**Paper 1: Top-Down Research Paper**

**Requirements**

**Topic:** Argue a position on a general topic (any topic) that interests you personally.

**Length:** *At least* 3 pages

**Formatting:** All papers should be typed in Times New Roman or Arial 12-point font, be double spaced, and have 1 inch margins on all four sides.

**First draft due date:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**What is a position paper?**

A position paper is an essay that argues a position on a controversial issue. You need to take into account the readers’ objections, questions, and opposing viewpoints and remember that your **purpose** is to state your own position clearly and to convince those who disagree with you that they must take seriously the arguments you raise.

* From the handbook *Reading Critically, Writing Well*

**Some possible topics**

**-**How do you feel about a law requiring motorcyclists in Hawai‘i to wear helmets?

-How do you feel about raising tuition at this university?

-How do you feel about allowing alcohol in dorms?

-How do you feel about TOEFL being required for university entrance?

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**\* “The Case for No Helmets” by Dick Teresi**

*Before reading the essay, answer the following questions.*

1. Do you wear a helmet when riding a bicycle, moped or motorcycle? Do you think that it’s necessary? Why or why not?
2. What do you think will be the author’s position?

**The Case for No Helmets**

By Dick Teresi

It’s time for the nation’s oldest bike festival. This weekend, 150,000 motorcycle enthusiasts have converged on Laconia, N.H., for the Laconia Motorcycle Rally. Ah, the joys of motorcycling! The throaty roar of your V-twin engine, the call of the open road, the wind in your hair….

Wait. Forget about that last part. The riders en route to Laconia won’t feel any wind in their hair. They’ll just feel the rush of air over their plastic helmets—at least until they cross into New Hampshire, which doesn’t require riders over 18 to wear them.

Forty-seven states have some helmet requirements. At the rally, plenty of T-shirts will deride motorcycle helmet laws. They’ll sell well. In a survey of 2,500 bikers at the 1993 rally, 98 percent of the respondents said they opposed such laws. This opposition is often dismissed by nonriders as evidence of biker’s rebelliousness. But we opposed the laws for reasons other than personal freedom. Helmets are not necessarily the life-savers some people think they are. In some cases, they may be killers.

Deep in the plush recesses of any helmet approved by the Department of Transportation is a tiny warning label: “Some reasonably foreseeable impacts” are any collisions at speeds greater than 15 miles per hour. The department tests the protection provided by helmets by dropping them on an anvil from a height of six feet. This is equivalent to an impact at 14.4 miles per hour. So if you’re riding to Laconia, keep your speedometer below 15 miles per hour.

But what about all those statistics purporting to prove that helmets save lives? Some studies indicate that there are fewer motorcycle deaths per one million residents in states with helmet laws than in states where helmets are not mandatory. (The study most cited was made by the Centers for Disease Control and covers 1979 to 1986.) But this is largely because there are more riders per capita in states that did not require helmets.

If you take those same statistics and count motorcycle fatality rates per 10,000 registered motorcycle rather than per general population—a more sensible approach-- you find that nine states without helmet laws had a lower fatality rate (3.05 deaths per 10,000 motorcycles) than those that mandated helmets (3.38).

What about claims that helmet laws reduce deaths caused by head trauma? Jonathan Goldstein, a professor of economics at Bowdoin College, studied crash and injury statistics and found that while helmets might prevent head injuries at very low speeds, they can increase the possibility of neck injuries at high speeds. This makes sense. The body like any object under impact, breaks at its weakest point. If a biker wearing a four-pound helmet is thrown to the pavement, the head might be saved but the neck is more likely to snap.

Helmets, especially full-face models, suppress the normal sensations of wind and speed and thus can give riders a false sense of invulnerability and can lead to excessive risk-taking and dangerous riding habits. The real problem is not uncovered heads. It’s that too many bikers don’t ride well and too many automobile drivers don’t look out for motorcycles. To make motorcycling safer, the nation needs better driver and rider education. A 1988 study by the American Motorcyclist Association, showed that states with good motorcycle education programs and no helmet laws had an average fatality rate of 2.56 deaths per 100 motorcycle accidents while states with helmet laws but no training had a death rate of 3.09 per 100 accidents.

Is there a place for helmet? Sure. Anyone who rides in a car should wear one. Head injuries make up only 20 percent of serious injuries to motorcyclist but are far more common in car accidents. If the state legislators who have pass the helmet laws are serious, they ought to prove it by always wearing one in the car. Meanwhile, let motorcyclists feel the wind in their hair.

Article from *Reading Critically, Writing Well*

Authors: Rise B. Axelrod, Charles R. Cooper, and Alison M. Warriner

**\* Note that this essay is shorter than the one you will have to write for the assignment.**

*Now, read the essay and answer these questions.*

* 1. What is the author’s opinion? What kinds of evidence does he use to support his opinion? (Look for different types of evidence.)
  2. How would you evaluate the author’s argument? How about the author’s use of evidence? (Keep in mind that these are not the same: an argument can be good and the evidence bad, or the evidence could come from a trustworthy source but the argument could be illogical.)

**Exercise**: Imagine that you are writing a position paper on why you think alcohol should **not** be allowed in dormitories. What kind of material do you think you can use to support your position? Consider both primary and secondary sources.

* + - Primary sources: interview someone directly or go to the place yourself
    - Secondary sources: books, newspaper articles, statistics, Internet

**Paper 1: Top-Down Research Paper**

Introduction

* Define the issue. (What is the issue? Why is it important?)
* Explain your position.
* Explain the experiences or observations which have led you to this position. When people know the story behind your belief, they can also understand your position better!

Presentation of Research—This middle section should be the longest section.

* How will you support your position? What primary and secondary sources will you collect?
* How will you introduce the sources? How will you connect the findings from different sources to each other?

Discussion and Closing

* Imagine those who will disagree with you. They could be misinformed, or they could have a valid concern for disagreeing. Think about ways to inform people better, and respond to the concerns that are valid.
  + Example: “There should be a law in Hawai‘i that makes you have to wear a helmet when riding a moped.”
  + Misinformed view: “Helmets just interfere with riding a bike and cause more accidents.”

Way to deal with this: Remind the reader of statistics that show more fatalities and injuries result when people do not wear helmets; tell the story of a particular case in which a helmet saved someone’s life

* + Valid disagreement: “Even if there is a law, nobody would follow it if there was no way to enforce it.”
    - * Way to deal with this: Describe how such a law might be enforced; consider alternative ways to encourage wearing a helmet, or alternative ways to make roads safer
* Conclude the paper by briefly summarizing what has come before.

**General tips**

*Provide the information that will help your reader understand you and agree with you.* For example, if you ask your professor to give you an extension on a deadline, describe what happened to you—e.g., car accident—to help them understand why you need an extension!

*Refer to supporting evidence as much as possible*. Avoid making general statements without giving evidence. For example, instead of saying “helmets will make driving safer,” provide statistics or stories from the news.

*If appropriate, you could propose a recommendation or solution to the problem/issue.*

**Due Dates for Paper 1:**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_: First draft due

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_: Final copy due

*Your final paper should be 3 pages typed, double-spaced.*

*Times New Roman or Arial, Size 12 font*