**The Assignment**

Students will write a short research essay on some focused, issue-based aspect of the broad topic of home in their community. Working in small groups, students will identify an appropriate area of inquiry, undertake a preliminary literature review, compose a thesis/argument, write a joint outline/proposal, and then continue to research and think about the topic after having received instructor feedback. Students will then describe, analyze, and defend their findings in the form of an approximately 5 page social science paper, which is to be written individually (and may present an individualized thesis). A number of in-class activities have been scheduled to help you with planning and executing this assignment. As well, you may consult with your seminar instructor for further advice.

**Worth:** 20%

**Components:**
- outline
- first draft
- poster
- second draft
- final paper

**Important Classes:**
- 10/21 – Brainstorming of topics and selection of groups
- 10/25 – Library orientation
- 10/28 – Presentation and sharing of initial readings among group
- 10/30 – Presentation and sharing of additional readings among group
- 11/04 – Poster work

**Important Deadlines:**
- 10/30 – Outline
- 11/13 – First draft, with thesis and one or more passages in which evidence is used ready for in-class discussion
- 11/15 – Poster presentation
- 11/20 – Second draft, ready for peer review, editing and revision
- 11/27 – Final draft, to be accompanied by two earlier drafts and notations, and, essay checklist

**Topics**

Before class on October 21, think about some possible topics for your study. Perhaps you would like to know more about homelessness in the Fraser Valley, or city planning, or public transportation, or water use and purification, or arts organizations and the availability of arts programming, or farming and food issues in the valley. Or, you might want to learn about a particular cultural or ethnic group living here and its migration and history, or the role of religion in forming and sustaining (and possibly separating) communities in the valley. You might want to focus on local indigenous land claims or housing issues. You might want to study typical family structures or the availability of childcare, or, explore architectural styles, their implementation, and their implications for how people live, or yet, examine endangered species that live or sojourn in the valley, etc. This is only a partial list of possible topics - as you look at the course schedule, read, and attend events in this course, others will no doubt occur to you.

**How to Do this Assignment**

This assignment requires you to:
- identify an issue related to home in the Fraser Valley, ideally one about which there is some debate
- find and read a number of sources that explore this issue and show some diversity of views about it
- describe how this issue manifests itself in the community (however defined)
- explain the basis of the differences in perspective presented in the literature
- suggest what you think is the best way to think about this issue and why - this is your thesis or argument.

Doing well on this assignment has three critical parts: the first is the research process, the second is the development of a thesis and essay outline, and the third is crafting the essay itself. The remainder of this document assists you in these areas.
The Research Process
In high school it may have been acceptable to scroll through a couple of google pages, copy-and-paste some notes, and call it research. Do not take this approach in university! For one thing, if your sources are improperly or inadequately acknowledged it can result in a failing grade or even charges of plagiarism. Moreover, most of the information you will find on the internet is not peer-reviewed. Peer-review is a process by which anonymous scholars assess the writings of others before they are published to determine that the work is authoritative - i.e. a knowledgeable, accurate, and reasonably complete source of information that is appropriately researched, evidenced, and argued. Because all academic publications must go through this process, they are much more reliable sources of information than most writings found randomly on the internet, and thus the information that scholarly publications provide is much more appropriate for use in academic work. Google can be a good place to start a search for information on a particular topic, for instance, by reading a Wikipedia article that introduces a topic, or finding the names of some books pertaining to the topic - and what everyday people have said about them - on Amazon or Google Books, but unless you take your information search to the library, your access to scholarly information, the quality of your work, and correspondingly, your grade will suffer.

The best place to gather information for academic purposes is within an academic library. There is an online catalogue that works like a search engine to point you to all of the resources available through the UFV library – these include books, electronic books, online and print journals, newspapers and magazines, films and video, etc. You already know that often the best way to find the best information is to refine a search by using alternate words or phrases. You can apply these skills to keyword and title searches, etc, within the library catalogue. The more you know about how scholars think about a topic, the better you will be able to select alternate words and phrases to search for information about the topic – and, once you have located some scholarly sources and have begun to read them, take note of which authors are being repeatedly referred to in the text, and/or, of particularly interesting or useful points attributed to other authors, and then use the bibliography of the work that you are reading to find other sources that your initial search did not locate. In this regard, the work of a scholar is never complete! Note that the library offers an Inter-Library Loan service which will borrow books and/or provide you with a print copy of articles that are not within the UFV collection; this is very useful, but you need to allow some time for the resources you order through this service to become available. As well, if a UFV book that you need is out on loan, you can place a hold on that item, so that the person who has it cannot renew it and you will receive it when their loan period is finished. The library also has reference services to help you as you go about your search.

In choosing which sources to rely on, you must assess your sources. Then you must analyze your selected sources, and finally incorporate them appropriately into your own argument. The assessment, analysis, and incorporation aspects of the research process intersect the writing process.

- **Assessment**: First of all, you must ensure that you are using appropriate, authoritative (i.e. peer-reviewed) sources. As well, as you go about your literature search, you need to assess whether your research is missing any key texts (i.e. those that are cited in just about everything you are reading on the topic) that would help you to develop or frame your argument. A third aspect of assessment is determining the thesis or argument of each particular work that you read, and understanding how that argument is developed and supported; this intersects analysis. Ultimately, the process of assessment helps you to demonstrate that you have done an effective search, know the significant literature, and can thus establish your own authority on the topic.
- **Analysis** is the process of understanding what a text is about and how it connects to other texts, and then, articulating and asserting your own opinion of the text at hand (whether this is expressed in first person or not). In analyzing your sources, you need to ask questions of them: What are their arguments? What positions do they take? How do they present and use evidence? How do they use and respond to other scholars? Are their arguments convincing? (You may wish to use the ARTS 100 note-taking templates). When you are satisfied with your assessments and analysis, incorporation can take place.
- **Incorporation** refers to the process of putting everything together in your own paper so that the paper is not a jig-saw puzzle of other people’s facts and ideas, but instead reflects and is crafted around the line of your own argument. For more on this, see the sections on the Outline and Essay.

A few last words about the internet: although an entire research process should not be conducted on the internet, it is also true that some materials on the net may have their academic uses. For instance, unpublished conference papers that scholars have given at academic presentations, or working papers by scholars affiliated with a think-tank or research project, or study guides or lecture notes posted online, in addition to publications that have exceeded copyright limitations by virtue of their date of publication. Also, newsmedia, open access, and popular press journals, museum, gallery and archive websites, and publisher or distributor pages about books or films can all have their academic uses. And, it should go without saying that online journal articles found through the library’s search engines are appropriately scholarly sources.
The Outline
The outline is a sort of miniature essay, a statement about your work that is ‘in progress’. This part of the Researching Home assignment is to be worked on and submitted by your group. There are four main components to this assignment, which are:

1. Title
Your working title is a distillation of the central ideas and concerns of your paper. Even if your title is to change, envisioning it now is helpful in clarifying what your paper is going to be about.

2. Thesis Statement or Research Question
Within the text of the outline, state your essay’s central argument, claim, or question (this is your thesis statement) in a sentence or two: what is the case that you will make, or, the question that you’ll answer? Be sure to be as specific as possible – the purpose of this assignment is that you will examine the literature on your topic and make and defend a specific argument with regard to it. A clearly developed thesis statement or question, one succinct and focused enough for you to efficiently manage the process of researching and writing, will be essential to your doing well on the essay part of this assignment. Be aware that overly-general essays written in a descriptive or survey style are not the intention of this assignment – you need an argument. It may be useful to consider a case study approach, as this encourages your work to engage with specificities (and, helps you to direct and manage your research workload).

As you are submitting the outline as a group, if you have individualized theses, you should include each.

3. Proposal/Abstract
This is a brief description of your project and its specifics. It should be written in formal style, and is typically a maximum of 250 words in length. It should introduce the topic, and situate it within the broad literature of the course by outlining some of the general and pertinent issues/questions of the literature with regard to your thesis. Most importantly, the abstract details the specifics of how you will defend your thesis/make your argument/present your case: which data are important to your argument, and which authors/writings will you utilize to make your case?

4. Sources
Include a bibliography of sources you intend to use. Be sure to include a variety of sources—full length monographs, journal articles, essays in edited collections, sources from the course readings, etc. Some of your sources should be ethnographic, sociological, or historical, while others might be literary. Note that the essay checklist indicates a certain number of source minimums; you must cite at least:
   — one monograph
   — one journal article
   — one chapter from an edited volume
   — one source from among the diverse course readings
   — one local newsmedia report.

A Further Note on Sources: This paper does not require nor encourage firsthand ethnographic research (i.e. research among people, whether interviews or direct observations). There are disciplinary protocols regarding ethical research with human subjects that this course is not designed to have you learn to manage - so, stick to published sources!

What Makes a Good Outline?
A good outline will: 1) state a plausible thesis to be examined and argued; 2) show some evidence of having read the potential source materials listed on your bibliography (i.e. “the literature”); and 3) will give some indication of how these readings have contributed to the development of the thesis (i.e. “the literature review”). In other words, what is your thesis, and how is it connected to the literature? As well, a good outline will cite the literature appropriately and include an accurate and complete bibliography.

Poster Presentation
All groups will present a joint poster in class on November 15th. Posters should include a title, the names of group members, your shared research question, a bullet-form list of points central to your topic (including how your topic relates to the idea of home), at least three quotations from your research materials, at least two quotations from course materials, and at least one image. It may also include key data or information that will help viewers appreciate and understand your topic.
The Essay
Although the information gathering and proposal for this assignment is done as part of a team, the final essay is to be written individually. There are three critical aspects to writing an essay: organizing your thoughts and arguments, the writing process and structure, and citation.

1. Organizing Your Thoughts & Arguments
You’ve already written and submitted an outline in the form of an essay proposal or abstract. At this stage, one of the best tools in organizing all of your notes is to write a point-form or bulleted outline for yourself. Use this to guide your paragraph structure, and more importantly, the organization of your argument. Set out each of the major points or ‘bullets’ that you need to make, and then ‘slot’ your notes and sources into each category so that you have a sense even before writing the essay of where everything should ‘fit.’ If things occur to you about the development of your argument as you are writing, as they often will, you thus have already set up a document on which the implications of any structural change will make themselves readily apparent to you.

2. The Writing Process and Structure
The writing process is one of synthesis and integration of your evidence so that it supports your argument. This is facilitated by your point-form outline. As you write, you need to attend carefully to the structure of your paper. Note that the number of paragraphs in an academic essay in university is not pre-determined according to a 3 or 5 paragraph formula – instead, you write as many paragraphs as you need. You will obviously need an introductory paragraph and a concluding paragraph; these articulate your thesis and encapsulate the big ideas of your paper. It can be a good idea to explicitly signal your thesis to the reader by using a template such as “In this paper, I will argue that...”; a similar tactic can be used in your conclusion with a change of tense (“I have argued that...”). In between the introduction and conclusion, each paragraph should elaborate on one aspect of your thesis, and its particular topic should be signaled in its first sentence (known as the topic sentence). Make sure that your paragraphs are coherently and logically organized; re-organize paragraphs as necessary to improve on the ‘flow’ of idea, and, to ensure that there is no misplaced/unrelated/extraneous material in each paragraph. Until you have submitted it, consider your paper a work in progress that you must draft and redraft/craft and recraft.

Furthermore, you should keep two scholarly issues in mind as you write: 1. although we no longer expect to find objective ‘proof’ in some of the social sciences, scholars in all fields continue to assemble data/evidence and to use it to demonstrate particular arguments, positions, or claims; and, 2) be sure to watch for ethnocentricty, value judgements, and other forms of bias. You are encouraged to take a reflexive approach, being self-aware and acknowledging these issues as they arise.

3. Citation
As a scholarly writer, you are expected to adhere to particular expectations concerning citation in all of your written work. As you write, make sure that you avoid plagiarism by clearly citing (marking or signaling) the words, ideas, and data of others - all information, ideas, interpretations and arguments derived from another author must also be accompanied by citation details (i.e. telling your reader where you got your information). In addition to quoting other scholars, you must learn to summarize and paraphrase their observations and ideas – this is part of the academic process of learning to write well. (See the Arts 100 Citation Guide for more information).

What Makes a Good Essay?
This assignment requires you to undertake a research process to find specific local data, and, to relate those findings to a broader academic literature through the assertion and defence of a thesis. Evaluation of essays will be based primarily on the thoughtfulness, analytical depth, clarity, and development of your thesis/argument, as well as on your use of appropriate sources and the way in which they are used (analyzed, synthesized, and integrated) as evidence of your thesis. All sources must be cited adequately and correctly. Your incorporation and extension of class themes and readings will also be considered, and of course, the calibre of your writing will be assessed - including organization, conciseness, word choice, and the coherence or connectedness of the ideas. Overly descriptive writing will be considered superficial and inappropriate; of course you must survey and present factual information, but this must be employed in demonstration of an argument.

Essay Checklist & Outline
Complete and attach the essay checklist (posted on the course webpage) to ensure that you have fulfilled the major technical requirements of the essay. Turn in your essay outline, drafts, and checklist along with the final paper. All of your notes should be kept until after the course is complete and your final grade is submitted, as they may be requested in the event of any suspicion of academic dishonesty.