SYNTHESIS ESSAY

Essay Prompt: Based on the sources we have read and watched, write a 4-page essay in which you discuss what you believe to be key characteristics of people who stand up and fight against injustice.

What is a Synthesis Essay? A thesis-driven synthesis essay is a written discussion in which you draw on more than two sources to support a claim you make about a topic.

You have: read several articles, watched videos of interviews and a speech, and participated in a variety of class activities.

Now you will: organize some of the information around the prompt assigned by your instructor (discuss key characteristics of people who stand up and fight against injustice), make a Thesis Statement that gives your answer to the question, and then present information (quotes, paraphrases, examples) in a logical way to support your Thesis Statement.

 SOURCES: You MUST Use the following:

"Mahatma Gandhi"
“Greening the Ghetto,” by Elizabeth Kolbert.

You must also use at least ONE of the following sources:
1. “Arn Chorn Pond”
2. “Winona LaDuke”
3. “Ernest Villareal”
5. Video: “Greening the Gulf: Diane Wilson”

 A synthesis essay is NOT: a summary, or a simple comparison.

 A synthesis IS: an integration of what you have learned, and your ability to use this learning to develop and support an idea of your own.
The Importance of Your Own Thesis Statement

The purpose of this synthesis paper is for you to present your own point of view - supported, of course, by relevant facts, drawn from sources, and presented in a logical manner.

*Your thesis statement will determine how you relate your source materials to one another*, which sources you use, which parts of them you use, at which points in your essay you use them, and in what manner you relate them to one another.

*Your thesis statement will be your stance on the issue.* Your thesis statement will drive the discussion. It will determine the evidence you present to help support your claims. Support for your claims will come in the form of facts and expert opinion (from your articles) and your evaluation of the authors’ evidence and reasoning.

OK, so I need a Thesis Statement. What else?

The body of a synthesis essay: should be organized by your discussion of the characteristics, as you have listed them in your Thesis Statement.

*Be sure that each paragraph:*

1. Begins with a sentence or phrase that informs readers of the topic of the paragraph (your Statement);
2. Includes information from a source (Evidence);
3. Clearly indicates which material comes from which source using lead in phrases and in-text citations. [Beware of plagiarism: Accidental plagiarism most often occurs when students are synthesizing sources and do not indicate where the synthesis ends and their own comments begin or vice versa.]
4. Shows the similarities or differences between the different sources in ways that make the paper as informative as possible;
5. Represents the texts fairly—even if that seems to weaken the paper! Look upon yourself as a synthesizing machine; when paraphrasing, you are simply repeating what the source says in your own words.
STANDARDS FOR SYNTHESIS ESSAYS

1. Remember that you are using your sources to support your ideas and claims, not the other way around.

2. An A or B paper will create a "dialogue" between your ideas and sources, and also among the sources themselves.

3. Take special care to address your audience in an appropriate manner. Make sure you provide sufficient information to make your Thesis Statement convincing.

4. Organize your paper logically:
   A. State your thesis clearly and make sure that it reflects the focus of your essay.
   B. Make sure your main points are clearly stated (use topic sentences), and connect each point to your thesis as explicitly as possible.
   C. Divide paragraphs logically.
   D. Provide appropriate transitions both within and between paragraphs.

5. Develop each main idea thoroughly. Use specific examples and source materials appropriately as support. Be sure to integrate source materials smoothly into your own writing using lead-in phrases and transitions. Also be sure to avoid unnecessary repetition (repetition is often an organization problem).

6. Make sure sentences are clear and unambiguous. Avoid passive voice. Double-check to see that sentences don’t contain any dependent clauses or phrases masquerading as complete sentences. Also proofread carefully to correct any other sentence errors. Check capitalization, spelling, commas, etc.

7. Quadruple check your MLA documentation. Are your parenthetical citations correct? Is your Works Cited list correct according to MLA style, and does it include all sources cited in your essay? Use a citation website to help you do in-text and Works Cited citations correctly (MLA style).