

## Visualizing San Francisco: Exploring Signage & Public Spaces

### Writing a Thought Paper: The Ten-Step Process

*Originally written by John Grant, with additions and emendations by Robert Berkhofer.*  
[homepages.wmich.edu/~jgrant/Writing%20a%20Thought%20Paper.doc](http://homepages.wmich.edu/~jgrant/Writing%20a%20Thought%20Paper.doc)

There are many things that go into writing a good thought paper. One might compare it to building a house. Think about it: if you do not take the time to plan for construction, the house will fall. Writing a good thought paper is similar. Here is a ten-step process to help you write better thought paper. These guidelines will help you in writing any essay.

- 1) Before reading the documents, write down the assigned question that you are going to address in your paper. Read this question several times to yourself. The purpose of this exercise is to get you thinking about what your answer will be, before you begin reading. If you haven't been assigned a question, think about what you want to know from the sources before reading.
- 2) Read the documents. Meanwhile, jot down any evidence from the documents that you might want to use in the paper.
- 3) Write a thesis statement that answers the your question.
- 4) Write down several sub-themes that you would like to address in the paper. Initially, write as many as you think of. Then pick the two most interesting subthemes that you would like to discuss.
- 5) Write an outline, like one listed below. After completing this outline, you'll find that the paper is virtually written. All you have to do now is write the first draft.

### Suggested Thought Paper Format:

#### A. Introductory paragraph

1. Write a lead sentence that gains the reader's attention. Example: "When speaking of families, it is important to consider the issue of sexual behavior."
2. Introduce your thesis or most important argument. Example: "The American Revolutionary War was less of a social revolution than it was a fight for economic autonomy."
3. Introduce sub-arguments or sub-themes that you are going to use to support your thesis.

#### B. Body of the paper

1. Discuss the sub-themes that you identified in the introductory paragraph, in separate paragraphs.
2. Write down page numbers of the book (document reader) that you're going to use to support these sub-themes.

### C. Conclusion

1. Restate your thesis and sub-themes.

2. Write any closing comments or implications of your argument.

6) Write the first draft of the paper.

7) After you've completed writing the first draft, the unpleasant part begins. Yes, it's time to proofread.

8) When proofreading, you want to correct several things, which I've listed below:

spelling—Most word processors have a spell-checking feature, but do not rely heavily on them. Use a dictionary, to correct any words that you are not sure about.

usage—Be sure that you are using the word that you intend to use correctly.  
Examples: there/their/they're, no/know, it's/its, lead/led, or any other homonym

punctuation—Use periods, commas, semi-colons, colons, dashes (two hyphens), when necessary.

verb tense—to improve the flow of your writing, choose a tense (i.e., past, present, future) and stick with it. Most historical writing speaks of figures from the past in the past tense ("John Hancock said...").

paragraph construction—Think of each paragraph that you write as presenting a complete idea. Thus, you want to form a topic sentence that each subsequent sentence relates to. Then you want to make sure that the last sentence of each paragraph flows into the first sentence of the following paragraph.

words of hesitation—Try to eliminate words that connote a sense of hesitation (e.g., maybe, might, perhaps, possibly) unless you absolutely have to use them as qualifying language.

9) After proofreading for these things, go back, and read your paper aloud. This process will allow you to hear any inconsistency that you did not pick up earlier when reading silently. Meanwhile, ask yourself the following questions:

a. Do my thesis, sub-themes, and conclusion make sense?

b. Do I support all of the statements that I've made with evidence from the readings?

10) This last step is probably the most important. Have someone else read your paper. Often a fresh eye will catch things that you did not.

## Grading Criteria

Although grading is an imprecise art, it is possible to attain a considerable degree of consistency. In general, the key points are: Represent ideas fairly and accurately, raise critical questions and doubts, explore these questions and doubts to provide a sophisticated account of the ideas and issues under consideration, and write clearly. I look for the following when reading papers:

- a) Writing. If you write clearly and grammatically, you will think clearly and in an organized fashion. If you think clearly, this will be reflected in your writing.
  - b) Accuracy. Have you represented the relevant ideas fairly?
  - c) Focus and coverage—a balance of the two. On the one hand, have you covered the main ideas relevant to your topic? On the other, are you focused enough? A sense of the larger picture should be present, but pursuing too many themes or ideas results in confusion.
  - d) Sophistication and depth. Have you taken into account various facets of a problem or idea? You can be accurate at a general level (“The Buddha was a seeker of truth.”), or you can be accurate at a sophisticated level (“The Buddha was a seeker of truth who formulated his understanding in terms of the four noble truths.”). Have possible questions and objections been taken into account?
  - e) Creativity. Are you open to unexpected insights and a sense of adventure?
- Although there are no hard and fast rules, if you cover criteria a) through c), you should get a B. Provided you have gone that far, you can add further dimensions to your paper. If you have any questions about comments I have made on your paper or your grade, please come and see me. It is important for me to know of any doubts or problems.

## In Conclusion

By studying these guidelines, I hope that your learning experience will become more pleasurable and rewarding for both you and me. These guidelines are meant to help you polish a skill, academic writing, that you are developing as you progress. Don't get so hung up about them that you feel your creative processes hindered. If anything, they should provide just enough of a framework to express your analytical and creative skills. The accompanying essay emphasizes the creative aspect of paper writing.

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### **Areas of study for this course**

Journalism  
Communication Studies  
Urban Planning  
Graphic Design  
Sociology  
Psychology  
Semiotics / Communication Theory  
Architecture  
Marketing / Promotions  
Public Relations  
Anthropology  
Archeology  
Ethnography  
Visual Anthropology

### **Ethnography**

Ethnography (from Greek ethnos = folk/people and grapho = to write) is a qualitative method aimed to learn and understand cultural phenomena which reflect the knowledge and system of meanings guiding the life of a cultural group.[1][2] It was pioneered in the field of socio-cultural anthropology but has also become a popular method in various other fields of social sciences—particularly in sociology,[3] communication studies, history. —that studies people, ethnic groups and other ethnic formations, their ethnogenesis, composition, resettlement, social welfare characteristics, as well as their material and spiritual culture.[4] It is often employed for gathering empirical data on human societies and cultures. Data collection is often done through participant observation, interviews, questionnaires, etc. Ethnography aims to describe the nature of those who are studied (i.e. to describe a people, an ethnos) through writing.[5] In the biological sciences, this type of study might be called a “field study” or a “case report”, both of which are used as common synonyms for “ethnography”. [6]

### **Visual Anthropology**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visual\\_anthropology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visual_anthropology)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Visual anthropology is a subfield of cultural anthropology that is concerned, in part, with the study and production of ethnographic photography, film and, since the mid-1990s, new media. While the term is sometimes used interchangeably with ethnographic film, visual anthropology also encompasses the anthropological study of visual representation, including areas such as performance, museums, art, and the production and reception of mass media. Visual representations from all cultures, such as sandpaintings, tattoos, sculptures and reliefs, cave paintings, scrimshaw, jewelry, hieroglyphics, paintings and photographs are included in the focus of visual anthropology. Human vision, its physiology, the properties of various media, the relationship of form to function, the evolution of visual representations within a culture are all within the province of visual anthropology. Since anthropology is a holistic science, the ways in which visual representation are connected to the rest of culture and society are central topics.

**Thoughts to consider:**

What has happened at the site or location you are investigating?

What occurs there now?

Who is there now? Who has been there?

What kinds of signage are present?

How important is the signage to the identity of the site?

What kinds of visual clues do you find that tell you about the history of the site?

Are there any problems or conflicts visible at this site?

What will the site be like in 50 years? 100 years?

What will signage be like then?

What kinds of technologies will be present?

Describe the graphic designed elements of the signage systems.

What can you tell us about the graphics? Typography? History of the typography etc.

What is public at the site?

What is private at the site?

How does signage help people find their way?

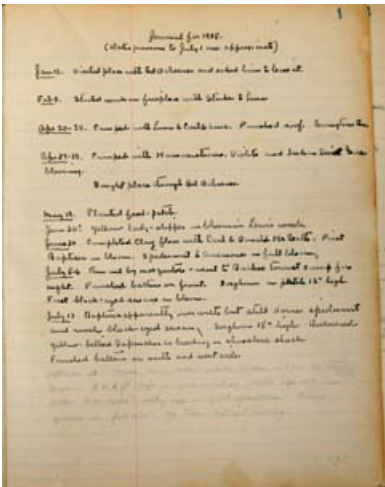
Is there any remarkable signage that you noticed?

What makes it remarkable?

Is there anything out of context that you noticed?

Can you observe people reading signage?

What was it like being a photographer at the site?



# Learning Historical Research

Translations use details when you tell

<http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/landscapes.htm>