

The Documented Critical Essay English IVP

Definition: The DCE process consists of reading works of different genres in order to more fully understand a topic. The student will read fiction, nonfiction, and biographical works and write analytical papers that will lead toward the compilation of a final major ESSAY. This essay, which incorporates an arguable thesis, CRITICALLY analyzes three works in one area of study. Outside research is incorporated into this final paper and is DOCUMENTED by citations and a works cited page.

Philosophy: The Las Virgenes Unified School District believes that the college bound student should possess, upon entry into a college/university, the writing, literary, thinking, research, and organizational skills that the DCE process teaches. Students who successfully complete the process consistently have an easier time with associated assignments in college (and generally do better as a result of their knowledge) than do their peers who have not constructed a DCE.

Objectives: During the DCE process, the student will:

1. learn a lot about one topic
2. develop additional and varied research skills
3. enhance analytical ability
4. further hone writing skills
5. exhibit the cumulative results of twelve years of LVUSD language skills instruction
6. improve academic confidence and resulting self esteem

Literary Materials: Depending upon the individual teacher direction, the student will choose an area of study and will read books in different genres about his or her topic. The teacher has the prerogative to limit and/or redirect literature choices if he/she foresees potential problems or deems certain works inappropriate. Core novels from middle or high school will not be allowed, whether the students has read them or not.

Time Frame: The DCE process spans most of the senior year. Process steps required by individual teachers may vary somewhat in content and/or timing, but generally begin in September with the final paper due late in the second semester. A list of specific assignments and deadlines will be provided. Other English-related content will be taught concurrently with the DCE.

Grade Value: Performance on the DCE will not, in itself, “make or break” a student’s overall semester grades. While the DCE process is important, its products will comprise no more than 30-40 per cent of the first semester’s final grade, and up to sixty percent of the second semester’s total. Teachers may grade the DCE process either by a points system or by letter-grade weights.

The Documented Critical Essay (DCE) is a multi-essay project that includes three analytic compositions that lead toward a final *synthesis* essay. A student must receive a passing grade on the DCE in order to pass their senior year English IV class. Furthermore, the DCE is a *progressive assignment*. The student must receive a minimum grade “C” on each of the essays before moving on to the next step/essay in the project. Essays that do not receive a minimum “C” grade will be returned to the student for the necessary re-writes and will be averaged not to exceed 70%. The English Department views the DCE as a senior capstone project and expects students to engage the assignment with commensurate effort and dedication.

Suggested Student Philosophy: Students who successfully complete the DCE process are usually left with a superb feeling of accomplishment. Many former students return to tell of the benefit the DCE experience has had in the improvement of their college performance. Those who are chronic procrastinators or who begin the process with “negative vibes” often create for themselves a difficult senior year. Too, those who succumb to “senioritis” and miss important classroom instruction also set themselves up for problems and frustration. Students who start with a positive attitude and “jump in with both feet” generally do well. Attitude is half the battle! Also, your teachers are on your side and are there to help you. If you experience problems, get help early. Remember, you get out of the DCE what you put into it! Hit the deck running and GOOD LUCK!