

AP Research Summer Assignment – 2026

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Welcome to AP Research:

Congratulations on pursuing the prestigious Capstone diploma. I am thrilled to teach the second year of the Capstone program, and I look forward to working with you as you complete your culminating research project.

What is AP Research?

In AP Capstone Seminar, you learned fundamental skills for engaging with academic research, synthesizing information from scholarly sources to explore an issue or support an argument. In AP Research, you will again explore an academic topic of your choosing; however, you will conduct your own research to generate new data that adds to the current body of knowledge. This investigation is part of a two-semester research project on **a topic of your choosing**. The sooner you identify your research question, the more time you will have to complete your culminating project.

Summer Assignment:

Part I: PREP Journal

This summer you will begin the Question & Explore phase of your research project that will culminate in a final paper and presentation at the end of the year. The Question & Explore phase requires you to read critically, pose questions, and identify topics you find compelling. During this phase, you should explore subjects that interest you and keep a journal of your reflections as you begin to answer the first important question: *What do I want to know, learn, or understand?*

You may use a variety of sources for your exploration including but not limited to podcasts, documentary films, newspaper and magazine articles, museum exhibits, historic sites, credible websites, state and national parks, concerts, plays, religious ceremonies, radio broadcasts, interviews with subject experts (i.e. a scientist or researcher, a historian, a public official, etc.), databases, archives, and books. You may also incorporate your exploration into any planned summer vacations by keeping a detailed account of what you learned and your reflections on the experience. For example, while visiting another city, you may choose to explore a museum or historic site and reflect on that visit in your journal. When you think about it, most experiences can be an opportunity to learn something new. If unable to travel, let the internet take you where you wish to go. (Many museums have broadened web access to their exhibits ever since the 2020 pandemic's impact on travel and tourism.)

The **first objective** of your summer assignment is to explore sources on **topics that genuinely interest you**. Your AP Research performance task will require a commitment to one research question that spans both semesters; you want to be sure you can choose something that will hold your interest all year, so this summer exploration is important work. Do not feel like your research topic needs to be so “serious” or “important.” As you will learn in this course, anything can become a research topic. However, do please choose something school appropriate. Reach out if you are unsure.

Your reflections should be recorded in an online document (saved in Google Docs or Office 365). This first section of your PREP journal should document which sources you found, your reflections, and potential research questions that arose.

Please note: The goal of this assignment is for you to identify potential topics and approach sources as a researcher. You will be expected to select your research topic by September, so this head start is key!

CRITERIA

You must have at least **THREE** sources. Any combination of sources is acceptable; your curiosity should be your guide!

Your summer assignment should be typed and will be the first entry in your PREP (Process & Reflection Portfolio) which is a research journal you will maintain all school year. Your summer assignment should include these basic elements **for each source**:

- **Title AND type of source** (newspaper/magazine article, podcast, museum, park, book, interview, documentary)
- **Title or name of article, book, film, site, exhibit, individual, etc.**
- **URL (if applicable)**
- **Creator, author, producer, director, (if applicable)**
- **Location (if it is a place you visited)**
- **Date of creation or publication (if applicable).**
- **Description and keywords:**
 - What topics or issues were explored in the source?
 - What is the context of this source?
 - What are some keywords you could use to find additional information on this topic?
 - You may also include other modes of documentation such as photography, video, and audio recording as long as YOU produce the documentation. For example, you may choose to record an interview or photograph a historic site but DO NOT download images or video from the web.
- **Your reflections:**
 - What interested you about this source?
 - What did you learn?
 - What questions do you have?
 - How is this source connected to a personal area of interest or inquiry?
 - Could this source lead to a possible mentoring opportunity?
 - **What are possible research questions related to this source?**

The expectation is **not** a cohesive essay but rather **journal entries** showing your reactions to new information and the ideas/connections you have. I recommend you take a device or notebook to jot down your ideas as you experience the source and then type them **very similarly** to your first thoughts, editing your notes only for grammar/mechanics as you type.

Additional Sources (optional, thinking ahead): What are some additional sources you could use to continue your research? For each additional source, provide the title, URL (if it is a website) and any other information necessary to secure this as a potential source in the future.

Part II: Analyze an Exemplar Research Study

What do you consider a significant research contribution of the 21st century?

For this task, begin by thinking of an academic discipline that interests you. From any field of science or math to the diverse arts and humanities or the various social sciences, select a discipline of study and do some digging. What important findings were determined in this field through research conducted some time in the last 25 years? **Find a scholarly study in which the researcher(s) generated new data to arrive at a conclusion/new understanding. Read the study and answer the following questions, also in your PREP (file saved to Google docs or Office 365):**

1. Who were the researchers involved in this study? What makes them credible?
2. What prompted this study? In other words, what was the original question or problem the researchers set out to address?
3. What were the assumptions and/or hypotheses the research would test?
4. What was the specific method? (In other words, summarize in detail how this research was conducted, in your own words as you understand it.)
5. What conclusion/new understanding was reached?
6. Why was it significant?
7. From the initial search to the study itself, cite all the sources you used to find and understand this research study.

Both portions of this assignment will be due on the fifth day of class. Details on how to submit your work will be explained on the first day of school.