The Assignment In the essay, “Hidden Intellectualism,” Gerald Graff writes, “Real intellectuals turn any subject, however light-weight it may seem, into grist for their mill through the thoughtful questions they bring to it…” (249). He uses sports as an example of how something that is not necessarily seen as academic, is in fact, very academic: “Sports after all was full of challenging arguments, debates, problems for analysis, and intricate statistics…”(252). Graff realizes that as a teen, he and his friends had vigorous debates about sports: they analyzed facts, interpreted information in order to have informed opinions, and then stated their opinions in a credible way so as to get others to understand the message they wished to convey. Therefore, for this writing project, you will have to research and write about something that interests you. You get to pick the topic. You must be a “real intellectual” as Graff says and look at your topic through “academic eyes.” For instance, you can write about anything from fashion to fishing. But remember, it must be academic. This means that you must begin your research where all research begins: with inquiry. What are the most important issues surrounding your topic? What is the conversation? Who is having the conversation, and why is it important? And finally, what will you add to the conversation? You have to decide what your topic will be, and you have to decide what you feel is important to write about. This also means that you must know what it is “they say” before you can have an “I say.” You will need to use the strategies we have learned for reading with a purpose in order to evaluate and use sources purposefully. You will need to use the strategies we have learned in order to write for an audience, keeping in mind that your audience needs things from you, and knowing that your audience does not know what you know. This project is about learning how to see any topic through “academic eyes,” and how cohesively and purposefully you can synthesize different texts to do more than support your claims but to also provide context in a credible and clear way for an audience. Banned Topics ● Gay Marriage ● Abortion ● Gun Control ● Stem Cell Research ● Illegal Immigration ● Capital Punishment ● The American Dream ● Music in schools ● Anything that has anything to do with 9/11 ● Steroid use in sports ● Global Warming/Climate Change ● Legalization of Marijuana ● Pros/Cons of Video Games ● Music as therapy ● Anything else I think of I am not banning these topics to censor you in any way. I have seen students write on these topics and, without fail, they write stale, black and white arguments that lack the complexity required to complete the assignment. If you feel strongly about one of these topics, and you feel you can approach one of them at a new angle, feel free to talk to me about it. Criteria In addition to the learning objectives above, when your classmates and I read your paper, we will be looking for the following: ● If your paper shows the complexity of an issue, topic, and or conversation ● If you go beyond mere summary and regurgitation of someone else’s argument and add to the conversation ● If your summaries and quotes are purposeful, introduced and explained ● If your voice is distinct: is it clear what is your “I Say” and what is the “They Say” ● How you establish ethos ● How well you analyze information in order to add to the conversation and make your claims ● If you have a naysayer, how well is it introduced and how you address their objections to what you say Technical Requirements ● 7-8 full pages of writing (2100-2400 words) in TNR 12 pt font, double spaced, and in MLA format ● Works cited in MLA format with 4-5 sources from credible sources (academic journals, trade journals, books, literary magazines are okay. Some popular culture sources may be okay, depending on the situation and the source. ● MLA-formatted internal citations