Writing an effective sales letter. REQUIREMENTS: • 4-5 pp. single (1.0)-spaced pages, making sure you’ve hit the “remove space after paragraph” option – a minimum of 1600 words, NOT counting the bibliography; • in Times New Roman font (!!), size 12 pt (!!!); • minimum of 8 sources, the majority scholarly (peer-reviewed) or “gray” (hard statistical data from .gov [and suchlike] sources); • at least two paradigms; • written in straightforward, clear English. The midterm is a sales, or “pitch,” letter. Let’s focus on each of those words, the second first. It’s a letter, not a memo. A memorandum is, usually, a communiqué between persons already acquainted and in some manner of official cahoots with one another. The Latin word “memorandum” is, in fact, a passive periphrastic meaning “a thing to be remembered.” A firsttime sales pitch is not asking anyone to remember anything. It’s broaching a topic for the first time. Therefore, make the document a letter, the format in which an outsider would more typically introduce himself or herself. And the letter is a sales pitch: you’re trying to persuade your patron—by now an individual person with an individual title at a specific institution, within whose purview it lies to fund or ignore your project—to attend an oral presentation at which you will set forth, in greatly expanded form, the material you cover in the midterm. The aim of the midterm is to persuade through a bravura display of writing, research, and organization. In it, you are the boss. Say “I”; say “my plan calls for X”; offer no options (“we could build a boat, we could make a hat, we could” &c.), but simply and forcefully articulate precisely what it is you propose, and why—on the basis of what clear, distinct ideas dictated and validated by research—you are proposing precisely that, not something else. This is what the book’s formulation about the document being a leadership statement that puts information into action by providing a research-justified solution to a well-defined problem means. The book defines the six P’s quite well. I want to add only a couple of preliminary remarks about them here. 1. Your midterm letter should contain all six P’s, though its Price section will be brief and does not require any fulsome development here. (Basically, you need to know if your project is commensurate with your patron’s resources and budget. You need to make sure your proposal isn’t totally infeasible.) 2. The term “problem” should be construed in a broad, businesslike sense: it refers not, or not only, to some form of suffering or injustice—your project need not have any grand sociopolitical ramifications—but to a deficiency or inefficiency of some kind that is in some way impeding the better flourishing of a population (which may even include the patron, if your project is about how a patron is, e.g., losing money or failing to serve an available market niche). It is crucial to remember that the flourishing of that population must be something your patron, for- or non-profit, has some definable incentive to care about. Your reasons for proposing a plan must be predicated on practical enticements for the patron, not on ethical positions. This is true even when the ethical concerns are of the most pressing sort. A for-profit institution will help a population if and only if there’s some kind of profit to be made in doing so. Nonprofits have mission statements and agendas; it is important to match the problem to the organization. 3. Paradigms are model approaches to your problem or to others with structural similarities—approaches (potentially) applicable, in one way or another, to your project. They supply you with the concrete and specific steps that make up your plan and establish the likelihood that your plan will succeed. In short, paradigms (in the midterm, you must have a minimum of two [2]) must provide you and your reader with information about methodology (what precise steps are to be taken?) and efficacy (how much quantifiable success did those steps have when applied in the paradigm case?). To put this as simply as possible: paradigms show the patron HOW something was done and HOW WELL that specific something worked. You will derive both the specific steps of, and the proof of concept for your plan from your paradigms. 4. Note, however, that you can also have what I call “negative” paradigms. What I mean is this. Let’s say your project deals with a disturbing increase in the number of on-land shark attacks in Buttzville, NJ. And let’s say that sharks (and/or other predatory waterdwellers) have come ashore in other places at other times to attack humans. Finally, let’s say that different circumstances and different response efforts chose different methodologies: Browntown, NJ (it’s a real place!) solved its problem with on-land barracuda attacks by arming residents with cudgels; Los Angeles solved its problem with pacu fish by issuing all male citizens titanium cups and chain-mail jockstraps (look up pacu and you’ll see why), and in the meantime called in the National Guard, who strafed the roving fish with machine-gun fire. But you reject both of these options: the pacushooters also cut down innocent civilians, and we don’t want collateral damage in Buttzville; and the sharks’ thicker hides and trickier defensive style makes cudgeling ineffective (it’s been tried and proven ineffective). Some discussion of these paradigms is worthwhile because it shows the patron that you are aware that several potential methodologies exist, but also that those methodologies will be inefficacious in dealing with the problems specific to the marine assailants haunting the streets of Buttzville. This sets up the paradigm you single out as a methodological model: the one in which Maine residents learned that sharks will desist from attacking if would-be victims break into showtunes at the onset of attack. 5. A sort of corollary to (4): it may be that you reject paradigms individually because each is flawed when applied in isolation from some other(s), but that instead of throwing these paradigms away, you find a successful approach by intermixing them. There may be some indication that while mako sharks will not stop attacking just because you break into “Stardust” or “Baby, It’s Cold Outside” (they’re tone deaf, see) NOR just because you cudgel them (thick hide and whatnot), there exists some scholarly data that strongly suggests that mako sharks WILL stop attacking and burst into tears if sung to, cudgeled, AND given beer, all at the same time. In such cases, you combine paradigms that don’t work by themselves, but do work in combination. 6. The plan is the heart of your project; if it isn’t robust, what you’ve written is a book report or a trailblazer or some other clown-shoes excrescence of high school education. In a 4-5-page single-spaced paper, it should occupy a solid page. And a few more prefatory remarks, this time on research and citations: 7. Every truth claim you make about anything that is not absolutely common knowledge needs to be supported with evidence. 8. I will be suspicious if each of your sections uses only one or two sources over and over. That will suggest that your research is not very deep or comprehensive and make me wonder what you’ve missed in your effort to cut corners. If you get the ugly feeling in the pit of your stomach that eight sources, the official minimum, probably aren’t enough to win you a good grade, you have a wise stomach. 9. If you have a scholarly article you’re using, and it’s printed on pp. 600-666 of some issue of some journal, and all your citations are from p. 600, I’m going to get the distinct feeling you’ve read only the first page, or only the abstract. My suspicions will probably be confirmed by the shallow, non-specialist, non-specific tone of the discourse you derive from this scholarly source: scholarly articles deal in complexities, not in pat generalizations. So should you; this is a scholarly project. 10. In bold, because it’s that important: what I am looking for is density of citation. You can’t fake this by padding. You want to create the overwhelming impression that you are ironclad in the authority serious research bestows upon the diligent researcher. If citations—of multiple high-quality sources—are visible all over the place the moment I look at your pages, I will be happy. If they are not, I will complain in the margins about the scarcity of research. I will also have the unfortunate (for you) impression that you are offering me opinion rather than established fact. You don’t want that! 11. Attached to your letter, on its own separate page(s), must be a Works Cited page. This page does not count toward the 4-5-page minimum. 12. Works Cited must, in fact, be works you’ve cited in the paper. You can list 15,000 sources; if you only cite two in the paper, you still fail. 13. The Works Cited page must be alphabetized. 14. All entries on the Works Cited page must be presented in APA format