

City University of New York (CUNY)

## CUNY Academic Works

---

Open Educational Resources

LaGuardia Community College

---

2018

### Write a Manifesto [Composition]

Caron Knauer

*CUNY La Guardia Community College*

[How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!](#)

More information about this work at: [https://academicworks.cuny.edu/lg\\_oers/38](https://academicworks.cuny.edu/lg_oers/38)

Discover additional works at: <https://academicworks.cuny.edu>

---

This work is made publicly available by the City University of New York (CUNY).

Contact: [AcademicWorks@cuny.edu](mailto:AcademicWorks@cuny.edu)

## **Write a Manifesto / Project Based Learning**

Please read the Youth Climate Manifesto and “think about what it means to you and our world”. Get into groups of four or five to discuss and come together as a class to discuss. Each group should come up with an issue devoted to creating social change and policy and/or a community project for a safer and more just, fair, equal, peaceful, and beautiful world. Each group will plan, research, create and write a manifesto which will incorporate a specific plan of implementation for activism that promotes civic engagement. And then groups will be paired to give each other feedback before final revisions are presented to the class. The group will receive a grade for collaboration, content, presentation, and students will receive an individual grade for the reflection.

### **How to write a manifesto that incorporates a vision social activism:**

A manifesto is a declaration in writing in which a person, group, government, or organization conveys their intentions, motivations, and/or opinions. It endeavors to answer the question: What are my/our beliefs? What kind of activism can help create politics and places that engender a better world for everyone? The Declaration of Independence is a form of manifesto as is Henry David Thoreau’s “Civil Disobedience”. Artists have written manifestos, as have philosophers and politicians. Corporate manifestos are written by businesses and organizations, and individuals write personal manifestos. There’s “sacred activism” as coined by Andrew Harvey in his book *The Hope* and defined as “a transforming force of compassion-in-action that is born of a fusion of deep spiritual knowledge, courage, love, and passion, with wise radical action in the world.” The word manifesto is derived from the Italian word *manifesto*, itself derived from the *Latin* *manifestum*, meaning clear or conspicuous. While the length and content of a manifesto varies, a well-written and organized manifesto will not only present a clear and new worldview that not only deviates from the status quo, but one that also offers a practical and methodical plan to achieve and implement action and change. When developing and writing a manifesto, you should keep all this in mind.

**Week 1: Start with an issue about which you have suggestions for change and/or new development, and then ask questions.** This is a way to help you form inspiring and concrete ideas. These questions can give you focus. You may wish to ask more than one, or to focus on topics surrounding a particular question. Some examples of meaningful questions include:

- What are the purpose, meaning, and values of your manifesto?
- What types of actions are aligned with your values? Describe two in detail.
- How will you present your ideas to the world?
- What do you want your group to accomplish?

- What are you willing as a group and individually to do to achieve those accomplishments?
- What do you want your manifesto's legacy to be?

**Think about your audience.** To whom are you writing the manifesto? Will your work be read by your peers, the general public, your local city council, borough president, mayor, college president, and/or potential funders? How can you best anticipate people who disagree with you on the issue? How will you present the counterargument? How will you address groups that are already working on this issue-- what will your group do that other groups aren't doing?

**Week 2: Research:** At least three secondary sources should be incorporated, summarized, cited, quoted and paraphrased. Please also include one primary source, which could be an interview and/or field research. A climate change manifesto should show climate science research. If you're advocating free community colleges, you'll need to research the cost of college as well as the plans of politicians who support this idea. If you're tackling gun laws, you'll need to research your state's policies. If you're advocating the government provide more funds for outside and/or environmental art, i.e. sculpture gardens, research a neighborhood one like Socrates Sculpture Park. You can also read Laura Zabel's *Guernica* (December 14, 2015) piece "Art as Activism". Community issues could incorporate an interview with a local politician, and art activism could include an interview with an artist. Research can also include your own personal experiences.

**Brainstorm your ideas:** When you're first starting out, don't feel like you have to know exactly what you're going to say. Just write down your ideas in brainstorming sessions. There are lots of ways to go about brainstorming. Choose one which suits your group best, and which enables you to most freely jot down your ideas. You might want to create a Google document. The key is not to criticize, but to open yourself up to new and fresh ideas.

- Thought webs can help you to connect many different ideas. Make sure you are adding as many connected details as you can. This will also help you to build an outline.
- Stream of consciousness writing can help you to get your brain working on the topic. By writing whatever comes to mind, and not worrying about the punctuation and grammar conventions, you can feel free to express important concepts. Give yourself a time limit, and see how much you can jot down in that time.

**Working together as a group** Work collaboratively as a team by dividing up topics that need to be researched and assigning one particular aspect to each member. Once your outline is written and it's time to work on writing your manifesto, you can also assign particular sections.

**Week 3: Your claim/thesis/mission statement:** Your claim, thesis, or mission statement should state why the social change you're advocating for is essential, necessary, and/or urgent, and how it will benefit people and which people, in particular. In your manifesto, you will support this claim with relevant and reliable evidence.

**Write an outline:** Once you have enough ideas that you see a unifying point or mission statement, make an outline. This will help you to arrange your ideas once you write. Put ideas into a logical order. Make sure to include an introduction and a conclusion in your outline. Your conclusion should include your call to action and concrete ideas for implementation. You don't need to write full sentences here. This is the part of the process where you're just trying to figure out the flow of your manifesto.

**Project requirements:** Your manifesto will have a title. It will be 3-4 pages long and include quotes, paraphrases and a works cited done in MLA format. It should include at least one primary source, which could be an interview with someone working in the field, or a related one, about which you're writing, and a minimum of three secondary sources.

**Week 4: Compare/Contrast and editing and proofreading:** Read another group's manifesto and discuss it as a group. Make a list of suggestions that will make it stronger in terms of its content as well as the writing of it. You will give this list to the group. Write individual reflections detailing how this manifesto compares and contrasts with your group's. What did you find most compelling about this manifesto? What particular areas need strengthening, clarifying, more evidence, supporting details, anecdotes, etc.? Discuss incorporating the suggested changes in your manifesto.

**Week 5: Fifteen minute in-class presentations:** Each group will present its manifesto in class. You can decide as a group if you want to do a multi-media and/or multimodal presentation. Students will write their observations and reactions to other presentations and share with the class.

**Week 6: Reflection:** Please assess individually and write a 2-page reflection about how your group worked together. Some aspects of the process and your experience of it you can contemplate are: How did you research and collect content? How did you collaborate on critical thinking, problem solving, and group deadlines? How effective was your self-management? Was the work shared, or did one person contribute more? Was there a weak link? What are the pros and cons of working together as a group? Would you have preferred working alone on this project? Why or why not?

**Due dates:** Due dates for all of the above assignments will be provided in class.