Hi. I’m Sid Dobrin. This video is about the Research Project that asks students to narrate an event from multiple perspectives.

This assignment is designed to help students think specifically about the role of point of view in narratives. It is also designed to encourage students to think about how narratives are used to convey information about situations and events and how those narratives influence what we end up knowing of an event. To ensure that students benefit from this objective, I try to spend time with my students helping them think about the events they select. I ask students to think specifically about situations that might involve some degree of conflict and how the opposing sides in the conflict might represent two different narrative points of view. But, I also try to encourage them to dig a bit deeper beyond the evident narratives between the parties in conflict and consider how other narratives might affect how we come to know the event. For example, I ask students to think specifically about the narratives different players or stakeholders might convey in the situation, particularly those narratives that might not be considered primary to the situation, like the often marginalized voices of peoples of color or women. To emphasize this part of the project, in class I’ll ask students to think about the narrative the Aztecs might have written about Hernán Cortés’ landing in Mexico.

The research component of this assignment is important, too. The assignment does not ask students to fabricate narratives, but to conduct research to identify what narratives were influential in the actual event. For this reason, too, I’m fairly explicit about what constitutes an event for the assignment. While a student might consider a fight between roommates a particularly important or traumatic event, for this assignment I make sure that my students understand that I mean an event that has been significantly written about, and about which they will be able to locate first-hand, experiential narratives about the event. In this way, too, the assignment asks students to engage in some critical thinking about and analysis of the situation.

From this perspective, then, I find it important to talk with students about the assessment rubric. In particular, I want students to think about how their synthetic narratives will convey a strong sense of situational understanding, but I also try to focus specifically on the critical thinking, reading, and writing criteria within the rubric. Along with emphasizing the process portion of the rubric, I find that the critical thinking portion helps me stress the importance not just of “looking stuff up” but of critically and rigorously thinking through their research and the role of narratives in what they discover in the research.
That's just a little bit to help you think about your approaches to this research assignment. Thanks for using *Writing Situations* and thanks for watching.