



**EL MOLINO HIGH SCHOOL  
SENIOR PROJECT PACKET  
Class of 2021**

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, the fieldwork portion of the senior project has been suspended. We cannot, in good conscience, send students out in to the field to volunteer or to job shadow in such uncertain times and potentially unsafe conditions. The focus of the project will shift to it's remaining major components—a research paper on a controversial topic and presentation at the end of the year.

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The El Molino Senior Project provides every student with the opportunity to pursue an issue or topic that is of personal interest to him or her. Every senior will demonstrate the acquisition of new knowledge, experience and skill by writing a research paper, compiling a professional-level portfolio, and delivering a presentation before a community panel. Students are expected to take appropriate risks and stretch their learning so as to grow both intellectually and emotionally. Students are encouraged to take on a project that will benefit themselves and the community they are about to enter.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** All projects must be “approved” by the Senior English teachers. Projects may be denied approval if they do not fulfill the requirements or if projects are deemed inappropriate or dangerous.

**A quality project will:**

- Be a **learning stretch**
- Include a **research paper** about a **debatable issue** that can be researched using credible sources
- Include an **interview** with an expert (a professional who can provide insight about the student’s research)
- Include a **professional portfolio** providing extensive evidence of work completed, including interview write-up, drafts and journals.
- Include a **presentation** of their work to a panel

## Timeline - Class of 2021

While all senior English classes will address important due dates and provide some in-class time for research and development of the Senior Project, **it is the student's individual responsibility to complete specific sections of the project and research according to the timeline.** All assignments must be submitted as specified in assignment directions for full credit. For example, if you submit something via email when the assignment specifies submission to Google Classroom, your assignment will be considered late and you will not receive credit.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Work Due</b>
<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	Parent Letter signed by parent or guardian
<b>WEDNESDAY 9/16</b>	Submit Letter of Intent for feedback and signatures
<b>WEDNESDAY 10/14</b>	Letter of Intent with all signatures
<b>TUESDAY 11/10</b>	Journal Entry 1
<b>Thanksgiving Break - 11/23--11/27</b>	
<b>WEDNESDAY 12/2</b>	Expert Interview Write-Up
<b>WEDNESDAY 12/9</b>	Research Outline Project Update Reflective Essay
<b>Winter Break - 12/18--1/4</b>	
<b>WEDNESDAY 1/13</b>	Essay Outline
<b>WEDNESDAY 3/10</b>	Journal Entry 2
<b>WEDNESDAY 2/3</b>	First Draft of Research Paper
<b>TUES. 2/16-- FRI. 2/26</b>	Editing Appointments
<b>MONDAY 3/15</b>	Research Paper Final Draft <b>due to turnitin.com</b>
<b>Spring Break - 3/22--3/26</b>	
<b>FRIDAY 4/9</b>	Professional Portfolio
<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	Practice Presentations
<b>FRIDAY 5/14</b>	Panel Presentations Due

TO: The Senior Class of 2021

FROM: Paige Greco, Lana McNamara, Steve Sumner, English Teachers;  
Matt Dunkle, Principal; Dani Barese, Vice-Principal

RE: The Senior Project and Letter of Intent Criteria

Dear Students:

This year will mark some of the most meaningful work you will produce in all your high school years: the Senior Project. The project is a requirement for graduation at El Molino High School. Done well, the Senior Project is an opportunity for you to learn more about yourself and your world.

You will spend a lot of time on this project. Therefore, choose something that is a good match for you, something you want to learn more about, as well as something that is unique and challenging for you. As a first step, you will submit a Letter of Intent to your English teacher. Letters must conform to the highest standards of excellence in form, mechanics and clarity of content before they will be considered for acceptance by the advisory board. The Letter of Intent format template is provided on page 4.

The purpose of your letter is to share the controversial issue you intend to research. The Letter of Intent content should include the following:

**Paragraph 1: Relevance and Urgency**

Identify your project and give a general overview of what you expect to accomplish.

- Explain why you chose this as your focus for your Senior Project. Why are you interested in this topic? How is it relevant in your life currently or in the future?
- Explain how this topic is urgent and controversial. Why should someone care about this issue? Why is it an important question to research and answer? For you? For the reader?

**Paragraph 2: Your Research Question**

Identify the debatable question you will answer in your research paper

- Phrase your research question as a “should question” (e.g. Should the federal government ban GMOs?).
- In brief, what are the differing perspectives on the issue?

**Paragraph 3: Plagiarism**

Copy the anti-plagiarism commitment found on page 4.

Your letter will be signed by yourself, your parent/guardian, and members of the advisory board.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Paige Greco

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lana McNamara

\_\_\_\_\_  
Steve Sumner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Matt Dunkle

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dani Barese

## **Letter Of Intent – Business Memo Format Template**

Please recreate the Business Memo Format that follows EXACTLY:

- Times or Times New Roman 12 point Font
- Block paragraphs (no indentation of paragraphs)
- Single spacing within paragraphs
- Double spacing between paragraphs
- Lines and Titles for 5 signatures as shown below.

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TO: English Teacher’s Name – correctly spelled

FROM: Student’s Name

RE: Letter of Intent - Senior Project

DATE: Submission date - **Deadline is:**

Dear English teacher’s name:

1<sup>st</sup> Paragraph (on the relevance and urgency of your topic) - See Page 3 for detailed content. [Paragraphs are single spaced, no indent, double space between each paragraph.]

2<sup>nd</sup> Paragraph (on your Research Question) - See Page 3 for detailed content. [Paragraphs are single spaced, no indent, double space between each paragraph.]

3<sup>rd</sup> Paragraph- (on avoiding Plagiarism) - Please copy the following paragraph exactly as written: Plagiarism is a serious offense. If I take information that other people have written or expressed without giving them credit, I am stealing their work. Plagiarism, as well as academic dishonesty or cheating, will jeopardize my grade and my graduation. I will not place my graduation or my personal honor in jeopardy.

Sincerely,

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Student Signature

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English Teacher Signature

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Parent Signature

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English Teacher Signature

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English Teacher Signature

**Phase I: RESEARCH that focuses on a controversial or debatable issue related to student interest.**

**Research:**

Once their research question has been approved, students will begin to accumulate research materials relevant to their controversial topic. Their sources will be gathered and presented in a research outline due at the end of the semester.

Research outline must include a minimum of eight scholarly sources including

- One book
- The expert interview

Students must use credible, scholarly sources

- Focus should be on primary and secondary sources
- Proquest provides many good “hard” sources
- .gov, .net, .edu, or .org are generally credible sources but .com must be verified by teacher.
- NOTE: “Wikipedia” and other wiki sources are not acceptable. Nor are personal blogs or listicles.

Students should endeavor to have research that is balanced and complete.

**Interview:**

Interview subject should be professional and expert in their field. When choosing someone to interview, consider what holes and gaps remain in the research you have done so far. What do you still need to know and who can tell you about it?

- Contact your interviewee well in advance of the deadline to set up your appointment.
- Make an appointment for a specific amount of time on a specific day.
- Don’t get too personal, e.g. “Do you like your boss?” “How much money do you make?”
- You must ask at least ten substantive questions (not including follow up questions or asking the interviewee to identify or describe themselves) that move your research forward.

## **Phase II: WRITE RESEARCH PAPER**

The purpose of the paper is to demonstrate that seniors can engage in focused research and can produce a sophisticated, persuasive paper which meets the California Common Core Standards preparing students for necessary career and/or college skills. Through completing the paper, students will learn the various rules of written etiquette, including proper formatting, citing of sources, organization, etc.

• **CONTENT REQUIREMENTS:** While each individual Senior English Teacher will provide specific guidelines and requirements for each class, the following are general requirements for a properly written and formatted Research Paper.

- Introduction “hooks” readers; includes a clear definition of topic and debatable issue
- Clear, issue-based thesis idea or focus of the investigation and research
- Well-developed body paragraphs with topic sentences
- Written in the third person and does not use personal pronouns to address the reader
- Incorporates and cites evidence from various sources, including an Expert Interview
- Provides ample commentary that explains, analyzes and evaluates the evidence
- Transitions smoothly; Includes appropriate diction and varied syntax
- Conclusion reflects on and synthesizes all evidence and ideas; asserts emphatic closing tone
- List of Works Cited attached
- All drafts and revisions as well as peer responses attached

• **MLA FORMAT, DOCUMENTATION and MECHANICS REQUIREMENTS:**

- 12 pt. font; Times or Times New Roman; one (1) inch margins on all sides
- All lines double-spaced (no single or double-double spaced lines)
- Heading with student’s name, teacher’s name, course title & period, date submitted
- Header 1/2 inch from top right corner with student’s last name and page number
- Title centered with important words capitalized (Do not underline, italicize or change font size)
- Parenthetical citations of texts, paraphrases, interviews and other people’s ideas
- List of Works Cited properly formatted
- Uses information from interview with at least one expert or authority

### **Phase III: PORTFOLIO with all drafts and support materials**

The student must compile and organize the following items in a digital portfolio. The Portfolio must be arranged in the following order and should be neatly organized and displayed:

#### **PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENTS**

- Cover Page (on front of binder - with your Project title and complete MLA Heading)
- Title Page (inside binder - 1<sup>st</sup> page - with your Project title and complete MLA Heading)
- Preface introducing readers to process and the finished “product”
- Table of Contents with page numbers
- Signed Proposal
- 3 Journal Entries
- Expert Interview
- Project Update Reflective Essay - originals graded (and revised, if necessary)
- Research Paper including graded original final draft with list of works cited and outline
- Self-Evaluation – Please complete the form your teacher will give you.

## **Phase IV: Project Presentation and Demonstration**

On Friday, May 15th 2021, students will present all of what they have done and learned during the Senior Project Presentation. Each student will submit a video presentation of 5-7 minutes to present to a panel composed of members of the school community.

- **Oral presentations must be 5-7 minutes.** No student will be allowed to exceed 10 minutes. A slideshow of at least 7 slides will be presented with the oral presentation.
- **Every student must first deliver the presentation to her/his/their English class.** Students will post a practice video for their classmates to view so that each student has the opportunity to receive coaching/feedback from peers and teachers.

### **GUIDING OUTLINE FOR PRESENTATION**

- I. **Introduction.** Begin with a story, anecdote, personal history that leads to telling what you did for your 30 hours and your research thesis. (1 – 1 ½ minutes)
- II. **Research.** Tell about your research. Why is this a controversial issue? Why should people care about it? Why did you choose this issue? What did you learn? What did you conclude? Include any particularly interesting facts you discovered. (2 – 3 minutes)
- III. **Interview.** Who did you interview? What did you find out from your expert interview? What did you learn from the process? How did your interview contribute to your understanding of your topic? (1--2 minutes)
- IV. **Conclusion.** Tell about your feelings for your entire project (work and research). Were you changed by this project in any way? What was the most challenging, rewarding, exciting, and/or interesting part and why? You absolutely may not end with “That’s it” or anything remotely like it. (1 – 2 minutes)

### **SLIDE SHOW**

Your slideshow of 7 - 10 slides should cover each of the main sections of your speech. You will likely have more than one slide for some sections. Start with a title slide that includes a picture, an MLA heading and, of course, a title. The font, background, and images should be easy for audiences to read and see, so consider your color combinations and font size carefully. Generally, each slide should have a title or label, text of 10 words or less, and a photo or photos of the student engaged in the project. If you have a video you feel would be useful, you may include no more than one minute of video total in your presentation.

## **The 2 Journal Entries**

In your Google Doc Journal Entries, you will be expected to describe the steps that you've taken in order to complete your project; you should also include your thoughts and reflections on how your project is progressing.

Both journal entries should word processed on Google Docs, MLA format, with title (e.g. Journal #1). All entries must reflect quality in content and mechanics. Entries must be thorough, thoughtful, and detailed. All entries must be submitted on time. A minimum of two (2) one page entries must be completed by the time you complete your Senior Project.

**JOURNAL ENTRY Guiding Questions:** These questions are to give you some ideas as to what you may write in a journal. You may not answer every question in every Journal. However, using these questions as a guide will help you to be thorough in your writing. **IMPORTANT!** If you have finished your hours, you must still address these questions, and find a way to reflect on your experience.

- **What have you accomplished?**
- **What skills have you employed?**
- **How is your writing going?**
- **Are you finding all the sources you need?**
- **What are your next steps?**
- **What have others said about your project?**
- **What have you learned about yourself?**
- **What have you learned (knowledge of topic/self)?**
- **Do you have any new ideas?**
- **Is there anything you are concerned about?**
- **How do you FEEL about your work so far?**
- **Has your experience enabled you to help others?**

**Students should note the intellectual and emotional challenges and successes they encounter during the course of their efforts.** The portfolio will include at least 3 pages of original journals written in real time, as the events occur throughout the year. **IMPORTANT!** Don't lose any Journals. Organize your Google Docs so you can find them easily. They are needed to earn full credit in the Portfolio.

## **The Project Update Reflective Essay - First Semester Final**

The project update reflective essay is intended to fully inform each student's English teacher on the student's progress. The essay serves as another opportunity for students to reflect on their achievements, challenges, and learning while completing the project. The essay should be a 1 - 2 page Google Document, MLA format (**single-spaced** this time), and it must cover the following areas:

- actual work completed (include specific details)
- skills employed and/or learned
- reflection on how you feel the project is progressing - rewards, obstacles, problems? Explain.
- work yet to be completed (include specific details)
- future steps - What questions do you still have about your topic? Are your expectations met or surpassed?
- contacts made with interviewee/community members
- learning stretch reflections - personal and intellectual growth

The Project Update will be included in your portfolio; each student must be sure to submit it to his/her teacher, and earn comments and a grade. **Do not lose this document.** It is needed to earn full credit in the portfolio.

TO: Parents of Seniors

FROM: Paige Greco, Steve Sumner, and Lana McNamara, English Teachers  
Matt Dunkle, Principal; Dani Barese, Vice-Principal

RE: The Senior Project

Dear Parents/Guardians of Seniors:

Senior year is underway and it is time for students to begin work on their Senior Project. In the coming weeks, seniors will embark upon a four-phase program, facilitated by their English teachers. In it they will: choose and research a controversial issue, write a research paper, compile a digital professional portfolio documenting the process, and deliver a presentation to a panel of community members. **The project is a requirement for all seniors. Seniors who fail to meet deadlines, who produce sub-standard work, or who skip any of the four phases, may not pass English, and may not graduate.**

Your role in Senior Project is two-fold. First, we ask that you look over the packet and talk with your senior about possible project ideas or areas of interest. As part of this conversation, think about your network of friends and business associates – often a good interview subject can be found here. If you do know someone who has some expertise in your student’s area of interest, we ask that you refrain from contacting him or her. Instead, have your student take that step.

Secondly, we ask that one or more family members volunteer to serve on a community panel Tuesday, May 26, 2020. It involves one evening of evaluating Senior Project presentations. If you are not available, perhaps a grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin, or sibling (they must be two years out of high school) can serve on a panel. **Each student is required to provide one panelist.** We will be asking students for panelist names in April.

We will be going over all of this at back to school night and would very much like to see you there and answer any questions you may have. Please sign and return this letter to school with your student.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Paige Greco

\_\_\_\_\_  
Steve Sumner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lana McNamara

\_\_\_\_\_  
Matt Dunkle

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dani Barese

Student’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent’s Name Printed \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_