

Essay #2: Integrating & Reconciling Data and Arguments

You have examined data on the growth of moose and human populations by graphing them, identifying trendlines, and making projections for the future. You have given some thought to the implications of your projections. You have also read the article “Optimum Human Population Size,” by Gretchen C. Daily and Anne H. Ehrlich and Paul R. Ehrlich, which gives a summary of the authors’ opinions on the issue of world population. As good critical thinkers, you should remain open to new information as it tests the hypotheses that are forming in your mind. In this case, you should be making connections between these two sources of information, comparing your ideas with those in the reading and trying to reconcile them. In what ways are your WACPack answers consistent with the opinions in the reading? In what ways are they not? Would you change the opinions you were formulating in light on this new information or not?

This essay should be “expository,” explaining for the reader the thinking processes you are going through in integrating and reconciling the information you were given. It is not meant to be an “argument” or persuasive piece of writing, although the thinking that you are probing and revealing—the comparing, the evaluating, and the development of new hypotheses—is the basis for good argument.

We will talk in class about the various ways that you could focus and organize this essay. In any case, you will want to consider a number of the following questions:

1. What are the differences in the terms carrying capacity, minimum viable population, and optimum population size? How do the terms introduced in the article affect your thinking in the WACPack?
2. Daily et al. state that “[h]uman population sizes have never, and will never, automatically equilibrate at some level” (470). Think about the moose of Isle Royale and try to explain what is different about humans and why the statement might be true.
3. Daily et al. state, “An optimum population size should be small enough to guarantee the minimum physical ingredients of a decent life to everyone” (470). Have we achieved that now? Think about the trendlines you drew for world population. How does adding a concern about the quality of life impact your thinking about those projections?
4. In what ways do you see connections between Hardin’s “Tragedy of the Commons” and “Optimum Human Population Size”? In what additional ways do both articles contribute to your understanding of your projections in the WACPack and vice versa? For example, did you think again about the impossibility of maximizing two variables as you worked through these materials?

Your essay will include, of course, a thoughtful introduction and conclusion and numerous specific details and references to the three sources. In-text citations will suffice here. Use of first-person point of view is appropriate, as your own critical thinking process is on display.