

MASTER OF LIBERAL STUDIES APPLICATION WRITING SAMPLE INSTRUCTIONS

PERSONAL STATEMENT

This portion of your application is extremely important, and we urge you to take care in the preparation of it. The persons reviewing your application will be assisted in their decisions by a brief and well-written statement from you (no more than two pages in length) which should include the following:

- Various influences that have been important in your intellectual development
- Your academic and professional objectives in applying to the MLS program

The document should be typed in 12-point font, double-spaced, one-inch margins. Your full name, title of the document and page number must appear on each page of the document.

WRITING SAMPLES

In addition to the Personal Statement, you are asked to submit three writing samples that demonstrate your ability to think and write critically. The writing samples should:

- Demonstrate a coherent and concise argument through well-organized paragraphs
- Provide support for your assertions
- Lead to a logical and meaningful conclusion
- When applicable, properly credit all ideas and quotes taken from other sources

The writing samples must not be edited by anyone other than the applicant prior to submission. You may use resources such as texts, encyclopedias or the internet but all sources must be fully credited. Writing samples will be read by the admissions committee and appropriate faculty as necessary. They will not be returned to you.

INSTRUCTIONS

Choose one topic from the two options in each of the following three categories:

- Humanities
- Social Science
- Natural Science

Each of the three writing samples must be three to five pages in length. Include citations for all references, typed in 12-point font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins. Your full name, title of the work and page

number must appear on each page of the documents. Write on these three topics according to the instructions given below in each section.

HUMANITIES

Address one of the following two topics:

Thoreau: Henry David Thoreau wrote the American classic "Walden; Or, Life in the Woods." Describe the circumstances of the book and the philosophy espoused by Thoreau in the book. What is your attitude toward the ideas proposed by Thoreau?

Creative Nonfiction: Three recent films, "Lincoln," "Zero Dark Thirty" and "Argo" fall under the genre of creative nonfiction. All three have been severely criticized for not being factually accurate. Choose one of these three films and describe at least some area where it definitely is or may be considered inaccurate. Discuss what harm can arise from distortion of the historical facts in the situation you have discussed. Finally, provide your opinion on how much artistic license a writer should be allowed to take in the writing of a creative nonfiction work.

SOCIAL SCIENCE

Address one of the following two topics:

Hurricane Harvey: In this catastrophic event for Houston, what failed us? What worked? What can we do to protect ourselves from future storms? Reflect on Hurricane Harvey, its effects on Houston and the struggles of Houstonians to deal with it. Use the lens of the social sciences to do this, emphasizing at least two of the following: sociology, political science, economics, psychology and anthropology.

Human Trafficking: Slavery is emerging as a major moral issue of the 21st century. Modern-day slavery is embodied in human trafficking, where individuals, often women and children, are transported across national boundaries against their will or under false pretenses and held for purposes of forced labor or commercial sex. Provide an essay on this topic and the steps being taken to combat it.

NATURAL SCIENCE

Address one of the following two topics:

Extremophiles: What are extremophiles? Where are they found? Give examples. What is the significance of extremophiles for astrobiology?

California and Plate Tectonics: Will California break off from the U.S. and sink into the ocean? Consider possible answers to this question in light of the theory of plate tectonics, explaining what you most need from that theory to evaluate the possibilities.