Summary into Synthesis

A basic but key skill in scientific writing is summarizing; it is often unappreciated, yet it is a foundation skill that much of what will be done in the future depends. We have gone over the notes for summarizing, and you have compared your work with the members of your group. From these comparisons we compiled a master summary, which was then trimmed for accuracy (as we practiced our group skills: inclusion, cooperation, suggestion, and steering). This process has given you time to digest the summarizing process (listing main ideas, compiling, & trimming). In order to take this process one step further up the Cognitive Taxonomy (remember the ladder of thinking skills we talked about early on when discussing how the “U” is different than High Skill?), we are going to add the extra step of synthesis to your writing. Simply put this means highlighting the similarities and/or differences between the things you have studied (the writing summaries). Remember: this is a synthesis, not an evaluation; do not make value judgments in your writing, even though it will be very tempting—there is plenty of room for adding your own voice to this debate in the form noted below (experiences and observations).

All work generated for this assignment (from web to final draft) will be collected. Follow the format guidelines posted on the class Moodle site; be sure to see me if there are problems. As we discussed when going over the rubric: focus on an interesting introduction (hook) that goes from general to specific (say something definite about each piece of the readings); be aware of transitions between paragraphs to make your writing smoother (flow); end with a conclusion that reemphasizes the thesis (this is almost a mini-summary—reinforce or clarify/extend the point made about the two readings); and be sure to proofread so that your mechanics do not weaken what you have written (use of commas, semicolons, signal words, fragments, tense agreement, etc). Your final draft should be a minimum of 7 pages (double-spaced).

Essay Prompt: Identify an issue that connects the two articles. Then write an essay that compares and contrasts each author’s position on this issue and develops a thesis in which you articulate your position in this debate. Use examples from the two readings plus your own reading, experience, or observation in developing your essay. [Audience: while we will be sharing these essays during peer review, I am the main audience. Your writing should address the demands of the rubric, but be readable by your classmates.]