The Assignment
The assignment is to write a formal documented essay on a relevant and vital issue in the field of agriculture in Iowa. For your topic, look for a sociopolitical, economical, technical, or technological issue that affects you or has affected you.

Audience
The audience for this assignment will be your instructor, that’s me, in context as a member of Iowa’s community, who is aware of pertinent environmental and sociopolitical issues, but not necessarily technical issues.

When considering your readers. How much do your readers know about your topic? Are they interested in it? Do they have strong opinions about it? Do not assume that your readers have read the sources you have read.

Purpose
The purpose is to conduct research methodically, identify one predominant trend or a vital issue, and report back through your essay. For example: you might focus on sustainable agriculture, but more on the program implementation in Iowa. Or, you may focus on the work done by Iowa Farm Bureau, but more specifically on its soybean research project or their carbon aggregation pilot project. Also, you may consider topics such as the effect of more women entering agriculture business in Iowa, alternative crops such as pumpkins or Christmas trees in Iowa, and the aging of Iowa’s farmers for your paper.

Context
The agricultural scene in Iowa has experienced quite a few changing trends in the recent past. You are conducting exploratory research on one of these trends and reporting back to an academic audience, agricultural issues pertinent in Iowa. You may want to keep in mind that your audience may not necessarily know technical aspects of the field, so you would have to define, contextualize, and clarify them before using them in your text on a regular basis.

Some Research Questions to Address
- What is the trend/issue?
- What forces have shaped the trend/issue? (people, circumstances, institutions)
- How is it related to Iowa’s agricultural scene?
- What are its positive and negative implications?
- What steps could be taken to avert/reinforce it?
- Why is knowledge of this trend/issue important for Iowans to be aware of?
- What are future predictions for it (and with respect to Iowa and its community)?

Length
Your paper should have at least 3- 3½ double-spaced, 12-pt Times New Roman of text long.
Sources
As you are in a field that relies heavily on its research and scientific developments for its growth, you are expected to explore its information pool to know more about this topic. You may include personal experiences to address this issue, but you are expected to incorporate information from 4-6 academic sources for your research. Also, you may want to restrict your sources to the ISU library catalog, Google Scholar, and websites of standard institutions and organizations to ensure that you use valid sources. If there is any information that you have obtained from other places, you may want to discuss that with me before using it in your paper.

Interweave your sources into your paper to substantiate your thesis. Be careful, however, not to rely exclusively on one source. Verify the accuracy of your information and quotations. Miscues can undermine the credibility of your thesis.

The Process

Invention Stage (4 October 2006)
- Brainstorm ideas of possible topics within your major or proposed career.
- Generate 4 narrowed topics.
- First circle the three topics that interest you the most
- Write a brief paragraph on each topic and the possible areas of research and relevance
- Select the topic that is the most appealing to you
- Compose a list of questions for your topic that you will address in your paper
- Send me your writing process by Sunday night, 9:00 pm, October 8, 2006.

Restrict your topic to an area of the subject that you can handle in a short paper. State your topic in the form of a question and then decide whether or not you can answer it within the limited scope of your paper. If you tightly focus your topic, you'll find that you can construct a much more complete and satisfying paper.

Criteria to Consider
- Involves a narrowed topic related to the field of study
- Uses 4-6 academic sources
- Provides a thesis sentence with a valid research question
- Has a recognizable organizational pattern with transitions.
- Includes a variety of paraphrasing, partial quotes (phrases) and full quotes (sentence quotes).
- Concludes with an overall perspective or possible solutions.
- Uses appropriate conventions so the sentences are not confusing or distracting to the reader.
- Uses correct in-text citation and references format as used in agricultural studies
- Includes some form of tabular data that is interpreted into a graph or chart that is labeled and inserted in the text

You must attach a photocopy of your sources to your final draft of your essay with the cited text highlighted or underlined.