

Essay #4: Theranos

Value: 20% of overall grade

For this essay assignment, examine the poor critical thinking that occurred in the years-long perpetration of fraud at a Silicon Valley startup company called Theranos. Consider the origins/mythology of the company, the culture of the company, and/or the personality flaws and faulty management style of Elizabeth Holmes (founder/CEO) herself.

Then, commit to answering one of the essay prompt questions below:

Topic A: For fraud to occur at the level it did (a multi-billion dollar company revealed to be a shell company), many things had to go wrong on many levels. Not just one little thing went wrong. Explore three examples of failures in the culture and operations at Theranos that led to negative outcomes. In other words, explore the correlation between causes and effects in terms of lack of transparency, poor leadership, and flawed logistics (flow of operations and time lines).



Elizabeth Holmes pictured with the Edison device at Theranos

Topic B: If Holmes had only taken one class on microfluidics in college, how did she get so many prominent people to sponsor her startup? How was she able to draw so many venture capitalists and esteemed board members (such as Henry Kissinger, George Schultz) to her enterprise? To what extent did she rely on personal charisma to establish a "trustworthy" ethos for herself and for Theranos? What would have been the better alternative or pathway for Holmes to have taken to successfully launch her medical device?

Due Dates

- Brainstorm due Monday, 4/5
- Outline due Tuesday, 4/6
- Rough Draft due Wednesday, 4/7
- Peer Review due Thursday, 4/8
- Final Draft due Friday, 4/9

Requirements:

- Five pages (double-spaced, TNR 12-point font); bottom of page 5
- MLA style
- Thesis-driven
- Respond to one of the prompts
- Provide sufficient concrete and specific examples
- Use a minimum of FOUR sources (they must pass the CRAAP test)
- Include a Works Cited page
- Keep your similarity report under 15%

Tips:

- If you write on Topic A, be sure to use lots of cause-effect words for clear signals and transitions.
- If you write on Topic B, be sure to examine the way that ethos was misused by Holmes and her medical diagnostic company. Contrast that with what you think would have been a better approach. Be sure your essay demonstrates competency with the learning outcomes for English 1A listed in the syllabus
- You can email me a draft if you need some advice:
crystal.brownell@rccd.edu

HELP WITH CITATIONS (Documentary and a Podcast)

- DOCUMENTARY

***Documentary title.* Directed by First name Last name, performance by First name Last name, Production Company, Year published. Title of Site, Database, or Service where movie was streamed from (if applicable). URL (without http:// or https://).**

- PODCAST

Begin with the title of the episode in quotation marks. Provide the name of the series in italics. Then follow with MLA format per usual. Example:

“Best of Not My Job Musicians.” *Wait Wait...Don’t Tell Me!* from NPR, 4 June 2016, www.npr.org/podcasts/344098539/wait-wait-don-t-tell-me.