

ASSIGNMENT SHEET

UNIT 3: ACADEMIC CRITIQUE

Using Theory to Critique Pop Culture Phenomena

ENGL 001-1075 (Tu/Th 12:35-1:50)
ENGL 001-1083 (Tu/Th 2:00-3:15)
FALL SEMESTER 2005
MR. GOGAN
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(& by appointment)
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I. ASSIGNED WRITINGS

- 1 Evaluative Thesis-Support Critique Essay
- 3 Short Writings (abbreviated SWs)
- D2L Discussion Board Postings

II. CRITIQUE ESSAY ASSIGNMENT

Writer's Task:

Select a theory from *Critical Literacies* and employ it to evaluate a pop culture phenomenon of your choice. Using a theory to critique a cultural phenomenon means *employing that theory to generate questions about your chosen phenomenon* and then exploring those questions, using some of the principles of the theory for evaluation criteria. Your resulting paper should explain, analyze, and critique (evaluate) your selected phenomenon. For more details, see "Academic Critique" in *CL*.

Suggested Tactics:

- (1) Identify a theory's main ideas.
- (2) Critique the validity of each main idea and identify any gaps in the theory.
- (3) Use the theory's main ideas (and any revisions you may have made) to generate questions about your selected pop culture phenomenon.
- (4) Answer your question, using the theory's main ideas as criteria for evaluating your pop culture phenomenon.

Sample Topic: For example, assume you are employing Linda Seger's theory of screenwriting in "Creating the Myth" to critique *The Fight Club*. Ask yourself:

- (1) What are the main components of Seger's hero myth?
- (2) Do I agree with her main points? What are the gaps in this theory?
- (3) Does the Edward Norton character enact all the components of this myth? Does he revise them? Does he overturn some but not others? Why is this important?
- (4) After contemplating these questions, what can you conclude about the movie? Your answer is your thesis.

Or you might employ Fiske's theory of TV to critique MTV; or you might employ Stapleton's theory of hip-hop to critique your favorite hip-hop or rap artist; or you might use Bryman's Disneyization theory to critique universities.

Purpose:

- To make visible our daily uses of theory to evaluate our world.
- To introduce you to academic critique (using theory to generate questions about a cultural phenomenon so that you can evaluate that phenomenon).

Audience:

Teacher & classmates who are *as informed* on the theory but *less informed* on your selected phenomenon.

Format:

4 pp. double-spaced. Use the following heading in the upper left-hand corner of your essay:

Your Name
English 001
Mr. Gogan
Fall 2005
Essay #3

Essay Grading Criteria:

1. Purpose/Audience Negotiation:
 - How effectively is the topic defined and narrowed in the introduction—i.e., how well has the writer used a theory to generate a question about a selected cultural phenomenon?
 - How well has the writer employed a thesis statement (as his/her stance on, or answer to, the theoretical question generated)?
 - How well does the writer address the class and the teacher as people who are *as informed* on the theory but *less informed* on the writer's selected cultural phenomenon?
2. Organization: Given the purpose and audience,
 - How rhetorically effective is the organization (a) of ¶s in the paper and (b) of ideas in each ¶?
 - How effective are the introduction and the conclusion?
 - How well does the thesis statement organize the paper?

3. Development/Critique:
 - How effective is the critique?
 - How clearly are the writer's general points stated?
 - How effectively employed is the evidence (e.g., details about the cultural phenomenon via summary, paraphrase, and/or quotation OR your own reasoning)?
4. Writerly *ethos*:
 - How well does the essay employ an *ethos* of student expert?
5. Readability
 - How effective are the choices about sentence punctuation, subject position, parallelism, transitions, and action verbs?
 - Are there any spots where sentence shape (length, punctuation, wording . . .) interferes with meaning?
 - How effective are academic citation practices: i.e., MLA parenthetical citation & Works Cited page?

Due Dates:

D2L: See Calendar

11/1 Tu D2L Presentation

11/2 W Draft of Essay 3 posted on D2L **BY NOON** along with completed author sheet

11/2 Th **Peer Review Due BEFORE MIDNIGHT:** Completed peer review sheets attached to a "Comment/Track Changes" Draft

11/8 Tu Unit Three Portfolio due: SW's 1, 2, 3; Essay 3; PR sheets; author sheet;

III. SHORT WRITING ASSIGNMENTS (SW):

Writer's Task and Due Dates:

These sequenced writings are intended to help you think about your essay topic so that you can revise your ideas as we proceed through the unit. If appropriate for your paper, your SW's *may be incorporated into your final essay*.

SW1: 10/25 Th What gaps you see in one of today's assigned theories? (What doesn't the theory cover?)

Discourse Conventions: • freewrite 300 words; bring 1 copy to class

SW2: 10/27 Tu List 3 cultural phenomena suggested by the theories; explain why each interests you as a paper topic.

Discourse Conventions: • 3 paragraphs @ 150 words each; bring 1 copy to class

SW3: 11/1 Tu Generate 1 question from a theory that we've read and use it to critique the pop culture phenomenon that you've chosen to write about.

Discourse Conventions: • 1 paragraph freewrite to generate question @ 150 words; plus critique @ 350 words; bring 1 copy to class

Audience:

Teacher & classmates who are less informed than you

Format

Use same paper heading as for your essay. All double spaced.

SW Credit Criteria:

1. Completed and brought to class on assigned dates for use on in-class work
2. Evidence of having employed the stated discourse conventions for each

IV. UNIT 3 D2L DISCUSSION BOARD: (1 point) 1% of final course grade

For unit 3, your discussion board postings will not be reflected in your unit portfolio grade, but will be involved with the peer review process. Each posting will contribute to your final course grade. See D2L for specific topic instructions.

V. UNIT 3 GRADE: (20 points) 20% of final course grade

Your unit grade will be awarded to the final essay; *however*, short writings must be completed on due dates AND turned in with Portfolio One in order for you to receive full credit for the unit; otherwise, you may lose 1/2 (percentage) point for each SW not completed on time or included in your portfolio. (See English 001 Policy Statement for other grading policies).