

## W101: Stories of the US from the Bomb to 9/11

Spring 2020

Assignment 1

### Assignment description:

The close reading paper is a 2-page (single spaced) essay of a single passage from our assigned reading. Its goal is to decipher what the author is saying and how they say it. Your aim is not to argue with the author, or to create your own thesis, but to understand the piece by closely analyzing the three components of *form*, *style*, and *content*.

### Assignment details:

Choose an excerpt from one of our readings so far that surprises, confuses, or excites you. This excerpt should be:

- no longer than a paragraph;
- one that we have not discussed in detail thus far in class;
- related to course topics (i.e. the Cold War or author subject position).

Before writing, go through your chosen passage line-by-line, word-by-word, as we did in class. Think in depth and detail about every aspect of the passage, including *form* (what kind of text is this?; what shape does the passage take?; how does the passage fit into the larger text?; how does one word/sentence relate to the next?), *style* (what is the tone of the passage?; what images, metaphors, symbols, similes, and other rhetorical devices does the author use?; why are those devices used?; are there inconsistencies in style?; who is the intended audience?), and *content* (who is speaking?; to whom?; what is the context for the passage?; what is happening in the passage and why?; what are the steps the author takes to make their point?; is it consistent with the larger text?; what questions are answered?; unanswered?; what is most convincing about this passage and why?; how does this passage help the reader understand the larger text?). Your overall objective is to answer the following question: *whose perspective does the passage represent and how?*

Your close reading is not meant to answer every question. It is your responsibility to choose what is most important and most interesting about this passage toward the goal of addressing the main objective. This means that your essay is not a list of details, nor are your paragraphs a list of ideas. The paper should be a cohesive whole where all of the paragraphs relate to one another. Remember the difference between a *conceptual* (a, b, c, d...) and *categorical* (c, a, b, d...) essay.

### Additional details:

- Students must email me with chosen passage and statement of interest by beginning of class Thursday, January 23;
- Assignment must follow formatting mechanics outlined in syllabus;
- No need to have separate introduction/conclusion paragraphs;
- Include 1-2 sentence summary at the beginning of the text to contextualize the passage;
- Peer-review workshop on January 28 is required for full grade.

## Grading Rubric

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D/F</b>
<b>Focus</b>	Maintains focus on chosen passage throughout entirety of paper	Maintains focus on chosen passage throughout most of the paper	Maintains limited focus on chosen passage throughout the paper	No focus on chosen passage throughout the paper
<b>Central claim</b>	Clearly presents central claim and supports it throughout the paper	A central claim is supported throughout most of the paper	Vague sense of a central claim weakly supported throughout the paper	No central claim discernable
<b>Organization (overall)</b>	Well-planned and well-thought out. Paragraphs are focused progress conceptually	Good overall organization, progresses conceptually but may be unfocused in certain places	There is a sense of organization, although weak or missing in some places, and/or does not progress conceptually	No sense of organization throughout the paper
<b>Organization (paragraphs)</b>	All paragraphs have clear ideas, are supported with examples and close analysis, and have smooth transitions	Most paragraphs have clear ideas, are supported with some examples, and have transitions	Some paragraphs have clear ideas, support from examples are missing, and/or transitions are weak	Paragraphs lack clear ideas or examples
<b>Content</b>	Well-presented and well-supported ideas throughout; ideas are detailed and supported with specific details; answers all required questions from prompt	Well-presented and well-argued; most ideas are supported with detailed evidence; answers all required questions from prompt	Content is sound, but ideas presented are not particularly developed or supported; some evidence used, but of generalized nature; not all required questions from prompt are answered	Content is not sound

<b>Style</b> (sentence structure)	Sentences are clear and varied in pattern, from simple to complex	Sentences are clear but may lack variation or are sometimes awkward	Sentences are generally clear but are often awkward or unclear	Sentences are generally unclear
<b>Style</b> (word choice, tone)	Clear use of a personal and unique style of writing, suited to audience and purpose; the paper holds the reader's interest with ease	An attempt at a personal style but may be awkward or unsuited to audience and purpose; some parts of the paper may lose the reader's interest	Little attempt at style; reads as flat and perhaps uninteresting in content, which is generalized and clichéd	No attempt at style
<b>Style</b> (details and examples)	Large amounts of specific examples and detailed descriptions	Some use of specific examples and detailed descriptions; may have extended examples that go on too long or don't fit the paper's focus	Little use of specific examples and details; mostly generalized examples and little description	No use of examples
<b>Mechanics</b>	Chicago Manual of Style used properly; title, page numbers, date, name included; correct formatting according to syllabus			Incorrect formatting