

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

Spring 2020

### Assignment 2

#### Assignment description:

The midterm paper is a 4-5-page (double-spaced) essay. You will build on the skills you have learned from your close reading assignment by analyzing two texts together and developing a central claim. Your aim is to create a strongly argued thesis supported by evidence and close analysis on the topic of your choosing. You will engage in deep and dynamic analysis in order to give voice to a topic that has interested you. Peer-review and revisions are required for a final grade.

#### Assignment details:

Choose two texts from our syllabus (from January 16 to February 6) that you feel generate an interesting conversation with each other. Use one of the following concepts from class to narrow down your interests (you are not limited to the concepts listed):

- Soft/hard power
- Science fiction
- Bipolarity
- Iron curtain
- Red scare
- Doomsday
- Atomic bomb
- Deterrence
- Exceptionalism
- Containment
- Star Wars

Consider what your texts say when read together. Are they saying the same thing? Something different? Does one text clarify/confuse something about the other one? Does one text reinforce a particular theme or emphasize the theme in a different way from the other? Does one resolve, explain, or complicate something seen in the other? These questions should be answered by considering the *form*, *style*, and *content* of your chosen texts.

It is your responsibility to choose what is most important and most interesting about the texts toward the goal of addressing your research question. This means that your essay is not a list of details or arguments, nor are you expected to address the entirety of either text. The paper should be a cohesive whole where all of the paragraphs relate to one another, and ultimately back to your thesis. Remember the difference between a *conceptual* (a, b, c, d...) and *categorical* (c, a, b, d...) essay.

Use the following template to help you craft your research question:

I am studying (name your texts) \_\_\_\_\_ because  
I want to find out who/what/why (imply your question) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ in order to understand (state the rationale for the  
question and the project) \_\_\_\_\_.

Additional details:

- Students must email me with research question (following the template above) by beginning of class Thursday, February 6;
- Assignment must follow formatting mechanics outlined in syllabus;
- Peer-review workshops on February 13, February 20, and February 25 are 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