Assignments & Instructions

Commons Posts

In advance of most classes I'll ask you to post something to a shared Box Note document. These short writing tasks (generally around two robust paragraphs) are designed to help you develop your thinking in relation to the day's readings and writing. Because the document is shared, you'll have access to each other's ideas and examples, which will help you prepare for class as well as get a sense of how others are approaching the same problem/question/task.

Logistics
- Commons posts are due by 11:59pm the night before class so that I have time to read through them and consider how to make use of them in class.
- Prompts for the Commons posts will be in italics at the top of the BoxNote document (which will be named for the date of the class posts are preparing for).
- Your names will be in the document in advance (in the order you appear in the course roster). Find your name and write in your post underneath (or paste it in from another document, if you prefer to start elsewhere).

How Posts Will be Evaluated
- 10% (full) credit: Posts are turned in on time and are appropriate for the task. Posts respond thoughtfully to the prompt, meet the suggested length, and are posted on time. Students must complete all Commons posts to receive full credit.
- 8% credit: Posts are occasionally late or limited in scope. Posts are typically turned in, but you may have a few that are late, don't quite answer the prompt, or are too brief. You may miss two posts and still receive 8% credit.
- 7% credit: Posts are frequently late or limited in scope. You may miss three posts and still fall into this category.
- 6% credit: Posts are frequently missing and/or are consistently limited in scope, but some effort was made to contribute to the Commons.
- 0% credit: only one or two posts have been completed, on time or otherwise.

Note: posts made by 11:59pm are considered "on-time" and after that but within 24 hours are considered "late." Anything beyond that is considered missing but completing posts well after the fact may help you receive some credit for the Commons.

Introductory Rationales

Each time you hand in writing for feedback from me you will write a brief companion essay wherein you explain the logic behind your approach to each project and your decision-making process, including how the project you turned in has progressed from earlier plans and drafts. Rationales should also include examples of how course readings, activities, peer work, and workshops contributed to your approach and any other factors contributing to how the project has evolved. These short essays are important! They are your opportunity to teach me about what I cannot know from reading the essay alone, and to instruct me in what you hoped to accomplish in the essay that perhaps was not fully realized because of time constraints, writer's block, or other barriers. Having an awareness of what you were trying to do is as

important (if not more!) than whether you were able to accomplish your ambitions in the essay itself. If you relay your efforts with honesty and awareness, I can better help you troubleshoot for final revisions. *Please be honest about how your essay(s) came together. It will not help me if your rationales simply summarize the essay or read as self-flattery. The rationale is meant to be helpful for both of us, so don't take it lightly.*

As stated in the syllabus, I will read your rationales before providing feedback on your essays, so I will always be attending to your own concerns as a writer. Think of the rationales as the beginning of a dialogue that you and I have about and across your essay. The conversation is by no means finished! You'll respond through future essays and revisions, though you should also always feel free to email me or come talk to me during my drop-in office hours to discuss your work.

Logistics
- Rationales should be around 500 words for each individual project and around 750-1000 words for your final portfolio.
- Rationales should be saved *as a separate file* from your essay under the format "JohnS_Rationale_Project1_Sept28.docx" (first name, last initial, rationale, project, and date) and turned in with each response essay and the final portfolio.
- Missing rationales will delay feedback and negatively impact your participation grade.

Response Essays

You will be responsible for crafting three argument-driven essays that in some way respond to our case examples. The way that you decide to do so is up to you; you should respond in whatever way feels energizing to you that will sustain your interest. As a component of class discussion, I will ask you to do a small amount of research to flesh out the rhetorical situation to put the two articles in context. You may make use of this research in your essays, though keep in mind sources like Wikipedia are helpful for background but won't make compelling sources to quote or respond to. In general, the two articles that make up each case example should be your primary sources. Although this means that you have a fair amount of flexibility, I do have some general requirements:

- **Your essay should identify a point of inquiry, problem, issue, or exigence that compels you to respond to each case example.** We'll see in the articles we'll read a variety of ways in which writers identify the forces that influence or compel writers to write their own arguments, and you should make use of those examples to signal to your own readers what that point of inquiry is and what you are hoping to achieve through your argument.
- **You'll see in the examples that arguments are rarely identifiable through thesis statements. Rather, arguments unfold as the essays progress. There are, however, moments where writers "signpost" or otherwise signal their argument** by explicitly describing the steps they'll make toward the argument or by using specific language like, "I have been arguing," to sum up a previous move before moving forward. I expect to see you practicing these more nuanced forms of argumentation in your essays.
- **The case examples will demonstrate the conventions of a certain style, media, and/or genre of writing** (the first case has two academic essays, the second has two popular media/Internet publications, the third is up to you). **You should, therefore, practice the argumentative moves represented in the case examples and the affordances of the media they are published in.** You

will have to make decisions about what "counts" as a "fitting" response, and where you have some flexibility and where your options are more constrained.

- **You should practice in these essays writing for an audience that is informed or interested in the topic of the case example, but that is not the members of this class or me as your professor.** That is, you should not reference the class, class activities, or anything that a reader couldn't know if they hadn't been in the room with us when we discussed these essays.

- **Remember that there is a difference between an *argument* and an *opinion*.** An argument represents an idea or a way of thinking *that invites response* where an opinion shuts down conversation. If you say: "that's my opinion" (or "belief," or whatever synonym), whomever you're speaking to won't have anything to say except that they do or do not share your opinion. Be careful to craft your ideas in ways that invite interaction from your own readers.

- **Because we are working from two examples for each case, it will be tempting to write comparison and contrast essays and to evaluate which argument is more persuasive to you. It may also be tempting to write an essay that agrees or disagrees with either or both articles.** *While you are probably comfortable with these approaches, please resist the urge!* I think you'll find that such arguments are not that exciting to write and to be honest they're not exciting to read. Crafting a compelling argument usually comes from *complication* rather than the simple moves of compare, contrast, agree, or disagree. That is, the argument will, instead, evaluate, contemplate, extend, explore, or otherwise move an idea in a different direction.

Logistics
- Response essays should be ~1250-1500 words, double-spaced, and in a legible 11 or 12pt font.
- Save essays to your individual course Box folder under the format "JohnS_Project1_Sept28.docx" (first name, last initial, project, and date). The date will indicate where in the drafting process you are, which is important because I will want to see how your drafts are progressing over time.
- Working drafts submitted in advance of in-class workshops should be as complete as you can manage by the date they are due, and past brainstorming and planning (I expect to see full prose paragraphs). Feel free to leave notes for portions you have yet to fill in/that need work/etc.
- When the schedule says a project is due, I expect to see a fully fleshed out essay from start to finish. Although you will have the opportunity to revise for the final portfolio those revisions will be dramatic evolutions of the earlier versions, so this version should be as polished as possible. For one essay, you may accept the provisional grade assigned as final.

Instructions for Your Independent Case Examples

The third case example is up to your own design and discretion. Find two articles that you understand to be in conversation with each other (directly or indirectly). Take this opportunity to explore argument in your academic discipline, career interest, or other area of intellectual interest *that will be practical and helpful for you beyond this course*. You may also choose your examples because they represent a genre, platform, or media you'd like to teach yourself and practice. Do some research to discover more about the rhetorical situation that informs the articles, though the two articles should be the primary sources for your own writing. The same requirements as stated above apply to the essay you'll craft in response. *Note: it will be to your benefit to choose the essays you're going to use for this portion of the course as early as possible, so that if you run into challenges or realize they won't work as well as you thought you can switch gears. Feel free to run ideas by me at any point.*

Final Portfolio

The final portfolio should represent the culmination of your thinking and learning in this course. Your portfolio must include:

1) A final Introductory Rationale (around 500 words should still be sufficient) addressing how the work in the portfolio represents the culmination of your thinking in this course, the decisions and challenges involved in your revisions (see below) as is typical of the previous rationales, and any further reflections you'd like to include on your journey through this course.

2) A 500-750-word essay on argument as conversation, returning to Greene to consider this metaphor again as the framing idea for the course. In what ways are arguments conversations? What are the benefits and limitations of understanding argument through this lens, and so what?

3) Final revisions of *at least two* of your previous response essay projects, *though you may revise all three.* If you choose not to revise one of your essays the provisional grade will stand. In order to help you make substantive revisions and open up your essays, you must introduce an intervention you believe will improve your argument. *Explain your choice for each intervention you introduce and for which project in your Rationale, especially where you felt you took a risk and whether you felt that risk paid off.* You may introduce substantive interventions in a variety of ways, though here are a few possibilities:

   a. Introduce a new source/citation in direct conversation with the arguments in our case example or adjacent to them in some way. These may be works cited in the articles themselves, or works you discovered in doing contextual resources, or that you otherwise feel would be valuable to bring into dialogue with your existing thinking.

   b. Amplify a specific moment or theme to become the new main thrust of the project. For example, if you brought in a case example as a way of concluding, what would happen if you opened your essay with such an example instead? Or, alternatively, if you arrive at an idea that you feel like could be the new primary focus of the essay in the conclusion, revise to attend to that idea and its potential.

   c. Revise as an experiment in implementing a move you want to spend more time practicing that we witnessed this term in our readings, your peers' work, or that you were exposed to in your independent case examples. While of course you should be practicing the moves we've been discussing this term throughout the projects, this move should be a relatively dramatic shift and should require retooling your approach (for example, you might try out a different persona, or rework the structure of your argument after a specific model).

   ● *The interventions you choose should require substantial rewriting at the local and global level to improve the logical flow of your argument. Revisions that merely address my marginal comments from feedback and/or simply add material without considering how the new material requires you to rethink your argument may be assigned the same grade as the initial provisional grade. Revisions may exceed the ~1250-1500 word recommendation of prior drafts, though a thoughtful essay should still be possible within that range.*

Logistics:
   ● Include all final portfolio components in a single Word document (or PDF). Save your final portfolio to your individual course Box folder under the format "JohnS_FinalPortfolio.docx"
   ● The portfolio will be due during finals week. Look at your schedule and inform me what day you will be turning it in (there will be a due date sign-up sheet in Box).