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INT 110
American Culture
July 22, 2020

Topic I Essay Assignment

This assignment asks that you develop further thoughts on the pursuit of happiness and the American Dream, two interrelated concepts/constructs—some would call them one and the same—that define/drive American culture. We also learned that the pursuit of happiness and the American Dream are becoming increasingly inaccessible and elusive, and that materialism, status, desire, and ambition—common indicators/measures of happiness—could serve as self-imposed obstacles and barriers to happiness as well.

In 800-900 words, you will primarily base your thoughts on the pursuit of happiness and the American Dream on **ONE** of the following prompts, and bring in personal observations and/or lived experiences as support.

- Explore 1) John Updike’s story “A&P” in terms of mobility, freedom, and class as connected ideas, and 2) as a coming-of-age story where Sammy begins to see the need for and cost of independence/self-reliance.
 - Analyze John Cheever’s story “The Swimmer” in terms of materialism, consumption, and personal ambition, and as a critique of romanticizing or addicting to the pursuit of happiness and the American Dream excessively.
 - Respond to the two magazine articles’ observations of and commentary on America today socially and economically, as relevant to the difficulties of living the American Dream and their impact on individual happiness.
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Expectations and Grading Criteria

- The essay engages with one of the prompts thoroughly and meaningfully.
- The essay should avoid excessive summary of sources.
- The essay should include textual analysis and quotations where needed.
- The essay is not overrun with subjective or overly-personal language (“I feel,” “I don’t think,” “I believe,” etc.)
- The essay contains no plagiarism.

An essay in the A or B range successfully demonstrates further thinking on the pursuit of happiness and the American Dream, while providing sound textual analysis and relevant observations or experiences. The essay does not contain glaring or repeated issues that hinder full comprehension.

An essay in the C range fails to develop further thinking on the pursuit of happiness and the American Dream. Overall, the essay is underdeveloped, excessively informal, and difficult or confusing to read.



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