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ENGLISH 21002
Writing for the Social Sciences
Professor Nathan Fetherolf

Comparative Analysis Essay

During the first section of this class we will read essays covering topics from a wide swath of the Social Sciences. *Letting Go* by Atul Gawande discusses the economics of end-of-life healthcare; *Under the Influence* by Scott Russell Sanders covers the psychology of addiction; *Last Call* by Larissa MacFarquhar is a heart-wrenching psychological study of suicide; *Deafness as Culture* by Edward Dolnick and *Mother Tongue* by Amy Tan are linguistic essays; and Orwell's *Politics And the English Language* covers, well, politics and language. What makes these essays profound is the way the authors zone-in on one facet of the social sciences and explore complicated issues from an individual angle. Still, none of these are the final word on any of these issues—they are, however, powerful pieces of the conversation. Now, it is your turn to join in on the conversation.

A comparative analysis puts two or more texts in conversation with one another regarding a Big Idea **or** uses one text to provide a lens through which to interpret the other text(s). For your first essay assignment, you'll begin to hone your ability to interpret, scrutinize, and extract meaning from one of the aforementioned reading assignments of your choosing. You will then seek out a second essay which discusses the same topic and either engage the two pieces of writing in conversation, or use one essay as a lens/keyhole to view the argument of the other more clearly or differently.

For Example—if you are interested in end-of-life care and economics, you will find an essay about this topic and compare/contrast it to *Letting Go* by Atul Gawande; If you are interested in Addiction, you will discuss the similarities and differences between the Scott Russel Sander's essay and another essay of your choosing. You will compare your selected essays to one another by using the conversation method, or the lens method.

If you choose to compare the two essays using the **conversation method**, you must use your two texts to build a conversation around a complex theme or concept. (i.e., a Big Idea). The texts should not simply agree or disagree with one another, but rather should each have something more to add to each layer of the conversation.

If you choose the **lens method** you must use one text as a way to or vehicle for interpreting the second text. This method asks readers to re-think a work in the context of ideas presented by another one that examines similar themes or raises different questions. This method is also anchored by a Big Idea.

In addition to honing your comparison skills, this assignment will also test (briefly) your research ability, as you will be responsible of procuring the second essay on the subject in question. The only acceptable essays for this assignment will be sourced from one of the following:

1. JSTOR.org
2. The CCNY Library database
3. A published book.

No other sources are acceptable. **You are required to include a bibliography in MLA format.** Please consult the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) for help with your citations. Address below:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html

REQUIREMENTS

Your essay must be approximately 1,500 words, double-spaced, 12-pt Times New Roman, and 1-inch margins. Number your pages. Your heading should include your name, the assignment (Comparative Analysis Essay), due date, and word count. Please title your work. Be creative.

REMEMBER: You must select an essay with a similar topic of discussion and the essay must be procured from either JSTOR, The CUNY Library database, or a published book (Must have an ISBN #) If your source does not come from one of these places, you will have to do this assignment again.

In your first paragraph, you must clarify the method/approach (Conversation/Lens) you intend to use to support the reader's understanding of your essay. You should be consistent in your application of the method throughout the essay.

Please note that, **while there is no minimum number of quotes required from your chosen texts and secondary sources**, one of your main objectives in crafting a strong evidence-analysis framework is to judiciously select evidence and place it where it will best support your claims.

Your essay must include correctly formatted in-text citations that point your reader to exactly what you referenced and complete a Works Cited entry at the end of your essay. Here are a few basic MLA citation reminders:

1. References within the body of your paper are done using parenthetical citations. Quotes and paraphrases from books use the author-page style of citation:

...end of quotation" (Gawande 24).

2. If you mention the author in the body of the sentence, you do not need to include their name again in the parenthetical citation. It would look like this:

Atul Gawande describes the problem with healthcare as "beginning of quotation" (24).

3. Once you have introduced Gawande as the author (either in the parenthetical citation or in the body of the paper), you do not need to include their name again. It would look like this:

Health systems fail when, “first quotation” (Gawande 24). Compounding the problem, doctors express “another quotation” (33).

4. If you are citing more than one work in the body of your paper, you will need to use each author’s last name in all citations. It would look like this:

Healthcare struggles when “first quotation” (Gawande 24). This is a similar economic problem as the education system “another quotation” (Mairs 33). The stock market, however, *paraphrase paraphrase paraphrase* (Gawande 33-34).

5. At the end of your paper, always include a Works Cited page or section that gives the full citation of any works you have cited.

GRADING

Each essay will receive a letter grade from A (or A+) to F.

Each letter grade signifies the following:

“A” essays not only fulfill the goals of the assignment, but push beyond those goals in surprising ways. This is more likely to be possible when the writer has found something compelling to write about and has taken great care to attend to his or her language and form.

“B” essays are competent papers that meet all the goals of the assignment but do not go beyond the requirements.

“C” essays reflect struggle in fulfilling the assignment goals. This kind of essay may show a fair amount of work, but it does not come together well enough to be a competent paper.

“D” essays may appear to have been hastily written, incomplete, or thrown together.

“F” essays fail to meet the minimum level of expectations for the assignment.

“Z” essays imply there is ample evidence to suggest you have plagiarized some or all of your writing assignment. Unfortunately, this grade is not only applied to the essay but also to your final transcript.

DUE DATE:

A physical copy of your essay is due to class at 5:00pm on March 2nd. You will then submit a final draft on Blackboard before midnight that same evening under the ‘SUBMIT ESSAYS HERE’ tab.



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