

English 1301
Essay #3: The Argument
Analyzing Work and Class in the Media and Popular Culture

Important Dates

Monday, October 28—discuss guidelines for Essay #3

Monday, November 4—topic due (on Blackboard discussion board)

Wednesday, November 6—first source due (in class)

Wednesday, November 6 and Monday, November 11—student draft review (for assigned students only)

Wednesday, November 13—Writer’s Workshop (at least three typed pages)

Wednesday, November 13—revision activity (meet in lab, BB131, and bring electronic version of essay)

Monday, November 18—final draft due (Blackboard)

Essay Prompt

In class, we have watched *Class Dismissed: How TV Frames the Working Class*, a documentary that discusses how the working class is represented on television. Representations of social class and labor are very common in the media and popular culture, especially in recent years. One look no further than reality shows like *Duck Dynasty* and *Deadliest Catch*, films such as *Elysium* and *The Great Gatsby*, or songs like Lorde’s “Royals” to see that social class and work are very important parts of our cultural psyche.

For Essay #3, the argument essay, you will be exploring some of these popular culture representations of work and/or class. To begin, a definition: popular culture is any sort of cultural material that is available to a large number of people, or the masses. We think of popular culture as movies, television, music, advertisements, social media, literature, and the like. We can also include the media in this discussion, which also includes newspapers, magazines, and television. You will first develop a thesis or focus for your essay, which will make a claim about the representation of work and/or class in popular culture or the media. Writers can focus on a particular social class and track their representation across various genres or works; they can pick a particular film or show and discuss how work or class is represented; or just about any other sort of approach that examines these issues.

In the next few weeks, we will be exploring Chapter 7, “Writing an Argument.” Based on your reading of this chapter, as well as our discussion in class, I would like you to construct an argument for Essay #3. Remember that an argument makes a strong debatable claim and backs it up with solid evidence and research.

Criteria

A successfully written paper will contain the following components:

- Length of the essay should be at least **five pages, typed, doubled-spaced, and with proper MLA formatting and heading**;
- A strong **thesis statement** that makes clear your argumentative claim;
- Focus on a very **specific issue** related to the representation of work and/or class in popular culture and the media. If at all possible, try to choose an issue in which you have a person interest;
- A strong, well-supported **argument** that considers the complexity of the issue;

- Use at least **two secondary sources**, not including the *Class Dismissed* documentary, or the television shows, films, etc. that you are analyzing. The shows, films, etc. are called primary sources, and writers can use as many of these as they like. The secondary sources can be articles from newspapers, magazines, and journals that discuss issues of work and class or how they might be represented. All of your sources need to be from the library or research databases, though I will allow one credible Internet source that I pre-approve;
- Inclusion of all aspects of **persuasive writing** that are discussed in Chapter 7;
- At least one example each of **formal, simple, and partial attribution**. Other than that, there is no requirement on the number of direct quotes and/or paraphrases you should use. However, remember that this is a lengthy research paper, so you should use plenty of evidence;
- Use of the **MLA Quick Reference Guide** and near-perfect use of direct quotes and Works Cited entries. The Works Cited page should include both the primary and secondary sources;
- Clear evidence of **revision** in each stage of your writing. In other words, your rough draft and final draft should not be the same exact paper;
- Use of **strong grammar, punctuation, and spelling** to the best of your ability.
- If you have made any grade below a C on the previous two essays, you are **required** to either come see me or make an appointment with the Writing Center for this essay;
- **Brief topic description.** On Monday, November 4, I would like you to submit a brief description of your topic (a few sentences), and I will let you know if you are on the right track. This description should include 1) the specific focus of your essay, 2) why you want to explore this particular issue, 3) what examples of popular culture/the media you plan to explore, and 4) any problems or questions you may have about the issue or the assignment. Please submit this description to the discussion board on Blackboard no later than class time on November 4;
- **First source.** On Wednesday, November 6, you will be required to have at least one source that you will use for Essay #3. Please bring the source to class, and you will receive lab credit for this component;
- Students who signed up for **draft review** on Wednesday, November 6, and Monday, November 11, should e-mail their drafts at least 24 hours in advance;
- Participation in the **Writer's Workshop**. On Wednesday, November 13, we will have a peer review workshop during class. You must have at least three typed pages and a Works Cited page on this day. Not having a draft on this day or participating in the workshop will result in **one full grade deduction** on your final paper and loss of lab credit; and
- Your **final draft** is due on Blackboard and via e-mail (for the web project) by class time on **Monday, November 18**. Please retain all rough drafts, prewriting, sources, and peer review, in case I need to see them.

Parting Words

While this is a broad topic, the key is to finding a very specific way into it. One of the most challenging and important aspects of this assignment is choosing a good topic. I urge you to find a topic that is personally relevant and interesting to you. You will be spending a lot of time researching, thinking about, and writing about this topic, so you want to choose wisely. Try to find a topic that is creative and unique, something that perhaps no other student is exploring. That will really help your writing stand out. Remember that this essay counts for 25% of your overall course grade, so the time and effort spent on this assignment should reflect that.