

WRITING EXERCISE #4

Due Week 6, second section

Drafting an Interpretive Thesis and Plan

EXPLORING IDEAS (Weeks 5-6) – With your paper topic in mind, preview the possible primary texts from lecture, discussion, and the reader. Which ones hold interest for you or represent a perspective that you’d like to analyze? A key theme for Weeks 4-6 concerns resistance, so consider how these texts resist or challenge cultural norms. Annotate the key details and issues explored in several texts before selecting one to analyze and interpret for your paper. Discuss possible texts with your TA before making a final decision.

PART A – Typed notes for # 1-3

1. Continue asking questions about your possible text. What are its key details and elements? How do they work together? Do they offer a critique or representation of American culture for reasons that you want to explain in your paper? (Different views/voices/arguments often crop up in the same text.) Some elements in the text might challenge one set of norms, for example, while leaving unquestioned another set of other norms which you’d like to analyze.
2. As you analyze your text’s details, use the suggestions given in Raimés and handouts such as “Analyzing Cultural Texts” to argue for their implied Level 2 themes. For a larger or longer text, analyze only **2-3 key passages or elements**. Group and connect related details and elements thematically. What is surprising or important about how they are used in the text to represent resistance to dominant norms or narratives? What sub-themes or tensions are suggested by how the elements work together?
3. Discuss your thoughts about your primary source in 1-2 pages, making sure to focus on its thematic suggestions. What issues are being resisted, challenged, questioned, or debated in the text? Although you won’t have an argument yet, answering questions about the details (*Why* are these details included? *How* are they related?) will help you narrow your paper’s focus.*

PART B – **Due:** 1-2 page typed plan with a tentative thesis, supporting reasons, and evidence (double-spaced)

4. Begin to develop your argument based on the types of details and connections you’ve noted in the primary text you’ve chosen. List possible thematic claims that you have inferred from connections noted in the text. Consider lines of reasoning that build toward an overall interpretation. In a few sentences, state your overall interpretation as a thesis. Forecast your reasons or supporting ideas.
5. Does your thesis (interpretation) make a claim about how/why specific details or elements within the text resist, challenge, explore, or reinforce specific norms or themes? Do you have enough details from your text to support each point? **
6. List the key reasons/sub-claims that support your interpretation. Write each reason as a topic sentence claim. Organize these supporting claims into an outline for your paper, using perhaps a block or point-by-point structure if you are comparing or contrasting key elements. (See example in “The Writing Process” handout or Raimés, pages 33-34.)
7. Finally, using your notes, complete a rough draft of your working thesis and an outline of your supporting reasons and evidence (Raimés 18-24). The more detailed the outline the better as it can serve as a plan for a logical and complete argument.

revised 4/29/08

* Part A updated using guidelines from Lester Faigley’s *Brief Penguin Handbook*, New York: Longman, 2002, 273-277.** Part B updated using guidelines from Axelrod and Cooper’s *St. Martin’s Guide to Writing*, 7th edition, 2004, 54-548.