

Writing Assignment 2: Analyzing 19th Century Racial Formations

Due Date: The assignment is due **Monday, October 31**, to your TA at the beginning of lecture. It should also be uploaded to Turnitin.com before 4:00 p.m. on that date. Papers submitted after lecture will be considered late, and will have their grades lowered by 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., B to B-). The penalty will increase accordingly for each additional day late. Any student turning in a late paper should consult his/her TA to discuss the situation.

The Assignment: In our Week 3 readings, Omi and Winant make an argument that an analysis of “race” must begin with an analysis of historical “racial formations.” They define racial formations as the “sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed” (21).

Reflect on this quotation, as well as the definition of “racial formation” given in lecture and in the DOC 1 Reader. Then, write a paper that compares and contrasts the process of “racial formation” of two groups in the 19th century United States. Develop your analysis by selecting examples from your lecture notes, related readings, and from chapters 6, 8, 11, and 13 in Ronald Takaki’s *A Different Mirror*. Use the following questions to guide your draft:

- Begin your paper with several paragraphs of analysis on the first group you have selected. How were men and women from this group racialized in the 19th century? How did issues of class and labor interact with the racial formation? What contradictions arose as a result of them? If your reader were unfamiliar with this history, what examples could you use to best demonstrate these points?
- In the next few paragraphs of your paper, use the same questions to analyze the situation of a second group described in Takaki.
- Conclude your assignment by comparing and contrasting the two groups. To what extent was each group able to challenge and perhaps transform the racial formation? What opportunities, if any, were available to them for making change? What strategies did they use?

Final Drafts: Final drafts should be approximately 2½ to 3 pages and should be typed, double-spaced, with 12-point font and 1-inch margins. Your name, your TA’s name, and your section number should be typed at the top. Give your paper a creative title. (Do not use a cover page).

Tips for Writing a Successful Response

1. You should imagine the primary reader of your paper is a friend or family member who is not attending this class and has not read the chapters (rather than your professor or TA). Thus, you cannot assume that your primary reader will know much about the chapters or the formations you have chosen to write about.

2. You do not need to write a traditional 5-paragraph essay that you may have been asked to write in high school. Your paper does not need to have a traditional introduction with a thesis statement or a conclusion. Instead, follow the guidelines above for beginning and concluding your paper.
3. In your response, you will want to demonstrate that you have read and analyzed the reading and your related lecture notes. Provide readers with well-chosen details, examples, and explanations to develop your ideas. Be sure to proofread for mechanical errors.

Works Cited and Outside Sources: To complete the assignment, students should use course materials (lecture notes and readings) and should not use outside sources. You do not need to include a works cited page for this assignment, but proper citation of others' work is required. For example, you should cite the page numbers from the reading if you use any direct quotations.

Evaluation Rubric

Grade Range	Description
“A” Range – Exceptional Response	The “A” paper is exceptionally and clearly written, with very few mistakes (if any), and demonstrates a comprehensive, complex, and especially insightful response to the topic and related course materials. Examples are extremely well-chosen and explained in depth, often going beyond the obvious points. Proofreading and editing are superb. Most importantly, it is interesting to read! It really makes readers think about the topic.
“B” Range – Strong and Successful Response	The “B” paper is well-written, with only a few mistakes, and demonstrates an effective response to the topic of racial formation. It mostly anticipates a reader’s needs and concerns. However, there are a few places where these components could be explored with more depth, specificity, and/or accuracy to improve the paper. For example, the examples and explanation could be slightly more developed, or they could be contextualized better. Proofreading and editing is well done, with only a few minor issues.
“C” Range – Adequate Response	The “C” paper demonstrates an adequate response to the assignment. It addresses all parts of the prompt, but there are a few areas for improvement. Some elements of racial formation could be explained better. Examples are not always well-chosen, clearly explained, or successfully applied to the ideas being developed. In addition, a few paragraphs rely on unsupported generalizations and/or missing context. Perhaps the writer could have anticipated reader concerns a bit more. In the future, additional editing and proofreading is necessary to organize and develop ideas throughout the paper.
“D” and Below Range – Incomplete Response	Work that earns a grade below a “C” indicates that the paper is an incomplete response to the assignment. A paper in this range may struggle with some/all of the following: addresses the wrong prompt; fails to follow all directions; fails to incorporate course readings and materials; does not use supporting details or evidence; has significant structural and distracting sentence-level errors. It may also contain evidence of plagiarism. A paper in this range could have strongly benefited from: additional planning and outlining work, office hour visits with the TA, appointments with Gwen Fish, and/or greater class participation.