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Honors 3100

Spring 2016

Unit 2: Critical Analysis of St. Louis Literacy

**Introduction**

People often attempt to read, interpret, and evaluate texts “objectively,” as though the text exists in a vacuum. However, many composition scholars emphasize the importance of *context* in reading and writing. For this essay, you will analyze a text that you find in the St. Louis area by considering the rhetorical situation for that text. (How you define “St. Louis” is up to you, but you should include an explanation of how your texts represents the people, communities, and issues of the city in your essay.) Remember that writing an analysis is more than just summarizing *what* the text is about; rather, it requires a close attention to language and *how* the language was used to accomplish the goals for a particular writing situation.

**Brainstorming, Research, and Analysis**

Start your rhetorical analysis by considering the kinds of writing and rhetoric that you’ve seen in the St. Louis area. Examples include billboards, graffiti, advertisements, stores and malls, landscaping, street signs, artifacts and other symbolic objects (like crosses), architecture, local newspapers, flyers, city design (like sidewalks and highways), the names of donors on buildings and grounds, the stained glass windows in a church, flags, the stars of famous St. Louisans on the ground of The Loop, etc. Once you select a text to analyze, collect as much information about that text as possible. Go to the place (virtually or in person) where you can see the text and collect detailed notes. You may even want to take photographs.

Then, analyze your text critically and rhetorically. What is the subject matter of the text? What issues or tensions do you notice? Who created this text? For what purposes? Who were the intended audiences of the text, and how do you know? What strategies did the rhetor(s) use to communicate? How might people or communities respond to the text in different ways? You should also think about how some of the critical ideas from our class discussions (like community, power, history, mythology, authority, free speech, representation, culture, conflicts, margins and centers, public and private, safety, transportation, the body, the environment) relate to your text. In your final analysis, you **should use at least one source from our class as a tool to frame** your analysis. You may use other sources as well, but the one from class is required.

Note: If you are struggling to find or select a text, please meet with me.

Finally, using your analysis notes and secondary sources, provide a 4-6 page analysis of your text. In other words, think about how writing and rhetoric functions within the city of St. Louis and why rhetor(s) used certain strategies to construct the text. Make sure to give specific details, quotations, and descriptions of the text in order to support your interpretations. The points you make in your analysis may support, refute, develop and/or challenge the ideas in the assigned readings; regardless, you should use a text about St. Louis as evidence to contribute to the scholarly conversations you’ve encountered in the assigned articles.

**Goals**

The goals of this assignment are (one) to analyze an example of literacy in St. Louis and (two) to become conversant with several theoretical, cultural, and political issues concerning public spaces and city life.

**The Process and Writing Calendar**

Wednesday, March 2 – Thursday, March 3: Conference (first draft due at the conference)

Tuesday, March 8: Second draft due (bring two copies)

Thursday, March 10: Portfolio 2 due (with the final draft of the Critical Analysis)

Rubric/Requirements (Subject to change as announced.)

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| **Structure/Organization:**   * Follow prompt, use approved topic * Clear, focused purpose * Well-written thesis, represents essay in entirety * Brief summary of the text and an explanation of how the text represents St. Louis * Introduction is attention-getting * Sets context, motive and criteria for analysis * Introduces the sources by providing background information (author, title, etc.) * Clear organization that emphasizes content and strategies for development * Each paragraph clearly fits with purpose of essay * Utilizes effective transitions between main ideas and paragraphs (flows well) * Resolution/conclusion |
| **Development/Detail:**   * Analysis is clear and fully explained * Analysis demonstrates depth of thought, going beyond surface meaning for each example * Each main point (paragraph) analyzes specific detail from text and connects to thesis * Quotes are smoothly worked into paragraph, not dropped in * Quotes and support from text are fully explained in connection to thesis * Essay demonstrates a certain level of maturity, professionalism and appropriateness * Makes significant revisions from draft to draft, not just sentence-level changes |
| **Polish:**   * Grammar * Active verbs, present tense * Clarity * Sentence structure and variety * Punctuation—commas, colons, dashes and semi-colons * Mechanics * Bibliography with accurate source information and proper MLA citations |