

# Important Information Regarding Major Essays

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The following guidelines and requirements will apply to all major essays for this course. They should prove useful and should be consulted regularly to ensure that you follow them and avoid any misunderstanding.

## What are the major essay assignments?

The major essay assignments for this course will take us through around midterm at which point we will turn our attention to the research project. There will be four major essays. The four essays will be based on work that you do with four selected readings from your *Ways of Reading Words and Images* book. Each major essay assignment is explained in the text itself. Generally, you will not receive an additional handout explaining the assignment. You should refer carefully to your text when working on the assignments and ask questions as needed. The assignments are as follows:

- Human Actuality [Coles] (page 433)
- Proportions and Relations; Sharpness of Focus [Lange and Taylor] (page 434)
- The Importance of the Reader's Eye [Agee and Evans] (page 434)
- Style and Convention [Said and Mohr] (page 437)

## What constitutes a draft?

You will be writing all the assignments for this course in multiple drafts, as revision is absolutely essential to an effective writing process. You will be required to turn in two scheduled drafts of each essay, but you will likely create more drafts as you continue to revise your essays for inclusion in your midterm portfolio when they will be graded as a part of that larger project.

When you are required to bring a draft to class, you should understand exactly what constitutes a draft for this course. A draft is a complete pass at the essay. It's "complete" in the sense that it has a beginning, a middle, and an end. It's not necessarily "finished" though in that you will return to the draft to revise and revise again. A draft is not simply prewriting; it is not just an outline or a round of prewriting; it is not just notes. Again, a draft is a complete pass at the essay with a thesis, organization and development of ideas, with an introduction and a conclusion.

On workshop days, you should always bring three copies of your draft to class.

## Are the drafts graded?

Yes. You will receive a formative grade for each draft you turn in. Formative grades are not as heavily weighted as "summative" grades, which you receive at midterm with the portfolio project. However, they are important. Plus, formative points are easy to earn if you simply do your work and do it on schedule. See the syllabus for a complete explanation of formative grades and what they mean.

## Will I receive feedback on my drafts?

Yes. For the first drafts that you bring to class for a given essay, you will participate in a peer review workshop through which you will receive substantial written feedback from your peers. If you want feedback from me on your first draft, you will have to meet with me either during my office hours or at another time by appointment. I would be happy to sit with you and talk at length about your writing. In fact, I encourage it. Just come see me.

For the second draft that you turn in for a given essay, I will respond in writing. I will try to be as thorough as I can with my feedback to you, but, unfortunately, I must balance thoroughness with efficiency, as I have well over 150 drafts to read and respond to in a timely fashion. If my comments seem too brief or if you would like more specific feedback, again come to see me. If you come prepared to our meeting, we can accomplish a lot in a brief conversation. I encourage this one-on-one interaction. I think that you will find it very helpful.

## How long do the papers have to be?

While I do not judge a paper on its length, I do judge it on how well the ideas are developed. Historically, for the kind of writing that is expected of you at this level, it takes about three to five pages to adequately develop your ideas and draw conclusions.

## When are the final versions of the essays due?

There is a complete schedule of assignments and due dates at the end of your syllabus. You should know your syllabus inside and out and consult the course schedule daily, as I will hold you to this schedule and expect that you use it throughout the course. I will not necessarily remind you of due dates. Keeping on top of the schedule is your responsibility.