

## Essay Assignment #2

Write a 4 page double-spaced paper. Cite at least one of the essays we have read for class, one other essay from the book we have not read, and one online source. Expect to have 3 to 4 sources in your Works Cited. Also plan to use examples from your own experience and your own contact with places or spaces along with clear explanations to support your claim or main idea. Think back to our discussions of situation and how it can impact culture and texts when developing ideas for your paper. The prompts below give you a variety of genre options. Be sure to look at the particular genre in the glossary (IC 561-585). In each case, however, expect to write clear prose and to include detailed examples and reasons that logically connect to your main points.

1. Write a manifesto (IC 577) that calls for a change in a space you inhabit—work space, dorm, classroom, etc. Read Kitaj (IC 189-92) as an example of the genre. Also see the Guide to Analyzing Contexts for Writing (IC 15-17) for some ideas on situation and consequences. Set out your problem with the space you inhabit. Then set out your ideal criteria for what such a space should look like and what it should do. Finally, show what you would do to change the space to better live up to the criteria. Conclude by discussing the how society would change if others made these same changes. Manifestos use strong and emotional language, but don't lose sight of clear and reasoned arguments. Make demands for change, but make the criteria for these changes clear. (Also see Haar and Reed, Rybczynski, various essays in the Cisneros section).
2. Write a cover/reflective essay (IC 568) on a piece of art that you create—this could be anything from a short story or poem to a comic, drawing, ready-made sculpture or multimedia piece. The work should try to symbolize the type of space that you want to inhabit, represent the space you want to inhabit, exhibit the mood or feeling of the space you want to inhabit, or it could be a piece you'd want to place in the space you want to inhabit. The cover essay or "artist statement" should explain the background rhetorical situation to the piece, the rhetorical or artistic goals of the piece, and the techniques used to carry out those aims. Situate the work with respect to the immediate situation but also with respect to the history of the genre. Refer to your personal history as well as essay in the book (Haar and Reed, Tuan, Rybczynski, various essay in the Cisneros section). If a paper-based work, include it with the statement. If a material work, include a photo. If a media work, include the url or submit it on a disc.
3. Write an essay (IC 570) on a place/space you want to escape to. Is this a "natural" space or a constructed space? Why did/do you go there? How does it make you feel or change your mood? What kinds of actions or work does the space make possible that you can't do in other spaces? Be sure to provide a thick description. Also remember the tradition of the essay that goes back to Montaigne—the essay should integrate personal experience, present day cultural or social issues or examples, and philosophical reflection. In the essay, discuss concepts from the readings: nature, culture, middle landscape, escapism, lucidity (Tuan); inner space, adventure as commodity (Barret); comfort (Rybczynski). The goal is to explore and reflect on your experience in order to connect it to other ideas and generate deeper understanding.
4. Write an opinion piece (IC 578) about an issue in the local DC area such as the high cost of housing, the affect of traffic, gentrification, home owners associations, or the nature of living in the suburbs. How does being stuck in traffic affect our lives? Why do people do it? How does living in the suburbs reduce the individual quality of the spaces we inhabit? Be sure to pull an online source from the Washington Post. Try to find an issue that is current if possible. Also try to connect back to various essays—Pollan on the suburbs, Cisneros on home owners associations, etc. Be sure to skim through the other articles and find something that connects to the issue you choose.
5. Write a feature article (IC 574) on a local place around DC. This could be a particular performance venue or club, a neighborhood or local eatery, a shop that has been in the area a long time or a school or church. What is distinctive about the place? Why do people go there? How does it make them feel? What kind of mood does it generate? How does it contribute historically or culturally to the area or region? Is this space authentic or inauthentic, why? Be sure to provide a thick description of the place, the people, and the (sub)culture. You will have to go to the place and carefully look around. Who is there? What are they doing? How does the space

foster this activity? Be as detailed as possible. (See Taulbert, Rybczynski, Crawford, Cisneros et al.)

6. Conduct and write an interview (IC 575) with a home decorator/designer, an architect, or someone on a housing board (for the city or a particular neighborhood). Try to find out more detailed information on how these people see space or place and their role in designing or maintaining it. The key here will be to develop solid questions that can get the kind of information you need. Read over the Interview entry for some ideas about asking questions to get good information. Go back to the essay by Haar and Reed, Rybczynski, Pollan, Rodriguez, and the Cisneros section to develop questions. Build concepts and quotes from the readings into your questions. Think in concrete terms about the relation between space and individuals. Architecture expresses and defines attitudes about individuals, families, communities, and establishes relations between values and politics. Practically everything happens in a space that has been designed. How do these designed spaces influence those actions?

7. Write a set of guidelines for setting up a space that is livable or comfortable (Rybczynski). This could take the form of a code of conduct (IC 566), proposal (IC 580), or even brochure (IC 564)—see Understanding the Preservation Process (IC 269-74) as an example. Your guidelines should initially be based on your own experiences of the particular space you choose. Spend some time sitting in it and working in it. Take ample notes about these experiences. Then go to essays in the book (Crawford, Rybczynski, etc.) and pull out key concepts that relate to your experience of these spaces. Take some ample notes. How do they recommend designing spaces? How do they recommend taking control of designing those spaces? Then, sit down and brainstorm some basic guidelines. Fill in these guidelines with details about how to achieve them and why it is important to implement them.

8. Write an argumentative essay (IC 573) about the ways historical and situational contexts influence individual acts. From the Reading and Writing Guides early in the book, to the Semiotics web site, to Kitaj, Taulbert, and Tuan, much has been made about locating a text or person in a context. Take a position on how you see individuals in their contexts. A particular culture, city, neighborhood, family or even historical period can have enormous influence on how you think, act, and view the world. (The whole idea of generations—WWII, Boomers, GenX, GenY—is based on this basic premise.) Use key concepts and examples from the book, but also from your own life. What aspects of a situation can never be overcome? Why? What aspects of a situation can be overcome? How? This issue influences politics as well. Democrats tend to put emphasis on situations, Republicans on individuals. Which one of these makes the most sense? Why?

Peer Review: For peer review on W (Mar 29) you'll need to write up a worksheet based around the model in the book (IC 32). Put in your name and brief comments 25-50 words, leave a blank line for the reader's name, and \*try to revise the generic questions in the book under reader's comments to fit your particular paper.\* Be sure to do this! Don't spend a lot of time on it, but make sure you revise the questions based on what comes to mind \*after\* writing your draft. Read over the Interview entry in the Genre glossary (IC 575-76) for some ideas about asking questions to get good information. Bring three paper copies of your draft and three worksheets. I'll try to put you in groups of 3 in class, which means you'd only need two copies, but you never know how the numbers will work out. In class on Wednesday, you'll exchange papers with your group and spend time reading the papers, commenting directly on the drafts, and then answering the question on the worksheet. After reviewing, you'll give the papers back, read over the comments, and then discuss them as a group.

Writing: For these papers I will be looking closely for: 1) a clear main claim or central idea with supporting reasons and examples that are logically connected to the main claim; 2) coherent paragraphs that don't jump around from sentence to sentence; 3) transitions (logical connections between paragraphs); 4) flow (no drastic shifts in content between sentences); 5) correct, clear sentences (no fragments or run-ons, no awkward wording, no subject/verb or pronoun disagreement). Number 5 is perhaps the most important at this juncture. It will be very difficult to get a good grade with sentences I can't decipher.

Format: Follow MLA format (See PSM 148-54). Be sure to include a header with Engl 101-section number, your name, date, and project/number (in this case Essay #2) in the top left corner of your first page. Your paper should be

double spaced with 1" margins top, bottom, left, right. Font is typically 12 pt. Times New Roman. If you use another font, don't go larger than this—use your better judgment. Follow proper method for in-text citation (See PSM 128-35). The paper should include a Works Cited with precise MLA formatting (See PSM 135-48).

Delivery: This paper should be viewed as a project. Include all invention work, peer reviews, and drafts, and a copy of your online source in a folder (left pocket) with the final typewritten draft, stapled in the left corner of the page, placed in the right pocket. Presentation is all about credibility. If you have everything and it's all neatly in order, it signifies that you have your act together. If it is a mess and you have missing stuff, it signifies that you don't have your act together. This may or may not be true, but it is what the instructor will think when s/he picks up your paper to grade it.

Important notes:

- By 4 pages I do not mean 3 ¼ pages. I mean 4 full pages! You can spill over to 5 pages but no more.
- A draft generally means complete sentences and paragraphs. Bring something readable.
- Do not forget to title your essay: remember; make titles specific like a version of your thesis.

Important Dates:

- W (Mar 22) - No Class: homework- read Essay 2 assignment, assessing online sources, and Genre glossary (IC); Begin your research, artwork, or interview; Surf the web for an appropriate source; Visit the place you are writing about; Start a draft; Then write a 250 word abstract/paragraph that reports on the progress you've made as of Sunday--see Report (IC 581) and use the intro/body/concl info as a guide for your paragraph.
- M (Mar 27) - Discuss genre, online sources, and abstracts: homework- skim Grammar (PSM 23-62) and Punctuation (PSM 63-86), write full draft of Essay 2 (come to class with one thing you learned about grammar/punctuation)
- W (Mar 29) - Draft due; peer review drafts, briefly discuss grammar: homework-finish Essay 2
- M (Apr 3) - Essay 2 due;

(See online syllabus for details that have changed for these days: <http://classweb.gmu.edu/bhawk/101>)