

ENGL 2089 Essay #2 (Comparative Genre Analysis)

Background:

For Essay #2, we will expand on the course's topics by examining literacy in a larger context through genre study, with an emphasis on how writers *use* and how readers *respond to* particular genres. Think about your own experiences with genre. For example, you might have noticed that texts on a particular topic are similar, perhaps in the way authors use evidence or in the way authors strive to achieve a particular purpose. You will also notice distinct differences in various genres of text, ranging from different tones or voices, to entirely different forms or media, to the ways in which writers use particular rhetorical strategies. Whether we like it or not, certain genres are perceived as academic, scholarly, or in some way valid in our society, while others are considered mainstream, popular, or written for the masses, and still others are considered visual or technological in nature. The point of this assignment is to help you better understand the importance of genre in regard to the rhetorical situation, and to help you improve your own skills in textual analysis.

Assignment:

You will find and compare three documents. One of these must be an academic, scholarly, or an otherwise traditionally-respected text. Another must be a mainstream or popular source, or one written for the masses (meaning educated *and* uneducated). The third source is your choice: you may select another academic or mainstream text, or a literary, visual, or technological source. You should focus your essay on the impact of differences and/or similarities in genre, the use of specific rhetorical features, and differences in the rhetorical situation (including audience). While this assignment is similar to rhetorical analysis, it differs in two ways: 1) It requires *comparison* in addition to *analysis*. 2) It requires you to determine how genre and the rhetorical situation affect one another and the features of the texts. Essay #2 should range from 5 to 7 pages (about 1300-1900 words), plus a works cited page in MLA style. As with your first essay, we'll be working on Essay #2 over time with brainstorming and drafts. Check the Daily Schedule for the due dates.

Audience:

Think of your audience as not just the teacher but also your classmates and anyone interested in literacy and genre study.

Essay Structure and Important Guidelines:

- Choose three texts about the same historical or current issue or event, but written in different genres. The event or issue can be anything that interests you, but should relate in some way to your discipline or a discourse community to which you belong. Think about the “hot” or controversial issues in your field or in your social or civic life.
- Choose the documents carefully – their complexity, relevance, and validity will have a huge impact on your essay. They need not disagree; they simply need to address the same issue but in different genres.
- Please keep in mind that “mainstream or popular” does not mean disreputable. Mainstream sources simply have a different audience and sometimes different purposes and contexts than more scholarly sources.
- At least two of your choices must be textual in nature (and fulfill the academic and mainstream requirements). Sources include magazine, newspaper, and journal articles; speeches; essays; books; extensive book reviews; reputable Web sites; interview transcripts; editorials; case studies; and reports. Your third source may be visual

or technological; examples include an editorial cartoon, a blog, or a documentary. **You must submit copies of a few pages of the sources along with your essay.**

- Annotate the documents closely as you read, and use your annotations as the basis for your analysis.
- Your thesis should state your overall comparison and should be analytical, not obvious. Questions you might consider examining include: Who is the intended audience for each document, and how does each writer want the audience to feel or act after reading the piece? What is each writer's purpose and does each genre help the writers achieve their purposes? Think also about the entire rhetorical situation—not only audience and purpose, but context. The context of similar documents might be drastically different depending on timing, cultural circumstances. What features are common in each genre and how are those features evident in each document? How is each piece organized? How do the genres and audiences impact the writers' style, language features, tone, use of jargon and/or discipline-specific terms, and word choice? Focus on **GENRE** and **RHETORICAL SITUATION**.
- Integrate quotes from the documents in order to show and support your analysis. Remember to perform effective quoting and paraphrasing, using signal phrases, and formatting parenthetical and Works Cited citations. Please use MLA citation style. (You may paraphrase visual or technological sources.)
- Avoid extensive summarizing. Comparison is an analytical thinking skill. Briefly summarize each piece and then begin your comparative analysis.
- Resist the urge to “lump together” your analyses—talking about the documents at the same time. Organize by point rather than by document in order to avoid writing three mini-analyses instead of one cohesive comparison.
- Please use pre-writing and revising strategies before submitting your essay.

Recommended Sources for Essay #2

- **General** — newspaper, magazine and journal articles: Academic Search Complete, Research Library (ProQuest), Expanded Academic ASAP, Wilson OmniFile. Also see *New York Times, 1851 – present* (database through UC Libraries) and Time.com for older articles.
- Specifically **newspaper** articles: LexisNexis
- **Books:** UC catalog or Cincinnati Public Libraries
- **Transcripts (radio and TV):** LexisNexis
- **Cincinnati Public Libraries catalog:** www.cincinnati.library.org (You can even request materials to be sent to the branch nearest you.)
- **Web sites:** Use Web sites relevant to your topic. Evaluate them carefully for legitimacy and credibility.
- **Subject-specific databases:** You might also find specific databases helpful. The UC library has everything from the AP Photo Archive to the Health Source database to the Worldwide Political Science Abstracts. The best way to find one of these specific databases is to use the A-Z list to look up databases relevant to your topic or call/e-mail a librarian.