

Assignments | WST383

■ DISCUSSION BOARDS

Discussion board posts are your first responses to a reading or film, so you will receive full credit for your careful, thoughtful, clear participation. Your audience is your classmates and professor. The topics will be assigned in class. A discussion board might ask you to

- 1) express your personal responses to the work,
- 2) attempt to summarize main points of your reading or media viewing,
- 3) state what you believe the main points are that the work is trying to make,
- 4) explain your own ideas about it, and
- 5) relate what you have read to your personal life in some way.

■ TAKE-HOME TESTS

The take-home test consists of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. It requires knowledge, synthesis, application, and interpretation of course material. The essay questions require a thesis statement and traditional essay structure, for the purpose of clarity.

■ ESSAY ASSIGNMENT

(Use cover sheet template and rubric.) This is an essay (**about 3 pages, typed**) or long blog post on the topic of your choice related to the course. It should demonstrate understanding of one or more class readings to date (or outside reading(s) of your choice), contain ***an arguable, thought-provoking perspective***, include personal narrative and at least two outside resources. Use MLA, APA, or CMS citations, as well as correct grammar, mechanics, spelling, and writing style. I am looking primarily for your original insights, so outside resources (beyond readings) are only used to support your ideas and are not central to the paper. Do not feature ideas that have already been featured in class or used as examples.

Write for a college-educated audience and assume the audience has not already read or viewed the material in the depth that you have. I am looking for thought-provoking, insightful, complex ideas that would be of interest to a wider audience and are written with clarity and organization. While you may write in first-person, only insert yourself when your personal experience is relevant to the discussion. Avoid perfunctory use of first person (for example, “The main idea for my paper is . . .” or unnecessary use of “I think”).

Your opinions per se will not be graded. We often have papers with opposing ideas earning equally high grades. There are no “right” or “wrong” ideas or experiences relating to course material. At the same time, the writing must reflect understanding of the course material, which means if you disagree with a particular lesson you’ve learned, you need to be able to articulate what that perspective is and then carefully refute it, so it’s helpful to include quotes from the text and explanations of them—and then, present a clear argument that supports your point of view in response.

A) Form

Personal essay or blog (with rant option) are popular, though you can approach this writing any way you choose, so long as it meets the assignment requirements. The “safe” way to write the response essay is to use traditional essay-writing form (see checklist), including thesis statement, body paragraphs, etc. However, more experienced writers may opt to get creative or use blog format. Remember that bloggers have a central idea, support evidence, and clear analysis, even though the style of writing may be more casual and creative than we find in a typical essay.

B) Prompts & Process

1. Brainstorm and Freewrite.

You might start by brainstorming some of the beliefs, attitudes, practices, and personal history that have formed your understanding of gender and sexuality. Or you might start listing burning questions you have about gender and culture. Think about the attitudes about women, gender, and sexuality that you grew up with, for example. Who or what influenced your own beliefs, attitudes, and practices most? How would you describe your own attitudes and experiences? What are some of the problems you see for your generation and social group of women? What are some of the benefits you see? Then, consider which articles/media seem to be most relevant to your brainstorming. You will ultimately incorporate them into your response paper, make the authors' ideas clear, and relate them to your own. Everyone has original, thought-provoking perspectives to share, just by virtue of being individuals with unique life experiences. Freewrite about these experiences.

2. Research

Select one or more class readings to reference and summarize what you believe are the relevant points that relate to your paper. Then, research peer-reviewed original sources and/or credible secondary sources to find information about your topic that could support your position.

3. Get Inspired

If you choose the blog option, it might be helpful to read other bloggers such as Lindy West (www.lindywest.com/work), who typically writes about related topics. If you wonder how to tap personal narratives in thought-provoking ways, you might be inspired by other women's stories at <http://imaginingourselves.imow.org/pb/Welcome.aspx>.

4. Get a Main Idea and Organize Others

Write possible main ideas for your paper (typically arguable statements). Then, make statements about why you believe your main idea is true. Those are supporting points. Collect research, personal narratives, explanations, descriptions, etc., under each main point so that you can use them for support.

5. Draft and Revise

A common misconception is that a first or second draft of a paper is a final draft. A paper in this stage is not ready to submit for a grade and needs about 80% more time devoted to it in revisions and edits (the “80-20 rule” is alive and well here). Plan for most of your time to be spent *after* you have your first draft. Reorganize ideas, rewrite sections that could be stronger, refine your writing style. As you're revising, take a look at the grading rubrics for this assignment to make sure you're meeting criteria.

6. Final Edits

Save the small stuff for last. If you have difficulty with grammar, style, and/or mechanics, visit the Saunders Writing Center to receive help. Allow yourself the necessary time to do this.

7. Proofread your paper ALOUD



Proofreading is most effectively done with two people. Each of you has a copy of your essay, and one reads aloud to the other. Each time one of you catches an error, you correct it. When students read their papers aloud, they often hear all sorts of issues they would never see otherwise.



C) Writing Resources

Millennial Speak  [PDF](#)

Juliet's Proofreading Marks:  [PDF](#) |  [Video](#)

Juliet's Grammar Tips:  [PDF](#) |  [Videos](#)

Juliet's Style Tips ("Words to Avoid")  [PDF](#) |  [Videos](#)

OPTIONAL: Juliet's "Writing Help" Videos Here:  [PPT](#) |  [Videos](#)

■ FINAL PROJECT: PAPER & ORAL PRESENTATION

(Use cover sheet template designed for final project.) The final project is exploratory and allows students to combine formal research with autoethnographic writing about a "real-world" field experience on the topic of their choice relating to women's studies (see sample ideas for final projects in separate document). Develop a project that shows your creativity and critical thinking skills and allows you to apply and extend knowledge you have acquired in the class.

A) Deliverables

- 1) a paper (approximately 6-10 pages in length) that describes and analyzes the field experience, shows informed personal perspective, and reports on research from at least three sources outside the class (MLA, APA or CMS documentation is required for citations—see the general "Essay Checklist");
- 2) an oral presentation of all of the above, including visual elements of some kind (e.g., PowerPoint).

B) Approach

In the tradition of a large body of feminist criticism, this project will openly combine personal experience (first-person, autoethnography) with traditional research. There is no single "right" strategy for writing the paper. Some students have broken it down into three sections (first-person experience, third-person formal research, and conclusions), while others combine first-person point of view with formal research throughout. As with the essay responses, we are looking for thought-provoking, insightful, complex ideas written with clarity and organization. However, beyond those requirements, the final project is a more thorough, thoughtful, formal project that includes substantial outside research.

FINAL PROJECT | Sample Topics

These are just examples from past students. You can choose a topic below or develop your own topic.

Sample Topic	Sample Research Idea	Field Experience Idea
Nudism	History, Theory, Practices, Representations	Visit a nudist resort and write about your experience
Sexual Orientation and/or Practices	History, Theory, Practices, Representations	Seek an experience that exposes you to people whose sexual orientations and/or practices locate them outside of the mainstream and write about that experience, as well as your own sexual orientation/practices.
Gender Identity	History, Theory, Practices, Representations	Seek an experience that exposes you to people whose gender identity locates them outside of the mainstream, and write about that experience, as well as your own gender identity. For example, interview someone transgendered and/or a doctor who performs sex reassignment surgery.
Veiling	History, Theory, Practices, Representations	Visit a mosque and/or interview someone who covers in an Islamic tradition, and write about your experience, as well as your own practices covering your body with clothing, etc.
Police Women	History, Theory, Practices, Representations	Ride along with a female police officer, interviewing her about how gender affects her job and how the physical nature of her job becomes part of her identity.
Sex Workers	History, Theory, Practices, Representations	Seek an experience that exposes you to sex workers (people who make a living through sexual services), and write about that experience, as well as your own perspectives on this work.
Domestic Violence	History, Theory, Practices, Representations	Visit a battered women's shelter, interview subjects, write about personal experiences, set up an info table in Vaughn Center, etc.
Women Doctors	History, Theory, Practices, Representations	Make rounds with a female doctor, interviewing her about how gender affects her job.
Cosmetic Surgery	History, Theory, Practices, Representations	Interview doctor(s) and/or subject(s) and offer your own perspectives
Cybersex and/or Cybersexuality	Theory, Practices, Representations	Join online forum or experiment in a MMORPG and write about your experience.
Rape	History, Theory, Practices, Representations	Visit a rape crisis center, interview someone who has been date-raped, and/or set up an info table in Vaughn Center. Write about your experiences, etc.
Working with a Female Artist or Filmmaker	History, Theory, Practices, Representations associated with project	Creative Project
Blogging, Publishing, New Media	History, Theory, Practices, Representations	Create your own blog or publication on a topic relating to the course.
Art / Performance	History, Theory, Practices, Representations	Visit artwork or performance related to course subject matter—or create your own artwork or performance.
Your Own Topic Here		

ESSAY SUBMISSION | Cover Sheet

YOUR NAME: _____ Class: _____ Days/Time: _____

TITLE: _____ Submission Date: _____

GRADING RUBRIC	NOTES
<p>Accuracy Does the paper reflect accurate knowledge of the readings/media assigned, or do there seem to be misunderstandings about what the author is saying? If there is no mention of the readings, this area will score zero.</p>	
<p>Critical Perspective Does the paper relate personal experience to the readings with insightful critical analysis, or is it limited to simple summaries?</p>	
<p>Complexity Is this paper using college-level rhetoric, analysis, and language appropriate for the course level? Or are the language and ideas simplistic?</p>	
<p>Thought-provoking Dimension Do these ideas push this dialogue outside of the expected realm? Would they be interesting to a larger audience? Or is this predictable fare?</p>	
<p>Writing Skill Is this college-level writing, appropriate for the course level? Does it demonstrate the criteria on the essay rubric for paper-writing? For example, is it clear, thorough, well organized? Does it demonstrate correct spelling, grammar, mechanics and style? Or does it reflect need for improvement? (See rubric for Writing.)</p>	
<p>Submission Requirements Checklist (-1 point for missing either of the first two)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> submitted in hard copy and on Blackboard with this cover page <input type="checkbox"/> stapled or binder clipped (no paper clips, loose-leaf, dog-ears, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> The paper is backed up on a cloud server (e.g., Dropbox; Office 365) as well as your hard drive. <input type="checkbox"/> The word "REVISION" written large at the top if this is a revised paper and the original graded paper stapled behind this new one. 	

GROUP PROJECT | Guidelines

Each group should submit the group work report below and agree on it before submission. Each member must pull his or her weight or may be dismissed by the group. Dismissals are not punitive. Dismissed group members complete the full project by themselves or find another group that will take them in. Group members may switch groups, but must make up their percentage of work. Dismissals and group switches must be coordinated with the instructor. Please contact me right away if there's any conflict—early intervention is most constructive. Please don't wait and let resentments build.

Name _____

Describe the work this group member contributed. Did this member contribute equally to meetings, and to the production of the pieces, in time, effort, and skill? Answer here and explain below. YES NO

Percentage of time, effort, and skill devoted out of 100% possible:

%

Name _____

Describe the work this group member contributed. Did this member contribute equally to meetings, and to the production of the pieces, in time, effort, and skill? Answer here and explain below. YES NO

Percentage of time, effort, and skill devoted out of 100% possible:

%

Name _____

Describe the work this group member contributed. Did this member contribute equally to meetings, and to the production of the pieces, in time, effort, and skill? Answer here and explain below. YES NO

Percentage of time, effort, and skill devoted out of 100% possible:

%

Name _____

Describe the work this group member contributed. Did this member contribute equally to meetings, and to the production of the pieces, in time, effort, and skill? Answer here and explain below. YES NO

Percentage of time, effort, and skill devoted out of 100% possible:

%



TITLE OF FINAL PROJECT HERE

[COVER SHEET TEMPLATE]

Description
Briefly describe your project below:

NAMES	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF WORK
Name Group Member #1:	[Briefly describe this member's role in the presentation.]
Name Group Member #2:	[Briefly describe this member's role in the presentation.]

SUBMISSION CHECKLIST
<p>(-1 point for missing either of the first two)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> The paper is submitted in hard copy and on Blackboard with this cover page.<input type="checkbox"/> Stapler or binder clip has been used (no paper clips, loose-leaf, dog-ears, etc.).<input type="checkbox"/> The paper is backed up on a cloud server (e.g., Dropbox; Office 365) as well as your hard drive.<input type="checkbox"/> No valuable original materials are being submitted (only digital copies when included).

Writing Skill Rubric | Juliet Davis

Criteria	Excellent/Outstanding	Average	Below Average
Content	The paper demonstrates originality and complexity, exceptional understanding of subject matter, insightful critical analysis, highly effective rhetoric. The paper pushes dialogue beyond predictable fare and could be interesting to larger audiences.	The paper demonstrates strong understanding of subject matter, fairly insightful critical analysis, and some complexity in ideas and rhetoric. The paper is fairly predictable in its points, but solid.	The paper may reflect misconceptions about the subject matter, lack critical analysis in favor of overly simplistic summaries/descriptions, and/or be overly simplistic in its ideas and rhetoric.
Structure, Organization	The paper is strongly structured. For example, conventionally structured essays contain an engaging introduction and clear thesis statement. Each body paragraph presents a main idea that supports the thesis statement and is well supported by evidence/examples. The paper's conclusion is not merely redundant but reflects thoughtfully on the topic that has unfolded. Unconventionally structured essays utilize creative alternatives to advance a main idea, but the ideas can be clearly followed.	The paper is fairly well structured but shows some weaknesses. For example, the introduction and/or conclusion may be perfunctory rather than particularly engaging. A thesis statement is clear. Body paragraphs are fairly well organized and supported but perhaps could be more so. Unconventionally structured essays may appear to be a bit disorganized rather than easy to follow.	The paper needs structure. For example, there may be no clear thesis—or the thesis may be hard to find. Body paragraph(s) may not have clear main ideas or be strategically organized to advance the thesis statement. A conclusion may need more substantive ideas or may not be present. Unconventionally structured essays may be hard to follow.
Clarity, Coherency	Ideas are clearly developed and thoroughly explained. One idea flows eloquently to the next, with clear transitions as needed. The paper stays on topic.	Most ideas are clearly developed and thoroughly explained. Some could be more so. Ideas may be a bit disjointed or need transitions to eloquently flow.	More clarity and/or coherency is needed. For example, a substantial number of ideas need to be more clearly explained and/or need to flow much more clearly and smoothly into others. The paper may stray from topic.
Language, Style, Grammar, Mechanics, Spelling	The writing is flawless in its grammar, mechanics—and adept in its use of language and vocabulary. Language is precise, concise, vivid, engaging. Sentence structures are varied and eloquent.	The paper is fairly solid in language, grammar, mechanics, and spelling. Vocabulary may be average rather than particularly adept. Language may demonstrate some redundancy, unfounded generalizations, and/or vagueness. Sentence structures may be somewhat redundant and/or inellegant.	The paper reflects substantial need for improvement in style, grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling.
Format	MLA, APA, or CMS format is used. Outside resources (if assigned/referenced) are properly cited and effectively incorporated to advance the	MLA, APA, or CMS format is used. Outside resources (if assigned/referenced) are properly cited; however, they could be utilized more appropriately/effectively.	Errors in MLA format impede readability. Outside resources may not be properly cited and/or need to be incorporated into the text more effectively.

Writing Skill Checklist

- MLA, APA, or CMS style format and documentation: see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>.
- Are outside resources (if any) properly cited and incorporated to support your ideas?

Content

- Does the paper reflect accurate knowledge of the readings/media/topic assigned, or do there seem to be misunderstandings about the subject matter?
- Does the paper demonstrate insightful critical analysis, or is it limited to simple summaries and obvious descriptions?
- Does the paper demonstrate college-level complexity in rhetoric, analysis, and language? Or are the language and ideas simplistic?
- Do these ideas push this dialogue outside of the expected realm?
Would they be interesting to a larger audience? Or is this predictable fare?
- Does the paper reflect an understanding of the lessons featured in class?

Structure and Organization

- Is there a clear thesis statement or main idea that serves as central focus of the essay?
(In conventional essays, the thesis statement appears at the end of the introduction.)
- Does each body paragraph have a clear main idea?
(Usually, the first sentence of the paragraph contains it.)
- Is each idea supported (e.g., by evidence, examples, description)?
- Is there an appropriate introduction and conclusion?

Clarity and Coherency

- Are the ideas fully developed and explained, or are they vague or confusing?
- Are supporting points explained thoroughly, or is there important information missing?
- Does one idea flow to the next, or do the ideas seem disjointed?
- Did the paper stay on topic, or did it stray at points?

Language, Style, Grammar, Mechanics

- Have you used standard English, or do you find slang/vernacular that might not be appropriate? Are you utilizing sophisticated vocabulary when it could be effective?
- Have you used precise, careful language, or do you find hyperbole, connotative language, unfounded generalizations?
- Is your language vivid and specific or do you see words that might be vague or bland?
- Is your writing concise (economical), or do you need to edit/cut words?
Have you checked your work for redundancy?
- Have you varied your sentence structure, or do you find that many sentences are similar? (Avoid redundant subject-verb beginnings to sentences.)
- Have you run spell-check? Have you checked your grammar? Proofread ALOUD, slowly?

