

Writing Assignments for Unit 3

Civic Literacy

“Civic literacy is the ability to think, read, write, speak, and listen as an **effective citizen**...[i.e., as someone] pursuing social justice locally, nationally, and/or globally (Ratcliffe, 2006, p. 429).

Unit Three Paper: Open-Form Essay for *Newsweek*'s “My Turn”

For this unit paper, as the heading above indicates, you are to use *Newsweek* “My Turn” essays as a model for writing **an open-form essay that connects your personal experience—or the experience of someone you know well—with a social justice issue at the local, national, or global level**. Your purpose: engage your readers’ imaginations so that they care about this issue, maybe even want to take action in connection with it.

What’s different this unit is *open-form*, which means it won’t have a top-down, thesis-support structure, but should take an engaging, evocative approach to organization that guides your readers along, as ABGW (2009) says, making them “codiscoverers of ideas and insights” (p. 547). Also new in this unit is an emphasis on *aesthetic language*, again in the words of ABGW, “language used to please and entertain” (p. 547). Finally, the “My Turn” model puts strict constraints on length: < 1,000 words. [It **must** fit on the My Turn Template.] Oh, and guess what: no reference format, APA or otherwise. You’ll need to refer to sources as a magazine article would.

Important Notice About Format: You will need to submit two versions of your Unit 3 essay, one on the formatted on the My Turn on D2L, submitted via the D2L discussion forum for everyone to read, and one in regular paper, double-space format for Dr. Chappell to grade.

Due Date for Peer Review: Tues., Mar. 31

Due Date for Submission to Instructor and Oral Briefings: Thurs., Apr. 2



The Road to Success

1. Think about a social issue with which you have been involved via personal experience, volunteer work, or observation.
2. Think about powerful stories associated with those experiences.
3. Consider how the stories, or one in particular, intertwines personal and cultural elements.
4. Reflect on what the stories mean to you.
5. Consider why a general, public audience—e.g., *Newsweek* readers—could/would/should be concerned about this issue.
6. How might you write one of those stories so that *Newsweek* readers could/would/should be interested in, perhaps moved by, it?
7. How do you want readers to respond?
8. Check *Newsweek*'s “My Turn” Web site (linked on D2L) for sample “My Turn” essays.
9. Connect all this with the strategies for civic rhetoric and public persuasion that we will discuss in class.
10. Write, read, write, re-write, get feedback, and revise again. Assemble portfolio and, suddenly, it’s Spring!

Grading criteria will be discussed in class and posted on D2L along with the cover sheet for you to use when you submit your unit portfolio.



Short Writes and Oral Presentations for Unit 3

SW #1/IOP #1: **Due** Thurs., Mar. 5. Prepare **notes** for **TELLING** a **two-minute** story about a time when you got involved with a community issue. Read ABGW 547–554 about making it a story, not merely a chronology. For people who didn't present ads in Unit One, telling us this story may count as an Informal Oral Presentation. (Everybody needs at least one informal presentation.)

SW #2: **Due** Tues., Mar. 17. Audience analysis of *Newsweek* (use the issue dated Mar. 2 or Mar. 9). **GOAL:** the *Newsweek* audience is your target audience for Paper #3, so you need to figure out who they are and what they want. One or two paragraphs (10–15 sentences). Jot answers to the following audience analysis questions, noting evidence that supports your answers, then formulate the paragraph(s), using full sentences. Figure out your main points to start the paragraphs with. For evidence, use ads, story content, and the rhetorical pitch of headlines on main stories (especially cover story).

1. What interests do the editors seem to assume will capture readers' attention?
2. What values do advertisers seem to assume will capture readers' attention and sell products to them? (Base your answer on multiple ads.)
3. How old is the audience? (Or, into what age group[s] does the magazine project its audience?)
4. What is the economic or social condition of the audience?
5. What general philosophies of government or politics does the audience hold?
6. What values/beliefs would be common to an audience with the characteristics you note in questions #1–5? Especially consider education, religion, and work.
7. Which of the values and concerns above (economic, social, political, education, etc.) seems most and least important to the presumed audience?
8. What seems to be the magazine's primary focus—past, present, future? In general, what can you tell about how the audience feels regarding its heritage or history, events of the present, or hopes for the future?
9. In general, do audience members expect certain patterns of thought in what they read? In other words, if you see certain patterns across a number of stories, you can be confident that that's what audience members expect.

SW #3: **Due** Tues., Mar. 24. Use one or two paragraphs to profile **your** "My Turn" audience and describe the **rhetorical situation** your essay will create for them to respond to. Here's the step-by-step:

1. What segment of the overall *Newsweek* audience do you want your essay to engage?
2. Rhetorical situations have three major components—audience, constraints (i.e., limits & variables), and a need to discourse, sometimes called an **exigence**. What is the exigence that will shape your essay? That is, what flaw do you seek to remedy by writing? Or, to put it another way, what is calling you to write this essay?
3. How do you want your audience to respond to the essay?
4. Right now, what is your likely strategy for getting them to do that? (To be discussed in greater detail. You will also need to consider how to overcome your audience's potential resistance.)

