FIE

DUE FIRST DRAFT, 500 words Friday, December 4th, 11:59 PM (via Canvas)
SECOND DRAFT, 700 words Friday, December 11th, 11:59 PM (via Canvas)

TEXTS

Your essay must cite and analyze one passage from one of the following readings:

Tolentino, Jia. “Always be optimizing.” *Trick mirror: Reflections on self-delusion*. Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2020.
Ho, Karen. “Biographies of Hegemony.” *Liquidated: an ethnography of Wall Street*. Duke University Press, 2009.
Foer, Franklin. “Mark Zuckerberg’s war on free will.” *World without mind*. Random House, 2017.
Watters, Ethan. "The Mega-Marketing of Depression in Japan." *Crazy Like Us: The Globalization of the American Psyche* (2010): 187-248.
Armstrong, Karen. “Homo religiosus.” *The case for God*. Random House Digital, Inc., 2009.

PROMPT

Fundamental to Expository Writing is the understanding that writing is an instrument of thought and, as Kurt Spellmeyer and Richard Miller note in the “Preface” to The New Humanities Reader, the “movement from the known to the unknown is the essence of all learning” (xix). This semester has required us all to move “from the known to the unknown” like never before. What, then, might we learn about the “unknown” of the present moment, given the writing you’ve done throughout the course? How might the thinking we’ve done together in Expos this semester help us understand this unprecedented time? While you are required to engage substantively with at least one major concept from a text, this is a more personal, more open assignment. Moments of self-reference, anecdotes, and personal reflection are welcome in this assignment when you put them in relationship to class concepts.

For our final assignment, choose a concept from one of this semester’s essays and use it as a “lens” or “frame” to interpret either your current experience or our collective life. I’m choosing collective as a purposely broad term, and it will be your work to create its boundaries. The goal here is to extend the critical thinking work you have done in Expos beyond the confines of our Zoom classroom.

I have listed below a concept from each reading that you may use as a starting place, but you may also pick a different one that has particularly resonated with your experience.

Tolentino’s “optimizing” mindset
Ho’s description of Wall Street’s self-reinforcing cult of “impressiveness”
Foer’s discussion of “radical transparency”
Watters’ idea of “explanatory models” that define (and may also constraint) how we see the world and how we react to it
Armstrong discussion of religion as a “daily practice” that’s not dogmatic but moral.

PRE-WRITING

Pre-writing steps:

- Choose a relevant quotation from one of the readings.
- Perform a close reading analysis of key terms or concepts (try taking interpretative risks as you do so! Look for unexpected or surprising analyses or connections.)
- Use the key insights you came upon to shed light on a current event of personal, collective or social interest.

WRITING

- Using the material that you have generated while performing the steps outlined above, compose two cohesive paragraphs highlighting an issue or current interest.

The paragraphs should be structured in a way that's similar to the body paragraphs of our analytic essays: they should have a topic sentence, followed by evidence that's properly contextualized, an analysis that establishes a connection with another, upcoming piece of evidence, potentially some further analysis and then a conclusion. You may then transition to the next paragraph.

FORMAT

You must proofread carefully.

Quotations should be carefully transcribed, punctuated, and attributed. For bibliographic conventions, you may use MLA (preferred), APA, or Chicago style. Please follow the conventions of standard edited American English. Use 1.0-inch margins on all sides, double-spacing, and twelve-point serif font (e.g. Times New Roman, Garamond, Palatino, or Baskerville). Number all pages. The paper should have your name, the date, and course information on the first page (as outlined in the attached "Style Guide"). Title your paper. Submit your paper electronically via Sakai's "Assignments." Email submissions are not acceptable.