

Writing Project One: Identity and Identifiers: Hashtags and Authenticity

PURPOSE:

This first writing project introduces writing as a process and asks you to focus on developing your **prewriting**, **invention**, and **critical reasoning** skills. Ultimately, the goal is to produce a clear, critically reasoned argument. During this project, we will discuss methods to explore ideas in greater depth and question the implicit arguments that are made through those assertions. We will discuss methods for structuring academic arguments and how to move beyond the limitations of essay templates such as the five-paragraph essay.

RELATED READINGS:

Annalisa, Merelli, "Sociality Barbie Hits Uncomfortably Close to Home" *The Atlantic* (9 September 2015) (On Bb)

PREMISE:

When we are asked about our identity, we often describe it in terms of groups that we belong to, such as sports teams, clubs, or other kinds of social groups. We may also mention our schools, occupations, or specific workplaces. We may use terms that identify our genders, ethnicities, or nationalities. Where we live—the neighborhood or type of residence—may also influence our sense of who we are. The languages and dialects we speak in those groups also shape our sense of who we are and how others see us. Sometimes we can choose these labels for ourselves, but other times these labels are placed upon us by others or as the result of others' actions.

In social media settings, hashtags function as identifiers that can allow posts to be sorted or categorized according to shared labels. By clicking or searching a hashtag, you can see content that is similarly tagged from a broad range of users. Hashtags have a wide range of uses, and their specific usage can depend on the social media platform on which they are being used. Because individual users choose whether to include hashtags with each post, social media users can curate an identity they wish to portray.

Not all hashtags are created equal. The number of posts using a particular hashtag can vary greatly, and the popularity of a particular hashtag might be short-lived. The purposes for hashtag use can also be called into question. Are users including hashtags as an opportunity to increase potential views, or are the hashtags an **authentic** attempt by the user to identify their post? Are these ideas mutually exclusive? How does the concept of **authenticity** relate to identity and diversity? This assignment asks you to think critically about hashtags as a form of identity construction, and to question the practices that you use/encounter through social media.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT:

Reflect on **identity construction through hashtags**. In a thesis-driven essay of 4-6 pages, respond to the following prompt:

How are hashtags an authentic reflection of identity through social media?

In crafting your response, consider the ways in which hashtags might be used and the impact those uses could have on identity and diversity. Be sure to question not only the effect(s) of hashtag use but also the conditions that gave rise to them. (N.B., if you do not use social media and would prefer to talk about other forms of identity marking [bumper stickers, e.g.], please contact me to discuss alternate arrangements.)

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

- In this project, we're focusing on the ways in which individuals build identities in online spaces. Frame your argument around the ways in which someone curates an identity through the use of hashtags.
- While many hashtags address important cultural issues such as #BlackLivesMatter, #OscarsSoWhite, etc., if you choose to examine a similar issue, you should focus on the ways that those post(s) reflect the identity of the poster rather than a discussion of the issue; these issues are important, and we will discuss hashtag activism in a later assignment.
- While many people associate hashtags with Twitter, they are not exclusive to that platform. If you have much more experience or preference for another social media platform that uses hashtags (or a similar tagging system such as Tumblr tags), you may focus on those platforms.
- The question of authenticity might be difficult to assess, and this assignment is not an exercise in validating/invalidating another person's identity online. Instead, you are encouraged to question the means by which one can adopt/assign/curate identit(ies) online and how those means achieve the desired ends.

ASSIGNMENT CALENDAR

DATE	TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS
WEEK ONE	
Monday, August 22	Introduction to WRIT 150; Syllabus Review; Diagnostic Writing
Wednesday, August 24	Introduction to Writing Project 1 (WP1); Appropriating the Prompt; Introduce Cultural Event Ancillary Writing
Friday, August 26	READING DUE: Merelli "Sociality Barbie" (On Bb) HW DUE: Reading response (see prompt on Bb) Brainstorming the topic: Inartistic and Artistic Proofs (Fact/Idea) List

WEEK TWO	
Monday, August 29	READING DUE: WRIT 150 Coursebook, "Thesis Development" (p. 41-45) BRING TO CLASS: A list of 3-5 arguments/issues that you want to write about Hypothesis and Thesis: Narrowing Down Your Central Claim; Provisional Thesis Workshop
Wednesday, August 31	READING DUE: Anne Lamott, "Shitty First Drafts" Reading Discussion; "Down drafting" workshop (Bring laptop if desired)
Friday, September 2	READING DUE: Crowley and Hawhee, "The Exordium, or Beginning" (On Bb) Peer Group Drafting Activity HW DUE: Post results of peer group drafting exercise on Bb by 8 p.m., on Friday, September 2
WEEK THREE	
Monday, September 5	LABOR DAY HOLIDAY: No Classes
Wednesday, September 7	Speed Dating Activity: Introductions (bring a printed copy of your introductory paragraph for in-class activity)
Friday, September 9	WP1 Individual Conferences: Meet with me during scheduled conference time; bring or post on Bb first draft on project by conference time HW DUE: Post reflection for revision plan on Bb by Saturday, September 10, at 5 p.m. HW for Monday, September 12: REVISE WP1 (post on Bb and bring printed copy to class)
WEEK FOUR	
Monday, September 12	Peer Review Workshop In Class (Bring printed copy of revised draft and submit on Bb) BRING WRIT 150 Coursebook to class Discussion: Writing Program Grading Rubric
Wednesday, September 14	WRITING PROJECT 1 DUE on Blackboard by beginning of class Cultural Event Ancillary Writing Due on Bb by Friday, September 16 Introduction to WP2