

Writing Project Three: Multiple Identities: Navigating Academic Conversations for Researched Arguments

PURPOSE:

This third writing project asks you to continue developing the skills we've discussed in the first two projects and adds an increased focus on building **support** for an argument. During this project, we will discuss methods to find and engage with academic sources on a particular topic through library research. Particular attention will be paid to integrating the multiple perspectives of authors and developing greater awareness of how **style** plays into source integration.

RELATED READINGS:

Bernstein, Mary, and Verta Taylor. "Identity Politics." *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements*, edited by David A. Snow et al., Blackwell Publishing, 2013, pp. 1-3.

Bonilla, Yarimar, and Jonathan Rosa. "#Ferguson: Digital Protest, Hashtag Ethnography, and the Racial Politics of Social Media in the United States." *American Ethnologist*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2015, pp. 4-17.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. "Letter to My Son." *The Atlantic*, 4 July 2015, www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/07/tanehisi-coates-between-the-world-and-me/397619/.

Morris, Wesley. "The Year We Obsessed Over Identity." *The New York Times Magazine*, 6 Oct. 2015, www.nytimes.com/2015/10/11/magazine/the-year-we-obsessed-over-identity.html.

Smedley, Audrey. "'Race' and the Construction of Human Identity." *American Anthropologist*, vol. 100, no. 3, 1998, pp. 690-702, www.jstor.org/stable/682047.

PREMISE:

While the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter has been around since the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the death of Trayvon Martin, the hashtag took on a renewed fervor after the killings of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO, and Eric Garner, in New York City, NY. The use of the hashtag has sparked frequent debates over the arguments contained in the hashtag, and it has also given rise to a multitude of related hashtags.

The issues of race in the United States obviously predate the development of **#BlackLivesMatter**, but the hashtag has resulted in greater awareness of these issues because of its popularity on social media. While the hashtag is important for acknowledging the issues in police-related deaths, the conversations and arguments do not begin nor end with the hashtag. Instead, they are an **exhortation** to have these difficult but necessary conversations.

In their discussion of identity politics, Mary Bernstein and Verta Taylor state:

Identities can be deployed to challenge **institutionalized relations of power**, challenging the division between what is cultural and what is political. By taking seriously how conceptions of power inform collective action, social movement scholars can show how activist concerns with representation and recognition are related to both institutional structures and the political economy. (3)

Race relations are a major issue throughout the history of the United States, and much of our cultural identity is formed around key developments in race relations. Issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, civil rights, and countless others are often built around the concept of **identity politics**, in which individuals might find political or social alignment because of the traits they share with a particular community. Identity politics can be a powerful means of addressing social issues.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT:

Identify a social issue that is connected to discussions of identity and diversity; consider the role that identity politics may play in that issue. In a thesis-driven essay of 5-7 pages, respond to the following prompt:

How do diverse identities and voices inform an important social issue of your choosing?

In crafting your response, consider the ways in which these sources and multiple voices might be used to complicate the issue and provide a nuanced perspective on the topic. Also consider the impact those uses could have on identity and diversity. Be sure to question not only the messages of those sources but also the beliefs, assumptions, and ideologies that inform their approaches to the issue.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

- Keep in mind the thematic for this WRIT 150 course: Identity and Diversity. As you explore the arguments related to the issue that you select, give consideration to the ways in which the author(s) and yourself are positioning your identities. In what ways are those identities aiding or impairing the ability to persuade?
- You are writing an argument using an understanding of the various perspectives related to the issue. Your argument should demonstrate a nuanced understanding of this issue building from the multiple voices you consult
- The purpose of this project is to write persuasively, not to argue without concern for audience. You should be engaging **rhetorically** with your readers. While it may be difficult to change the minds of others, you can still engage with them respectfully.
- For this assignment, please compose a draft following MLA style guidelines.

- Be sure to use proper citation and attribution when doing so. This helps build your *ethos* as a credible rhetor, but it also ensures that you avoid plagiarizing the work of others.
- You may want to consult the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) if you need assistance with citation and/or attribute (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>). There are many other online resources for help with citation, including resources from USC Libraries.

ASSIGNMENT CALENDAR

DATE	TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS
WEEK ONE	
Monday, October 10	Introduction to WP3; Introduction to Annotated Bibliography Assignment; Critical Reading Habits for Research (<i>Course Book</i> , p. 4)
Wednesday, October 12	Reading Due: Bernstein and Taylor "Identity Politics"; Morris "The Year We Obsessed Over Identity" In-class discussion: Discussing our identities; Finding academic sources; Differences between popular and academic sources (<i>Course Book</i> , pp. 103-108)
Friday, October 14	Reading Due: Smedley "'Race' and the Construction of Human Identity" Homework Due: Reading response to Smedley due on Blackboard by beginning of class In-class discussion: Race and history; choosing topics for WP3; Speed-dating topic ideas
WEEK TWO	
Monday, October 17	Reading Due: Coates "Letter to My Son" Homework Due: Reading response to Coates due on Blackboard by beginning of class In-class discussion: Coates' article; Toulmin Framework for Arguments (<i>Course Book</i> , pp. 8-10)
Wednesday, October 19	Reading Due: Bonilla and Rosa "#Ferguson: Digital Protest, Hashtag Ethnography, and the Racial Politics of Social Media in the United States" In-class discussion: Bonilla and Rosa; Paragraph Organization Activity
Friday, October 21	First Draft Due on Blackboard by class time In-class Peer Review
WEEK THREE	
Monday, October 24	Revised Draft Due on Blackboard by Monday, October 24 Individual Conferences in my office – No class meeting

Wednesday, October 26	Individual Conferences in my Office – No class meeting Ancillary Writing Project Annotated Bibliography Due on Blackboard by 11:59 p.m.
Friday, October 28	In-class activity: Mini Peer Review—spot checking issues in WP3 (Bring current draft of WP3 to class for feedback)
WEEK FOUR	
Monday, October 31	WP3 Final Draft Due by 11:59 p.m. on Blackboard Introduce WP4