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A New Perspective on the Sociological Perspective

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Document

SOCI 101 PROFESSOR REYMERS
INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY FALL 2013

Essay Writing Assignment 1: The Sociological Perspective

The first writing assignment involves integrating your understanding of the relationship between self and society as we have come to understand it via investigations into the elements of culture, socialization, and social structure. Your essay should be 1000 words typed (approximately 3 pages) and should be descriptive, definitive and written in a proper grammatical style for essays (standard college-level prose).

Imagine that, at your young age, you have become famous (do NOT write why; -5 points if you write why you are now famous) and that a big book publisher wants you to write your autobiography (giving you a \$20,000 advance simply to write an outline of your book). The company says that you should submit a 1000-word summary of your autobiography by Monday September 16th to collect your advance.

Grading Rubric:

(1) STYLE:
Type your 1000-word essay using a standard font (Times New Roman or similar) and point size (10-12), with 1" margins, double-spaced, stapled, with your name typed or written clearly on the BACK of the paper. DO NOT include cover page, illustrations, charts or figures.

(2) DEFINITION:
Somewhere within your essay you must define and describe the following terms: **sociology, society, self, norms, roles, institutions, culture, and socialization**. Be sure to put each term used in **bold type**.

(3) READING COMPREHENSION:
Include in the essay at least one reference to the readings you have been assigned so far this semester (*Intro to Sociology textbook, "Body Ritual...", "Extreme Isolation"*). Include references to recommended readings for extra credit. You do not need to use full reference citation format, but you MUST note the author(s) by name when you make reference to their ideas.

(4) CONNECTION:
You must use at least one personal example within the essay, a concrete story from your life demonstrating how three or more of the terms you are defining are connected.

(5) STRUCTURE:
There should be a clear structure in the paper stipulating what you will be talking about in the essay (for example, "The story of my life must be told backward...", or "My autobiography begins with family and ends with myself...") and a clear conclusion in the last paragraph of the paper (for instance, "I have learned from my experience that..." or "The moral of my story is...") highlighting how your society and culture have influenced who you are.

DUE: In class on MONDAY SEPTEMBER 16th.

TERMS

- **Proper** grammatical style
- **Standard** college-level prose
- -5 points if you write *why*
- DO NOT
- Must
- **MUST**
- Must
- Must
- **Clear structure**
- Clear conclusion in the last paragraph

GOALS

Goals v. Theory

Goals of the assignment:

Intended to be a fun first writing assignment for an introductory college-level course. In this short paper, students must define eight vocabulary words (**bolded**) and clearly show that they have read and understood at least one of the required reading assignments up until this point.

Students must use traditional writing conventions to frame the given creative writing prompt, but they must not get too creative. (Should NOT include anything other than words.) This is to be in standard form with a clear structure throughout and a clear conclusion in the last paragraph. They must not divulge any *whys*, but they must throw in a personal story about themselves because this is supposed to be fun.

A lesson in reading closely and following instructions. (The penalty for veering from these instructions is hidden midway through the summary of the creative prompt and will result in the subtraction of half a grade.) This paper must, **MUST**, must, must uphold the power dynamic of the professor/authority and the student, who must conform to all given parameters and expectations.

Theory utilized:

Bain:

"Every pertinent statement has a **suitable place**; in that place it contributes to the general effect; and, out of that place, it makes confusion. (1148)

Aristotle:

"producing the **right impression** of speech" (236)

Hill:

"**proper words in proper places**" (1150)

THEORY

Theory

According to James Berlin, this assignment imparts "a **largely mechanical skill**, important only because it serves students in getting them through school and in advancing them in their professions." (766)

Sharon Crowley would agree and further say that it "provide[s] a list of **universal prescriptions** that [make] evaluation of students papers a **routine matter**." (278) She would also argue that it "**concentrate[s] on the shape of discourse**, rather than on its contents or on the persons who compose and read it" (272)

Analysis:

This assignment asks students to address a book publisher, but the requirements leave no option but for them to write to an academic audience (in this case, their professor).

The structure is definitive under the impression of allowing freedom of expression. Creativity is not actually a priority, as any agency is held tightly within professor-given parameters and guidelines.

Recommendations

Balester: employing **stylistic and rhetorical variation** and experimentation with discourse norms

Aspasia: writing creatively while **rejecting "dominance and submission"** (59)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

ADVANTAGES

Balester: Rather than unwittingly perpetuating assessment practices that penalize students who employ language variety, the policies we enact must include professional development, **encouragement of multiculturalism**, and **tolerance** of all varieties and types of World Englishes. (75)

Aspasia: Praise is due not only for what is done, but also for what is not done. They may steal our souls with their **embellished words**. Such is the art of our rhetoricians, and in such manner does the sound of their words keep ringing in our ears. (61)

Grid Category Analysis

Balester: oversimplifying and standardizing writing; valuing efficiency over dialogue, **oversimplified and overstandardized** (63)

Aspasia: not attempting to knock them down with agnostic arguments, but rather gently drawing them in toward [her] own point of view (59); **recognizing "no superiority except in the repudiation of virtue and wisdom"** (63)

Questions for further study:

Fort argues that the development of a **personal strategy** allowing the individual to establish a meaningful relation between himself and art would at once make writing more difficult and more exciting. How could this theory be applied to make the assignment more closely aligned with its goals?

Welch wants us to reinterpret our standards in ways that take into consideration radical changes in communication. Could allowing more multimodal freedom allow students to demonstrate their mastery of the curriculum while honing their unique strengths in the process?

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

DOCUMENT