**The Media Journal Assignment: ENG151**

BASIC INSTRUCTIONS:

Start a media journal in a notebook. Follow one story, broadcast, writer, station, or another variation for comparison/contrast. Or follow three totally unrelated stories, your choice of medium, venue, and topic. Sketch notes to get the basic info about the medium, story, and details. Put together your notes for three entries in one Media Journal to upload on Blackboard prior to the deadline. In each entry, summarize and respond, with emphasis on journalism ideas and values. Write at least two paragraphs for each entry (summary and response), and then add two concluding paragraphs with overall observations on what you learned from analyzing the media critically while also learning classroom journalism concepts. Be sure to double-space.

TIPS

1. use official/mainstream sources, international news sources (see the links on the right hand side of my web site), or alternative news sources that have professional writing and verification processes -- avoid citizen journalism stuff, wiki-sites, and blogs. Wire service sites are ok.
2. when you summarize, be sure to note what kind of piece you're summing (such as an opinion piece, straightforward news, a feature, a column, etc.). If you're watching broadcast news, it's up to you to observe an entire segment or just one piece of the broadcast. When summarizing, also mention the author, piece title, and source.
3. in your response/reaction for each entry of the Journal, focus your thoughts by using and demonstrating course concepts in your analysis. Feel free to center your analysis on criticism -- what works and what doesn't, what's good and what's bad, what's exploitative and what's great journalism -- while using course concepts relevant to media criticism in your analysis.
4. develop full essay paragraphs (at least three sentences, with focused topic sentences, etc.)

If you need extra English grammar and mechanics review, I encourage you to visit the tutoring center, and here are a few helpful sites:

<http://www.towson.edu/ows/index.htm>
<http://www.towson.edu/ows/indexexercises.htm>

RESPONSE PARAGRAPHS: CRITICAL/ANALYTICAL STRATEGIES

Every entry in your Media Journal should focus on one piece of journalism and consist of at least one full summary paragraph and at least one full paragraph of response. For successful responses, strong paragraph structure will be crucial, so set up a clear overall point for the paragraph in your topic sentence, and stay on that topic in your paragraph development toward a clear concluding sentence. (Do not just stack unorganized observations, because that’s just building a simple list, not a fully developed paragraph.)

Consider the following strategies toward meaningful critical analysis of the journalism pieces you choose:

* **Straightforward journalism analysis** – is it good or bad journalism, and can you explain why?
* **News style and structure analysis** – hard news (on the most current, breaking topics) employs an opening sentence/paragraph known as a lede (to identify the whole story) and inverted pyramid structure to organize the story from most important to least important details. Can you identify and critique this style and structure?
* **Rhetorical analysis** – what are the author’s writing goals (beyond what’s obvious), how does the author pursue those goals rhetorically, and is the author successful?
* **Visual/graphics analysis** – what key visuals are employed, and are they successful, distracting, appropriate, ethical, etc.?
* **Sourcing analysis** – does the piece of journalism cover the story with thorough, balanced, and appropriate use of relevant sources (eyewitnesses, documents, experts, authorities, etc.)? NOTE: Be very careful about blaming a story for being too short, because most news briefs are meant to be brief – for example, the Chicago Sun-Times usually does not cover international news in depth and uses tiny Associated Press briefs to cover stories outside of its coverage/readership area.
* **Ethics** – is the story an example of good, ethical journalism that enhances our democratic society with information people can use to expand their knowledge of the world and exercise freedom? Or is it something else?
* **News value** – given your source (newspaper, web site, TV show, etc.) and its audience/goals, do you think it covered the story adequately, insufficiently, or too much? (Remember to be careful about blaming a news brief for being too brief.)
* **Audience response** – consider how a mixed audience might receive the story/piece you’re observing and if the journalism is successful in appealing to that audience.

Your teacher provides this list to help guide you in critical analysis of the news media, so feel free to develop your own mix of strategies from this list toward building well organized response paragraphs. You may also use these strategies in your overall conclusion to the Media Journal (two paragraphs) in which you can compare/contrast the various sources you’ve used.

UPLOADING THE ASSIGNMENT

First, log in to your Blackboard account by going to the following link and using the same PeopleSoft ID and PASSWORD that you use for every other City Colleges account:

<http://ccc.blackboard.com>

If you do not know your login ID/PASSWORD, then **immediately** go to Room #3921 (third floor) for technical help so that you can use Blackboard and your email accounts regularly after today.

For those of you who can log in, click on your specific ENGLISH 151 section under “MY COURSES.” Then, in the upper left hand corner of the screen, click on “Assignments.” You will then see a link in the middle of the screen for “Media Journal #1,” where you will click on “View/Complete.” Fill in the “Submission Title” with “First Media Journal” or any other title for the file that you like.

You will then be able to submit a file by clicking on “CHOOSE FROM THIS COMPUTER” and finding your document to upload. Let me know if you have any questions.