English 103
Essay #2: Essay examining a word or phrase
Worth: 100 points
Peer Review: Wednesday 3/1 in class
Final Draft Due Date: Friday 3/3 by 11:55pm, post to Canvas

Context:
Over the past few weeks, we have been reading about and discussing language. We have examined the ways that it is used to exert power and to persuade and how this power of persuasion is not always logically sound. In Amanda Montell's *Cultish*, she describes the fanatical power language can possess, its power to persuade us and even to make us feel that we belong. She argues that the power of a cult, in many ways, lies in the ways it employs language. In *Wordslut*, she demonstrates the ways that specific words carry with them meanings created by history and culture and how this language, with its power and persuasiveness, can be used to continue legacies of sexism and racism.

Purpose:
This essay will demonstrate your ability to think critically about the ways we use language, the words we choose, their meanings within broader cultural and historical contexts, and the power language can have to promote often fallacious and oppressive modes of thinking if not used thoughtfully.

Process:

To begin, think of a word or phrase that you often use or just interests or even confuses you (I also provided a long list of possibilities below).

Research the etymology or origin of the word/phrase. How has the meaning changed over time? How has the context, the zeitgeist of the moment, defined your word/phrase? Look for specific examples of the word/phrase in specific contexts in pop culture.

Based on what you learn, make a claim (an argument) about how the specific context has affected the word/phrase's meaning. Your examples will come directly from pop culture and your own experiences. **Your ultimate goal is to persuade your readers that they should use— or stop using—your word or phrase in specific ways, based on the evidence you provide.**

For example: In Amanda Montell's *Wordslut,* she points out that in gendered pairs—such as buddy/sissy, master/mistress—the female gendered words have become insults used to attack a man's masculinity or a woman's sexuality and faithfulness. Yet their male counterparts are still mostly positive. She argues that the English language didn't start out so gendered, and definitely not so negatively skewed against women; instead, those in power corrupted and manipulated language to maintain the patriarchy.

Ask yourself: where did the phrase "it drives me crazy" come from? How does the phrase negatively impact the disability community? How does it reinforce negative stereotypes about mental illness?

Ask yourself: how and why did the term "manslut" originate? Why must we place "man" in front of "slut"? Why assume a slut is female—does the language support this assumption? How are we shaming female sexuality through language?

Your essay should focus on a word, a phrase, or multiple words with similar connotations (for example: bossy, girlboss, and shrew in reference to women). After researching your chosen word or phrase, look for trends—how are they used, when, and why? Give specific examples from pop culture (news, film, art, sports, etc.). Create a working claim/argument about the meaning or potential meanings. **Your essay should be 4 pages,** in MLA format, 12pt. Times New Roman font and double-spaced.

Be sure to begin with a clear introduction and a thesis that states your position, then follow with body paragraphs that develop your main idea with clear examples, and a conclusion that expresses the significance of what you've shared.

Possible words/phrases to investigate:
Are these words potentially racist, sexist, ageist, ableist, etc.?
- Uppity
- Spirit animal
- Paddy wagon
- Long time no see or no can do
- Blacklist, black market, blackball
- Off the reservation
- Eeny, meeny, miney, moe
- Philistine
- Hooligan
- Cake walk, piece of cake, cake walk
- Boys will be boys
- Stud
- Bugger
- Crazy/mad
- Picnic
- Tramp
- Mannish
- Catty/catfight
- Diva
- Prima donna
- Blonde moment
- Little old lady
- PMSing
- Baby brain
- Throw […] like a girl
- A girly girl
- Jailbait
- Heartbreaker
- Don't be a spaz

- That's so nuts
- Blind leading the blind
- Blindspot
- Peanut gallery
- Bastard
- Tart
- Wench
- Courtesan
- Wearing the pants
- Always the bridesmaid, never the bride
- To grow a pair or man up
- One of the guys
- Friend zone
- Bachelors degree
- Feminist/feminism
- Empathy
- Dude
- Tomboy
- Working mother
- Drama queen
- She's asking for it
- Hysterical
- Feisty
- Career woman
- Perky
- Shrew
- Ditzy
- Tease
- Buddy/sissy
- Cowboy up
- Old maid/spinster
- Madam/mistress
- Hussy
- Slut/manslut
- Girlboss
- Cougar
- Prude
- Psycho
- Tone deaf
- Lame
- Special needs

English 103
Essay #3: Persuasion through Empathy
Worth: 150 points
Peer Review: Wednesday 4/19 in class
Final Draft Due Date: Friday 4/21 by 11:55pm, post to Canvas

Context:
Over the past few weeks, we have been reading about and discussing empathy. In the psychology field, empathy is defined as the ability to recognize, understand, and share the thoughts and feelings of another person.

Developing empathy is crucial for establishing connections and building compassion. Some studies show that empathy is on the decline in the US, but by experiencing another person's point of view, we can increase empathic behavior.

Empathy is not the same as sympathy or compassion. Sympathy is feeling concerned for someone else, while empathy involves sharing the other person's emotions. Compassion is an empathic understanding of a person's feelings accompanied by wanting to help or fix.

Researchers believe that we can choose and cultivate empathy if we spend more time with people who are different from ourselves or read about their experiences. So far, we've read about and discussed empathy, now let's write about it and examine its connections to the art of persuasion.

Purpose:
This essay will demonstrate your ability to think critically about the ways we use language to cultivate empathy and the connections between empathy and persuasion.

Process:
Pick your own misunderstood group or person (perhaps even choose someone or some group you dislike or disagree with). Conduct your research. Can you find empathy in yourself for your chosen group/person? For the situation they find themselves in? Can you evoke empathy for your subject(s) in your reader? Can you use this empathy to persuade your reader to understand the person or group in question, even if they don't agree with them?

Think about Jamison's essays in *The Empathy Exams*, especially "Lost Boys (The West Memphis Three)," "Devil's Bait (Morgies)," and "The Immortal Horizon (Berkley Marathoners)," and "Fog Count (Charlie Engle, ultrarunner imprisoned)." How does she create and question empathy within herself and the reader? How does she describe her subjects? One key characteristic of Jamison's writing style is she gives specific examples. In other words, when writing about the Berkley Marathon, she describes several individual runners. When she writes about the prison system, she focuses on one man, Charlie Engle. When she writes about Morgellons, she describes several specific people at the conference.

When writing your essay, be careful to avoid overgeneralizations about your group, but be sure to address and explain any single stories (stereotypes) about your group.

Remember: empathy does not mean endorsing or agreeing with someone else's actions, beliefs, or behaviors.

Assignment Requirements
You will write a description-heavy synthesis essay that combine personal essay and research. Be sure to choose a group you are NOT involved in. You can choose an individual or group who has been in the media lately or has been the subject of a documentary. You can choose a historical figure or group from the past. What are you interested in knowing more about? Your essay will be **5-6 pages and include 4 credible sources, cited correctly in MLA format.**

Possible Subjects
- Members of a specific cult
- Crossfitters
- Bronies
- The Homeless
- Instagram gurus
- Dolly Parton
- Britney Spears
- Wiccans
- Ultrarunners
- Skaters
- Prostitutes
- Scientologists
- Bodybuilders
- Apple/Google community
- Cosplayers
- Deadheads
- Deaf culture
- Drag
- Emo
- Flat Earth Society
- Glam rock
- Gutter punk
- Grunge
- Glam metal
- Metalheads
- Hipster
- Incels
- LARPers
- Nudism/Naturism
- Steam punk
- Trekkies
- Amish

- Goth
- Fruitarian

English 103
Final Project: JS StoryMap and Reflection
Worth: 150 points
Peer Review: Wednesday 5/17 in class
Final Draft Due Date: Friday 5/19 by 11:55pm, email me link and post reflection to Canvas

Context:
To culminate our discussion of how literature and literary techniques can help us to critically examine larger issues, you will create a StoryMap, accompanied by a 2 page scholarly reflection paper. This project will draw from our reading of *Exit West* and will be supported by credible research on the subject of immigration.

Purpose:
This assignment is meant to showcase your ability to creatively and critically engage the material covered in this course. Beyond demonstrating a thoughtful and informed process in your reflection paper, you will illustrate your understanding of the interactions of space, identity, and immigration in the novel through your creation of the digital map.

Process:
Choose any 3 locations that come up in Hamid's novel, *Exit West.*

Expand your knowledge of these spaces, specifically by researching their policies on immigration.

Create a StoryMap using Northwestern University's [StoryMap JS](#) based on the locations you've chosen from the novel and your research. This map should have no less than 3 data points, 3 images with captions, and 3 sections of text. In the text accompanying each of your data points, share what you learned about each locations' policies on immigration, citing your sources using MLA format. Then, use specific passages and quotes from Hamid's novel to illustrate how literature is engaging with these real issues in creative ways that prompt us to think critically about the problems and the racial and power dynamics behind them.

Submit a 2 page critical reflection on your work, how it engaged with the novel in unique ways, and how you considered sources in the creation of the project.

Papers should be in MLA format and should be uploaded to Canvas. Projects should be made accessible to me via email.