**What is an American?**

**An argument through definition**

For the final assessment in this unit, you will be writing an essay that defines “an American.” Most of the pieces we have read in this unit are definition essays (or speeches) that not only define a term, but also make a larger argument through that definition. For example, Menken defines Americans as clowns (among other things), and his larger purpose is to criticize much of what he is seeing in 1920s America: the desire for entertainment and frivolity, the materialism, the general lack of concern regarding politics, the hypocrisies of religion, etc. Likewise, all of these authors have a unique style and use an array of rhetorical strategies to develop their arguments, and I expect you to do the same.

Your essay should not only answer the question “what is an American?” but it should also make some larger argument about American society and/or life as an American. You have a ton of freedom in how you approach this essay with regards to form and style, but keep in mind that it is still a mostly-formal essay despite your having some creative license; that said, first person (esp. first-person plural) may be necessary in some places throughout your essay. That’s fine; use it when it makes sense and is necessary.

To start, spend some time thinking about and brainstorming on this question…write down your thoughts and ideas, or just start typing. Once you have all of your ideas on paper (what I like to call “word vomit”), you can then start to re-organize and re-work them into a strong, cohesive essay that develops in a logical and organic way. You do not need to know exactly where you are going with this essay before you start drafting. Do not try to force your ideas into a pre-set structure or formula. Rather, allow your ideas themselves to shape and structure your essay. Finally, allow your authorial voice to come through without getting too informal or ranty.

While there is no official page/length requirement or limit, your ideas should be well-developed, well-illustrated, well-supported, and clear, but please do not write me an entire treatise!

Due dates:

**Pre-writing/brainstorming/word vomit**: please have a physical copy of this step in the writing process for me to look over at the start of class on **Wednesday, October 2**. I will check it as you work on peer feedback/revisions.

**The final draft** of the essay will be due on **Monday, October 7**. This final draft must be uploaded to **turnitin.com** *as well as* submitted in physical form.

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AP Alignment: 1 2 3 4 5 6 Summative score: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| Task | **Insufficient** | **Developing** | **Proficient** | **Mastery** |
| **WRITING** | | | | |
| Write clear and complex claims (W1-2.a) | Makes an invalid or weak claim | Establish a valid claim and | Establish a knowledgeable claim | Establish a novel and knowledgeable claim |
| Warrant claims with relevant and valid evidence  (W1-2.b) | Insufficiently organizes ideas, concepts, evidence, and information to support that claim and uses little-to-no or irrelevant evidence to explicate the claim | Organizes ideas, concepts, evidence, and information to support that claim and uses some or limited evidence to explicate the claim | Organizes complex ideas, concepts, evidence, and information to support that claim and uses relevant evidence to explicate the claim | Effectively organizes complex ideas, concepts, and information to support that claim and uses the most significant evidence to explicate the claim |
| Use transitions, syntax, and valid diction to organize ideas (W1-2.c) | Uses weak or no transitions and/or lacks sentence variety. Little-to-no cohesion and clarity in connecting ideas. | Uses formulaic transitions and lacks sentence variety. Limited cohesion and clarity in connecting ideas. | Use appropriate transitions and sentence variety to create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among ideas. | Use sophisticated and varied transitions and sentence variety to create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas. |
| Formal tone  (W1-2.d) | Uses vague language, weak vocabulary, and/or lacks rhetorical/literary devices and has inappropriate tone provided the audience | Uses generalized language, vocabulary, and rhetorical/literary devices and has somewhat appropriate tone provided the audience | Uses domain-specific language, vocabulary, and rhetorical/literary devices and has appropriate tone provided the audience | Uses sophisticated, domain-specific language, vocabulary, and rhetorical/literary devices and has effective tone provided the audience |
| Meaningful conclusion  (W1e-W2f) | The conclusion weakly addresses the prompt and summarizes some points of the essay, not elaborating on the significance of findings. OR no conclusion present | The conclusion addresses the prompt and summarizes main points of the essay, not elaborating on the significance of findings. | The conclusion addresses the prompt and considers  broader issues, make new  connections, and/or elaborate on the significance of findings. | The conclusion pushes beyond  the boundaries of the prompt and  considers broader issues, makes new  connections, and elaborates on the significance of findings. |
| The writing process of editing and revising as well as voice  (W5) | Writing doesn’t show development through planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, reflecting no growth | Develop writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, reflecting minimal growth | Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, reflecting growth | Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, reflecting a significant growth |
| MUGS (Mechanics, Usage, Grammar, Spelling)   * Command of conventions (L1) * Capitalization, punctuation, spelling and writing (L2) * Developing voice through varied and elevated syntax and diction (L3&5) | Writing has many errors in conventions, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling and lacks voice and contains simple syntax and diction | Writing has some errors in conventions, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling and lacks a clear voice and contains a little variety in syntax and diction | Writing has few errors in conventions, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling and demonstrates voice through varied syntax and diction | Writing is virtually free of errors in conventions, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling and demonstrates a sophisticated voice through varied and elevated syntax and diction |