

## Unit 2: Essays That Challenge Experimental Essay and Rhetorical Analysis

This unit has focused on essays that challenge, either through coming to terms, forwarding, countering, or a combination, our definition of “the essay.” Min-zhan Lu extended and modified the genre of the academic essay by incorporating a personal narrative in “From Silence to Words.” Eula Biss forwarded the idea of the essay along with many other texts in the mosaic essay “All Apologies.” And, finally, Gloria Anzaldua considered “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” by countering conventions of language and the essay in her translingual piece.

And yet, even as Lu, Biss, and Anzaldua were actively challenging the conventions of the essay, elements of the position essay are still present in that these essays are thinking through serious issues and engaging the reader to consider them as well. In the same way that position essays focused on your ideas, Lu, Biss, and Anzaldua use these pieces to consider bigger social issues—Lu writes about the need to value different discourses in education, Biss muses on the nature of apologizing on the local and global scale, and Anzaldua expounds on the connections between language and identity as well as power. Even as these text subvert genre conventions, they contribute to an on-going conversation.

**The Assignment:** Write an experimental essay that uses one or more of the elements from Lu, Biss, or Anzaldua to *engage with an issue*. This piece can even engage with the texts you have been reading for this course or others. Complement this piece with a rhetorical analysis of your own work, written in the style of the position essay, in which you examine the choices you made as a writer using the language from this course (i.e. *Writers and Readers, Rewriting, and Call to Write*).

**Generating Ideas and Drafting:** This experimental essay is both an opportunity to build on your knowledge of the essay genre and to explore an issue that is important to you. Because you have so many choices as a writer, you need to think carefully about where you will take this assignment. What is an issue that is important to you? How should your writing style reflect your goals as a writer? What can you bring to the genre of essays and the conversation about your issue? Be sure to consider your rhetorical situation and stance as you write since you will be exploring these in the rhetorical analysis. Some possibilities for this piece are:

- Use the texts from this class to spark further thinking about some of the issues raised by Lu, Biss, and/or Anzaldua. In this essay, you could even engage with these texts and ideas explicitly.
- You can also bring in conversations started in other classes. If your interest has been piqued in other courses, this might be a great place to continue that thinking.
- One of the issues you’ve written about for this class might be a good place to start as well. But, you want to continue building on your ideas, not rewriting a text in a new genre.
- Make use of the freedom of form that you have for this essay, but also make sure that you are rhetorically aware. Personal narrative can be, and clearly is based on our readings, useful for shedding light on an issue, but it isn’t the only route you can take.
- Consider looking at “Generating Ideas and Finding a Place to Start” in *Writers and Readers* and “Argument as Conversation” by Stuart Greene for help developing an idea and finding an appropriate one for this course.

**Resources:**

- My office hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 1-2:00 p.m.
- Professional consulting at the WARC. Look online to schedule an appointment The WARC is open M-F 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. The calendar there does fill up, so plan ahead to schedule a session.
- Peer counseling sessions in the Library conference room, Sundays and Tuesdays 6-9:00 p.m.
- And your classmates.

**Logistics:** This assignment will be completed in three steps and include two main parts.

- Step 1: Write a first draft of your experimental essay (2-3 pages) and a paragraph about the approach you took to this assignment (think about the literary devices in Lu, Biss, and Anzaldua as well as the moves of coming to terms, forwarding, and countering). Bring a hard copy of both components to class on Thursday, October 22 for a short peer review.
- Step 2: Revise based on the feedback you received on your first draft and write a complete version of the rhetorical analysis in the form of the position essay (2-3 pages using the proposition, reasons, and transitions). You will be peer reviewing this in class on Thursday, October 29. Please remember to bring your fully-charged computer as well.
- Step 3: Revise, again, based on additional peer feedback. You should make large scale revisions to both the experimental essay and the rhetorical analysis. Submit to Canvas before class on Thursday, November 5 in this order:
  - Revised experimental essay and rhetorical analysis (4-6 pages all together)
  - Second draft and all the peer review material (this should be everything written about *your* essay, not what you wrote about someone else's)

This assignment will count as 20% of your final grade. Please note that the rhetorical analysis is just as, if not more, important than the experimental essay! I will be using the rhetorical analysis as a way to evaluate the success of your experimental essay and each will be taken into account on the rubric.

**Objectives:**

- ❖ Experiment with the genre of the essay by forwarding and countering the conventions
- ❖ Engage in an on-going conversation about an issue
- ❖ Use texts as models for writing in new essay genres
- ❖ Reflect on the choices that you make as a writer in crafting a rhetorical stance
- ❖ Continue to hone your skills in the position essay