

## UNIT 3 OVERVIEW

### SKYLINE ENGL 100

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#### OVERVIEW

Welcome to Unit 3, a continuation of instruction on textual analysis and basic essay structures along with an introduction to comparative analysis.

The focus of this unit is on comparing multiple works from *Rereading America* Chapter 5 on myths of "gender identity" in this country. The essay assignment this time is a comparative analysis of **two readings of your choice from the assigned selections from *Rereading America***. This comparative analysis assignment is meant to expand your critical "range" when approaching a set of related texts. In this unit I want you to practice finding connections between disparate readings by peeling away their layers in order to understand them at multiple levels so as to draw useful parallels between them. By comparing works you ultimately understand each at a much deeper level. Comparative analysis is something you'll be asked to do repeatedly throughout your college career when you have to compare and find connections between paintings or sculpture, historical events and eras, or scientific postulates and hypotheses. The ability to identify and critically evaluate differences and similarities between things is a core analytical skill that will serve you in many contexts.

But the essay for this unit is also an extension of the same kind of critical analysis of text you've already practiced in the last essay (Chapter 2). The only difference here is that this time you are being asked to consider two works instead of one, making this assignment much more about finding connections and articulating them in a clear, logical, organized and highly focused way. But the analysis itself should again seek to do more than simply list those connections for us. It should examine *how and why* text and storytelling succeeds or fails (or both), is effective or ineffective (or neither) in conveying the arguments it sets out to make, just as it has in your previous essays. And again, this is meant to be close textual analysis, not opinion based writing in the sense of agreeing or disagreeing with a respective writer's positions, which is not the assignment. You choose which two reading selections you'd like to write about (except the chapter introduction, that is), but make sure to evaluate the writing, not the ideas per se. Be careful to keep your focus on analyzing the rhetorical strategies without taking a position on the writer's political, moral, religious, etc. positions by stating your opinion about them. Practice making the structure of the writing itself the center of your discussion, rather than your own subjective experiences or opinions. As you've probably already realized by now, formal academic analysis will always require you to be able to step outside of yourself as you learn to generate strong, well-reasoned and well-supported, persuasive and objective argumentation to support your good ideas about text and concept.

It is my assumption that comparative analysis (or "compare/contrast writing" as some of you may have learned it) is something most of you have done before in other settings, but I have provided a brief review below of how to structure compare/contrast discussions in the essay assignment description for you to review before writing your essay. It provides a brief explanation of how to write an effective comparative analysis. Please review it carefully before you begin your draft essay work – **it is very important that you choose only one method of organization or the other to use in your work so that you end up with an analysis that is clear and focused and very well organized.** There are more "moving parts" to this comparative essay assignment, so there will be more opportunities to stray off the topic or to not maintain a focused discussion if you are not extremely diligent in keeping your discussion on track. I recommend that your essay planning include some kind of outline that helps you group ideas and information together in a logical fashion before moving to the drafting stages of the essay itself. It can be very helpful to have a framework to refer to while you compose this kind of essay rather than just jumping into an essay that requires you to manage so many pieces at once in a complex discussion.

There are also several useful additional sheets to help you formulate your own comparative discussions that I've included within the unit along with some additional external links that review comparative structures for you – these are all meant to aid you in your essay building. Please pay particular attention to the first sheet, **Comparative Analysis**, as it will probably clarify a lot of questions you might have regarding the structure and

scope of this essay assignment. Use the other sheets as well to help you review or relearn useful comparative strategies.

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### ESSAY STRUCTURE & COMPONENTS

As noted above, the essay this unit is a comparative analysis of two works. Please read the Chapter 5 assignment description within the unit, and then look at the sample comparative essays included in the samples folder and/or placed within the unit to get a good look at effective comparative essay models. Below is a brief overview of the component parts of your comparative essay.

#### *THE BEGINNING*

Your introductory paragraph should again contain short summaries of both of your chosen reading selections, and then sentences that offer your thesis argument for the essay. **Note: You need a thesis that is more than simply a neutral comparison.** I want you to take a clear position on the strategies you see being used and their relative effectiveness. Please make this comparative discussion a persuasive one just like your earlier critical essay rather than just a summary or a simplistic agree/disagree piece. Argue that one of the pieces does something better or worse or differently or more or less successfully, etc. than the other and then explain why, using references to both readings to make your arguments as you follow one of the comparative discussion models you'll learn in this unit.

#### *THE MIDDLE*

Remember to always use the text to support your assertions through properly cited paraphrases and direct quotes – but do follow the 75/25 rule: a maximum of 25% of any given body paragraph can be quoted or paraphrased material but the other 75% of the paragraph must be your own topic sentences, introductions, explanations and analysis. Sandwich the quoted or paraphrased material you'll be using for support in the middle of your body paragraphs, leaving room on either side for your own writing – teach yourself to always lead and end with your own good ideas, not someone else's. Use other writers and texts to support you, not the other way around.

#### *THE END*

Please note from the assignment description in this module that **you'll again need to include a works cited list with this comparative essay assignment.** Use the templates, samples and tools in the Works Cited Lists area in the course to help you compile your own list which you will attach to the end of your essay. The list must contain at least two separate entries, one for each of the two essays you are comparing. **This list is again not counted toward the minimum page total for the essay, which is 5 full pages of text.**

*(See below for a brief overview and review of file formatting guidelines and requirements you'll need to make sure your essays follow before submitting them to the course for evaluation at the end of each unit.)*

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**PROPERLY FORMATTED & SAVED FILES:**

This is how you must format your essay prior to submission. Please see the **Sample Format Page** in the course for more details:

Treat essays for this class exactly like you would for a regular face-to-face class: Use **1.25 inch margins** all the way around, **double-space** your work, eliminate extra spacing between paragraphs. Use a standard typeface (e.g. Times, New Century Schoolbook, Garamond, Calibri or Ariel) and use an **11 or 12 pt. font** (nothing larger or smaller please), black text (no colors please!). Arrange your text “ragged” down the right-hand margin and flush to the left margin (this is the default setting in Microsoft Word), and indent each paragraph one tab. **Put your name, the date, and the essay assignment in the top left corner of the first page, and please include page numbers.**

This is how you must format your essay *file* prior to submission.

Please note that you must submit **.doc** or **.docx** file attachment types *only* when you submit your essays to me (this applies to both emailed drafts, if required, as well as final versions using course upload tools). **I cannot open, read, comment on or grade any other file types, including but not limited to rft, txt, pdf, pages, and wps files.**

Do not send me an essay that has not been either created in Microsoft Word or converted to a Microsoft Word document and saved as either a **.doc** or **.docx** file. (Do not manually type “doc” or “docx” at the end of your document – the software will do that automatically when you save your file before sending it to me if you are using standard word processing applications.)

The way you name your essay files, in order to keep me from losing them on my computer, must also be **exactly** as follows in order to receive credit:

**Your LAST name only + a short description of the ASSIGNMENT.** Capitalize each new word in the title. Do not include your first name, do not include my name.

So, I'll pretend my last name is Smith and I'm submitting a final version of an essay for grading either by email or by using the course upload tools. Either way, I would save that essay file by naming it like this: **SmithChap5.docx**.

For **draft** versions of your essay, put the word **DRAFT** in all caps into your file title before you email the draft to me, like this: **SmithChap5DRAFT.docx**.

For **revised** versions of your essay, please put the word **REVISION** in all caps into your file title before you email the revision to me, like this: **SmithChap5REVISION.docx**.

Capitalize each new word, include only your **last** name (not your full name, and not my name), and do not put any extra spaces between words or any punctuation anywhere in the file title.

Again, these guidelines are extremely important – please follow them exactly as described. I handle hundreds of student files each semester, and your adherence to these guidelines is the only way I can keep track of everyone's work and guarantee that it gets graded and returned to you.

**Submissions that do not follow these guidelines will be returned unread and marked down a full letter grade for not having fulfilled basic file requirements – even if they are otherwise submitted on time and satisfy all other minimum assignment criteria.**