

CASEBOOK: PROSPECTS FOR AESTHETIC EDUCATION

Introduction

This assignment is simply an opportunity for you to develop your thinking about the theme of aesthetic education and related ideas we have discussed from your own perspective, grounded in a specific idea from one of the readings in the class. This is not an “essay” – do not apply your standard professional student techniques of writing an “academic paper.” You are not responsible for a specific argument or elegant generalized conclusions. This is about honestly and sincerely trying to reflect on a point of personal interest in the course material and connect it to everyday life. The “work” of this assignment consists in the quality of your reasoning and explorative reflections, not in pat conclusions that flatter what you think my values are, or some “academic” form of writing that you can successfully mimic. This will require your imagination as human beings more than your training as students.

Format

These reflections can take one of two general forms:

1. Short Paper
2. Project + Statement

Short papers can choose from the prompts and must follow the guidelines listed in the "Details" section below. "Projects" cover work that is not expository writing, for example an original image, video, audio media, poetry, spoken word, etc. All projects must be accompanied by short written “statements” that explain the author’s goals, including connections to the course material/relevance to the theme. These statements must follow the guidelines listed below.

Details

1. Paper
 - a. Must use (quote and explicate) a passage from a text in the course
 - b. Standard manuscript: 1” margins all around; 12pt Times New Roman
 - c. ~5 pages (double-spaced)
2. Project Statement
 - a. Must make purposeful reference to an idea from a text in the course
 - b. Single-spacing
 - c. 1 page (single-spaced)

Submission

1. Due via email attachment to schenold@uw.edu 5pm, Sunday August 20th
2. Email subject line should be “CHID110 Casebook”
3. Filename must be in the following format (all lowercase):
lastname,firstinitial_cp.rtf (i.e. "schenold,t_cp.rtf")
4. File format needs to be RTF (rich text format). All modern word processing software

Prompts / Project Themes

1. Artworks & Ideas

Assessing the failures of his own time, Schiller claims “the most pressing need of the present time is to educate the sensibility, because it is the means, not only to render efficacious in practice the improvement of ideas, but to call this improvement into existence” (76). Provide a commentary on this passage that develops your understanding of how artworks and their education of “sensibility” can be related to the “improvement of ideas.” You might draw on other materials in the course to develop your thoughts or connect Schiller’s argument to contemporary examples or personal experiences.

2. Whitman + X

Connect an idea in Whitman’s *Democratic Vistas* to another in either the course materials or a contemporary news item. In both cases you must cite a specific passage in Whitman to ground your reflection. In connecting to contemporary news you should limit yourself to major news sources (NYT, WaPo, etc.) and informative magazines (Scientific American, Wired, etc.). Your reflection should explain the selected passage in Whitman and explore the insights gained from the connection you make.

3. Meta-Meme (project only)

Create an original image meme that expresses insight into a theme or idea discussed in the course materials. Similar to the image memes produced in groups, these must be inspired by specific passages or arguments in a source work, but are free to extend, critique, juxtapose or re-interpret. These also require a project statement, as mentioned above.

4. Passage-based Critical Commentary

Select a key passage in a text from the course provide a critique, explaining its significance in the text, the point(s) it expresses, and then explore its integrity: What does the author make clear? What is assumed? Where can misunderstandings arise? What are some unforeseen implications? You should demonstrate careful attention to the text and empathy with the reasoning of the author even if you are in disagreement and pursuing a counterpoint (i.e. if you would counter, first demonstrate you understand).

5. The Problem of Imagination, Re-imagined

Narrate an experience of personal intellectual development in the class, detailing a change in your thinking (from confusion to clarity, from simplicity to complication, frustration to understanding - OR the *reverse* of these!). Although this is a personal narrative your account of your experience must make explicit reference to passages and course events that contributed to your experience (in addition to anything else that may have played a role). The narrative should also have a focus - a particular idea, claim, or issue - and give a sense of specifics in the experience.

6. Aesthetic Education and Contemporary Technology

Similar to Whitman’s insight that imaginative culture provides an important enabling (or disabling, as the case may be) environment for democracy, McLuhan and Lanier apprehend the tremendous influence of the technical environment – in our case digital media and systems - on social organization and individuals’ belief in and feelings about ideas, especially ideas about ourselves. Consider a specific point in one of their commentaries and reflect on how it complicates your personal understanding of aesthetic education.

7. Self-proposed paper topic/project

If none of the above options animate your thinking, or you have a different idea about how to engage in critical exploration and reflection of the some of the ideas presented in the course, email me an idea and we will discuss your plan! ☺