

Response Paper:
Susan Sontag and Social Media Today

“Today everything exists to end in a photograph” — Susan Sontag

Part 1 DUE: Annotations — Monday, March 5th ~~February 26th~~ midnight

Part 2 DUE: Paper — Monday, March 12th ~~March 5th~~ midnight

These dates are later than the ones listed on syllabus

You must submit your papers on Blackboard (your paper will be checked via SafeAssign)

In our digital age, photography and related media are vital to how we communicate. This paper assignment asks you to write a response paper to an essay by Susan Sontag, whose writings are important to the history of photography. She wrote the essay “In Plato’s Cave” in the 1970s, but many of her points continue to be relevant to contemporary society. Sontag’s writing is challenging, therefore, please give yourself enough time to read the essay (in pdf under supplementary reading on the OpenLab website) and we will annotate her essay collectively (also on the OpenLab)

Your paper should be at minimum 3 double-spaced pages (3 pages does not mean a 2-page paper plus cover), 1” margins, 12-point type (Please use Arial, Helvetica or Times), not including a cover page.

Paper Instructions:

- A. Give yourself ample time to do the reading and annotate Sontag’s essay
 - a. You must submit 10 annotations on the essay on the OpenLab
 - i. Make sure you have at least 1 annotation in each of the 6 sections
 - b. To begin annotation, you must create an account on Hypothesis (the annotation app for this paper). *Click sign up* and follow the instructions.
 - i. Once you have a hypothesis account, login to start annotating
 - c. What do you annotate?
 - i. Choose anything that is unclear to you, whether it is a word, phrase, or name
 - 1. Research that word or look it up and and your note
 - ii. You are welcome to add questions too (although that will not count as an annotation).
- B. Write at least two paragraphs summarizing points from 5 sections of Sontag’s essay.
- C. Think about whether Sontag’s essay is still relevant to our times and write at least two paragraphs about how her work may be connected to the uses of photography today.

- D. Consider whether one needs to be educated to navigate contemporary media (social media, internet, tv, movies, etc.). Do you think photography can contribute to our general education? Do you think Sontag expected photography to contribute to our general education? Compare her view to **your own ideas** about photography and discuss whether one needs to be an educated viewer in the 21st century.
- E. Lastly, in your concluding paragraph, name and describe an example of a recent photograph (after 2000) that seems to have gone viral across social media and discuss its impact on you.

Important note: Avoid long quotes in short papers (all papers for this course are short). Lengthy quotes will weaken your paper and diminish your grade. Please look over the grading rubric for written assignments on the class website, and be sure to run spell check before submitting your final paper.

An important note on plagiarism

PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED IN ANY FORM AND WILL RESULT UNCONDITIONALLY IN A FAILING GRADE FOR THE COURSE.

To “plagiarize” is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as:

Take and use as one’s own (the thoughts, writings, inventions, etc., of another person); copy (literary works, ideas, etc.) improperly or without acknowledgment; pass off the thoughts, work, etc., of (another person) as one’s own. [Lesley Brown, ed., *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 2 vols. (Oxford: 1993), 2:2231]

Blackboard’s SafeAssign checks your paper against a Google-like search engine and other student papers on file. You will receive 0 points for your paper if the matching rate exceeds 35%. Wait several minutes after you submit your paper to see your SafeAssign report. If the matching rate is too high, I strongly recommend that you re-write your paper with your own words to get it below the 35% threshold because receiving a 0 will reflect badly on your final grade. If you have any doubts or questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please do not hesitate to ask me in class, in office hours, or via e-mail.