

Essay #1 Assignment

Due: Thursday, October 13th, by 4pm (start of class).

- [Submit file via Dropbox](#) + bring printed copy to class.
- If you do not turn in your essay (digitally via Dropbox and printed copy) by the start of class on Th 10/13, you will receive no credit for the entire assignment. There are no extensions. **Late work will not be accepted and will receive no credit.**

Grading: Project # 1 is worth **10%** of your overall course grade.

- Plagiarism, in all forms, will not be tolerated. **Any essay that plagiarizes will automatically fail** (and you may fail the course as well). Refer to City Tech's Policy on Academic Integrity on the [Syllabus](#) for more specific details.
- If you would like to discuss your ideas or drafts, please schedule an appointment to see me during my office hours. I am more than happy to discuss your ideas/drafts in person with you, at any stage of your reading/thinking/writing process. Please note that I will not be holding office hours on the days when there are no classes scheduled on Tu/Th, due to changes in the college calendar.

Writing Task & Purpose

In class and on our OpenLab course site you have been using close reading to generate questions and ideas about various science fiction texts this semester (short stories, novels, films). For this first essay, you will build on this work, using analysis to write a **4-5 page thesis-driven essay** that presents a thesis (argument) about **one text (either "The Machine Stops" or Brave New World)** and uses subsequent claims/evidence from the text to explore and support this point.

- This short essay is **argumentative**. Therefore, your thesis should be persuasive (but arguable), and your essay should be driven by analysis (subsequent claims and evidence). Remember that the purpose of this essay is not to merely summarize (simply report what the text is about) or to write about some idea (values, conflict) *in general*, but to critically consider how some idea is represented in a *particular* text we have read.
- Keep in mind that, as in your blogs, in-class freewriting, class discussions, you can't discuss everything about the text. Spend time choosing/focusing your topic before you start drafting your essay. You are welcome to use one (or more) for the items on the science fiction framework (think about central conflicts, major themes, big questions, competing values), the discussion prompts provided in class, and/or on the course blog as starting points for your brainstorming process.

- This essay extends the thinking/writing you have already done in class and in your blogging. Therefore, while you should of course feel free to build on what you have already written this semester in blogs or other informal writing (or what we have discussed in class), **do not simply repeat what you have previously stated elsewhere**. Remember that your blogging is only an informal response to the texts we read and, as such, your posts may not be organized effectively or clearly/fully articulated. You should use this material as freewriting (or even a rough draft), and then work to revise it into a coherent and detailed argument. There is a much greater emphasis on analysis and structure in this essay than in your blog posts and other informal writing.
- You should write your essays in the **third person**, and use the **present tense** when discussing literature.
- **You should not consult outside sources:** this essay builds from *your* close reading of the text. As always, choose specific quotes and examples from the text that are relevant to your claims and use them in the service of supporting these ideas. Remember that each quote/example should be introduced, explained/analyzed, relevant, and cited (using MLA style for in-text citations). You should also provide a **Works Cited page** for the text.
- Structure the essay according to your argument, avoiding mere summary, on the one hand, and the five-paragraph essay, on the other. When arguing for your interpretation of the text, you should structure your essay according to your *thesis* about the text you chose, not necessarily according to the order of the text itself.
- Your essay should include: a focused thesis paragraph; body paragraphs provide additional claims (topic sentences) and specific, concrete details/examples in support of both these claims and your overall thesis (do not keep repeating the same idea over and over again in different ideas); logical connections/transitions among sentences, paragraphs, and ideas (claims); a concluding paragraph.

*Please make sure to follow the [Assignments: Formatting, Guidelines, and Submission](#) expectations, and the helpful tips/strategies provided below and the materials under [Writing Resources](#).

Cover Letters

You must include a cover letter (about one page long, typed, single-spaced) as the first page of your essay (this letter does not count toward the minimum length of your essay). This reflective letter should be addressed to your readers (me and your peers), and should be written in the first person (it can be informal/personal). **Essays without Reflective Cover letters will not be accepted & will receive no credit.**

This Cover Letter presents **the process behind your essay**, and therefore doesn't restate what your essay claims (the product) but rather **discusses your drafting/revising process for this essay**. Even though you are only submitting a final draft to me, you should go through a number of steps (pre-drafts such as in-class discussions, blogs, freewriting, group discussion, brainstorming, outlining, first drafts, conferences with me and Learning Center tutors, etc.) before you hand it in, and this Cover Letter shows how your essay has changed along the way.

In addition to responding to the questions below (holistically, not in order/bulleted out), you should also free to add any other questions/concerns you have about your essay or the writing process.

- What do you see as your main point/thesis, and how has it changed from first draft to this final draft?
- Describe your drafting and revision process. What was most challenging? How did you approach those challenges? How did you use our in-class discussions (both as a class and group work), and your informal writing (freewriting in class, reading response blogs, commenting on online "Class Discussions") in the drafting of your essay?
- What's the number one question about your essay – its thesis, structure, use of evidence, persuasiveness, style, and so on – that you most would like to get feedback on (and why)?
- Choose two elements of your essay – one that you think works well, and one that feels less successful – and describe why.
- What would you continue to work on in further revision?
- (If relevant) How did you engage with and incorporate (or not) my feedback or that of a tutor from the Learning Center (if you came to see me during my office hours and/or went to see a tutor at the Learning Center), and how did that help to re-vision your essay/argument?

***Having trouble getting started or hitting some bumps along the way? Here's some help for common problems when writing essays like this one:**

- **Thinking you have nothing to say:** This is where close reading is so helpful! Dig beneath the surface of the text and explore possible connections and interpretations. If you run out of things to say, you probably have not asked enough questions about the text or done enough active reading. Go back and re-read the text again, looking up words you don't know, highlighting important sections, asking questions (especially about the elements of fiction), and making notes in the margins. From there, create a series of focused and persuasive claims about your topic. You may also find that creating an outline will help you to structure your essay.
- **Trying to explore every possible aspect of the topic/text:** Instead, generate a thesis (and subsequent claims) that you want to make about your specific topic and discuss how particular details (evidence) contribute to your thesis.
- **Bringing in outside information:** Do not do research on the text or consult outside sources for this particular essay. For this assignment, I am interested in **your** analysis of the text/ideas themselves.
- **Assuming you "know" what the author "meant":** Remember that this is **your** analysis/interpretation of a text based on close reading. Therefore, avoid making pronouncements such as "Huxley means ..." or "The author did this because ..."
- **Being too general or simplistic:** Make sure that you focus your argument and that you have a series of arguable claims you are making. Don't just make observations or give examples without indicating the significance (the "so what?") of these facts. Provide analysis, and only use summary when it is necessary for your readers to understand the larger point you are making.
- **Straying from the assignment/thinking that "anything goes":** Use the text as the basis for **objective and relevant** discussion. Do not move away from the particulars of the reading to generalizations and digressions.