

**Response Paper:
Susan Sontag and Photography Now**

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

Papers are due: **Tuesday, March 6th**

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. Sontag 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 (a pdf under supplementary reading on the OpenLab website)

Your paper should be at minimum 4 double-spaced pages (4 pages does not mean a 3-page paper plus cover), 1” margins, 12-point type (Please use Arial, Helvetica or Times), not including a cover page. You can write more than 4 pages but please do not exceed 5 pages.

Paper Instructions:

- Give yourself ample time to do the reading and think about Sontag’s essay
- Review the format for a Response Paper by reading the pdf “Writing a Critical Response” (located on our OpenLab website under Readings)
- A Response Paper includes a brief summary of keys points and your analysis of the author’s argument
 - A. Summarizing (approximately 3 paragraphs):
Some points to consider:
 1. Why does Sontag use the metaphor of the cave?
 2. What other metaphors are used?
 3. What does Sontag say about why we take photographs?
 4. What does Sontag say about how we react to photographs?
 - B. Analyzing (approximately 3-4 paragraphs):
Some points to consider:
 1. Is Sontag’s essay still relevant to our times? Is her essay still connected to the uses of photography today?
 2. Does one need to be educated to navigate contemporary media (social media, internet, TV, movies, etc.).
 3. Do you think Sontag expected photography to contribute to one’s general education? Do you think photography can contribute to 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.

4. Discuss one photograph or photographer mentioned in Sontag's essay.
 - Do a little research on this photograph or photographer and write what you found interesting about the image and/or person.
- C. Lastly, in your concluding paragraph, name and describe an example of a recent photograph (take after after year 2000) that seems to have gone viral across social media and discuss the image in relation to Sontag's essay and 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]

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