Spring 2017

Composition 1101

Prof. Scanlan

Essay 2: Describing and Comparing Photographs

To describe is to create a verbal picture. A person, a place, a thing—even an idea or a state of mind—can be made vividly concrete through description. More specifically for our class, this essay asks us to select two photographs (that you have taken recently) and then describe and compare them. We compare things all the time: music, college courses, ideas, and fashion. We often do so in order to establish ways of knowing. Describing and comparing go together; they are two of the most important ways of understanding the world around us.

Writing a description/comparison essay requires three tasks that we have talked about in class:

1. Gathering: Gather as many details about the image/pro-filmic event as possible. Rely upon not only what the eyes see, but also on the context, and the emotions that the photos generate.

2. Terms: Dominant Impression, Decisive Moment, Reality Effect, Studium, Punctum, Frame, Pro-filmic Event, Rule of Thirds, Depth of Field, Documentary Photo, Art Photo: Use these terms (and others if needed) as a way to help you and your reader comprehend the photos.

3. Organization: How you move through the description is vital to writing a clear and effective essay. For example, will you move through each photo from top to bottom (Subject-by-Subject Organization)? Or, will you discuss the idea of color in both photos within one paragraph (Point-by-Point Organization)? Above all, you must organize it according to some strategy; and your organization must connect to your method. For the conclusion, I suggest that you consider what you learned about reading photos through the comparison.

More specifically, in Essay 2 you are to write an 800-word essay (approx. three full pages) in which you describe and compare two photos that you have taken recently. You must take the photos, and I must approve your choices. Second, you must post the final photos and the final draft of your essay to our OpenLab website before class on April 4. Third, you must incorporate at least three quotations from one or more of our readings: *The Place Where We Dwell*—chapter four (“Urban Art and Design”), Susan Sontag’s “On Photography,” John Berger’s “Understanding a Photograph,” or from Teju Cole’s *New York Times* articles. And, fourth, you must include a works cited page for this essay.

Grading Rubric:

1. Title, introduction, thesis, method (25 points)

2. Concrete Descriptions (25 points)

3. Organization and sentence/paragraph structure (25points)

4. Photography terms, conclusion, works cited (25 points)

Important Dates:

Mar 23, r    **Midterm Exam**

Mar 30, r   **Due: Draft of Essay 2 for Peer Review**

Apr 4, t **Final Draft of Essay 2 due—posted before class**