Spring 2018

Composition 1101

Prof. Scanlan

Essay 2: The Photo Essay: Describing, Comparing, and Storytelling

Description: 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.

Comparison: We compare things all the time: music, college courses, ideas, and fashion. We often do so in order to establish ways of knowing.

Storytelling: And storytelling is not only a universal form of human expression, it is how people interact and bind cultures.

Describing, comparing, and telling stories go together; they are three of the most important ways of understanding the world around us. More specifically for our class, this essay asks students to select two or three photographs (taken since March 6) and then describe and compare them; students can also use the photos to tell a story.

Writing a description/comparison/narrative 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, the emotions, and the story that the photos generate.

2. Terms: Narrative, Chronology, 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 readers comprehend the photos.

3. Organization: How students move through the description is vital to writing a clear and effective essay. For example, students may choose to move through each photo from top to bottom (Subject-by-Subject Organization). Or, student writers may discuss the idea of color in both photos within one paragraph (Point-by-Point Organization). Or, student writers may use chronological organization in which three photos to tell a story. Above all, students must organize the essay according to some strategy; and they should make sure to connect organization to method. For the conclusion, I suggest that students consider this reflective question: What have I learned about reading photos?

More specifically, in Essay 2 students are to write an 800-word photo essay. Students may choose to write a description and comparison essay that examines two photos; or, students may write a narrative photo essay in which three photos are used to tell a story (description and comparison are still important). All photos must be the student’s own, and I must approve of the choices. Students must post the final photos and the final draft of the essay to our OpenLab website before class on April 12. And, students 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, students 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:

March 29, r    **Midterm Exam**

April 10, t     **Due: Draft of Essay 2 for Peer Review**

April 12, r **Final Draft of Essay 2 due—posted before class**