

Writing about Race in Anime: Essay 3 Expectations and Rubric

Deadline: 7 December 2014, by 11:59pm

[Clarification: Late papers will be docked one point for each day after the deadline. Papers submitted later than five days (after 12 December) will receive a grade of zero (0). Final grades are going to be due from your TAs very soon, and I will have to enter *something* into the system, after all!]

This Assignment has been quite clearly laid out in terms of scope and direction (please see the prompt on the Blackboard site if you need a refresher), and the expectations should not be surprising. **You will be graded on the four aspects of the project (thesis, close reading, research, critique/critical thinking), as well as the basic formatting points that have remained constant throughout the semester.** The essay will be scored out of a possible twenty (20) points.

Pro-Tips:

- This project is not quite as staid and buttoned-down-formal as the work that we have been doing previously. That said, whilst I will be a bit more lenient on issues about such peeves as *contractions* and the second person plural pronoun (*you*), I do still strongly advise against using them. Seriously guys, this is a habit to leave behind as soon in your academic careers as possible.
- Additionally, remember the pitfalls of previous essay assignments. If you can make a generalization about a character or trope in a series, it is much, *much* more effective to mention a *specific* example, and elaborate on the context that it emerges from.
- I've noticed a few people doing this, and have commented on specific individual instances, but I thought it would be a good opportunity to make this concern known to everybody at once: remember that a *quote* cannot stand alone as a sentence by itself in a paragraph (and definitely do not use them to *start* a paragraph). This is known as a *dropped quote*, and they are not usually used in academic writing; especially when you need to establish for your reader who said it and in what context. Finally, the thing that I have seen some people do wherein we drop a quote and then follow it up with something like "this proves such-and-such", is probably not the most efficacious way to proceed with your writing. Quotes, in this case, do not usually *prove* things, so much as they *substantiate* your own argument about a point. (An example of what **not** to do: "Gundam Wing is the best anime

ever, bar none” (Brickler 17). This proves that of all the anime out there, Gundam Wing is the best.)

- Please, please, *please* cite your sources. To remind you guys, proper MLA formatting for in-text citations is (Last name #). No comma in-between. No “pg.” No URL. Quote, citation, period. For example: “*House of Cards* is amazing. And amazingly problematic” (Brickler 5).
- When listing character names (in live action programming) for the first time, make sure that you follow up their fictional name with the name of the actor/actress playing them in parentheses. For example: “*Scandal*’s protagonist, Olivia Pope (Kerry Washington), brokers no shenanigans from either clients or statesmen”. Again, this only needs to be done for the first time the character’s name is mentioned.

Finally—and I *cannot* stress this enough—be sure to be as *critical as possible*. Read between the lines. Pull from history and engage with the cultural persistence of stereotyping. See what the Bloggers are saying, and work in your own analysis. This does not mean that you have to completely tear the show down (especially if it is a show that you really like), but it does mean that we need you to be a critical participant in watching it. I will not be looking for how much problematical stuff you can find about an awesome show, or how many positive interpretations that you can scrape from something awful. ***I will be looking for how critically you can engage with the show as a whole.*** The strongest papers will be the ones that can read the show’s dalliance/focus on or against post-raciality in the most nuanced ways possible. If that makes things complicated and complex, *good!* You’ll get more pages out of it and, by wrestling with difficult ideas, the paper will be the better for it!

Scoring the Essay:

Formatting: ____ / 7 pts

- Compliance with the **Seven Point Plan** as laid out in your syllabus, including **title, page numbers**, meeting the minimum page count (**FIVE FULL PAGES**), and requisite information (name, date, course & section number). Also, make sure that the project is formatted appropriately (Times New Roman, Size-12 font, one-inch margins, double-spaced, and without an extra space after individual paragraphs).
- Make sure that you have submitted a rough draft, and that you have done so on time. (**Potential deduction of five points for an unsubmitted draft, and deduction of two points per day for late drafts** without an excuse)
- Even though the conventions for tone and voice are less stringent this time around, do try to keep your project as polished as possible (minimal grammatical mistakes and general effort to make the projects ideas progress logically and with appropriate transitions). **Potential to lose up to five points.**

Content: ____ / 13 pts

The above 13 points are comprised of the following elements:

Thesis ____ / 3 pts

- The central argument is clearly delineated (with some variation on “In what follows, I will/intend to...”)
- The argument is **specific**, and more direct than simply highlighting that there are racial or post-racial points of interest in the series under investigation
- The statement (and the introduction it is a part of) effectively lays out the trajectory of the project as a whole.
 - o Does this support or contradict a theory of post-racialism?
 - o How will you conduct your investigation into the above argument?

Close Reading ____ / 3 pts

- The essay utilizes several (between two and four) **specific** sequences from the series/film/game that help to clearly demonstrate the presence of a kind of work with or omission of race from its narrative
- These sequences are broken down fully, and their relevance to the central thesis is always quite clear to the reader
- These readings balance summarizing (synopsis) with analysis, and don't rely too heavily on either to the expense of the other.

Research ____ / 3 pts

- The project shows that you have some familiarity with what other scholars are saying about your subject series/film/game, and can add your voice to the conversations that the experts are having about it.
- This does not have to be exhaustive, but it should indicate that you are aware that other people are likely analyzing the same subject you are, and may have done so from different perspectives.
- An example: You are writing about *Halo* as a video game with the assertion that the war between the humans and the aliens is indicative of a post-racial society for the humans. You may not be able to find anything specifically to do with race and *Halo*...but you might be able to find something about race and video games more generally. That source can be used as a helpful way of helping you to frame your conversation
- You can feel free to openly disagree with your sources too. If a blogger is writing that *Grey's Anatomy* is categorically *not* post-racial in any way, shape, or form, and you disagree with that, you can *say* so. I just need to see that you have pulled a number of specific examples to back up your own claim.
- Research need not be comprehensive for this project, but you really should think about including some *cited* commentary.

Critique ____ / 4 pts

- Make absolutely sure that you remain as critical and open-minded about your arguments about the text as possible.
- You should have a clearly defined position in your thesis, but *wrestle* with it as you progress through the project. Find the things that support your assertions, but also make sure that you acknowledge the things that might *not* work in that direction too.
- Be critical about your examples; if it seems to support your own assertion, take a step back as you revise, and assess how the other side might view the same scene. How might somebody—whether through application of historicizing, theorizing, or stereotyping—view a point that you feel quite strongly about? Acknowledging the potential limitations of your own assertions can be a very helpful way of figuring out how to make them stronger.
- I need to see clear and evident efforts of critical thinking in your critique!

Refresher on Citation Conventions

The essay should appropriately utilize MLA style parenthetical citation (see pgs 267-268, and 272 in your McGraw Hill-Handbook or the Purdue Owl website):

- For a book work, note that the citation comes after the closing quotation mark, but before the period, with no comma separating the author's last name and the page number. As an example: "Appropriate MLA citation style is not that difficult" (Brickler 17).

- For a TV series or website without an author, make sure that you have referenced the source earlier in the sentence. As an example: As we see in season one, episode one of *Black Lagoon*, both Dutch and Revy refer to Rock as “Mr. Japanese” when they first meet him.

The essay should also use appropriate MLA style formatting for the bibliography as well (**NOTE THAT THE BIBLIOGRAPHY DOES NOT COUNT TOWARDS THE FIVE PAGE MINIMUM**)

- As indicated in class, the bibliography should be *alphabetized* by the authors' last names.
- For books: Last name, first name. *Title*. Place of publication: Publisher, Year. Print. (Take note of the punctuation and formatting)
- For articles: Last name, first name. “Title of article”. *Name of the Journal* Volume number. Issue number (Year): Page numbers. Database. Web. Date accessed.
- For notes on blog entries and online sources, see pages 291-293 of the McGraw-Hill Handbook.

You guys have totally got this. Best of luck on the assignment and on your final projects!!!