WHAT IT MEANS
A PERSUASIVE DEFINITION AND ANALYSIS PAPER: 100 POINTS TOTAL

“Words are never 'only words'; they matter because they define the contours of what we can do.” — Slavoj Žižek

We will spend some time over the coming weeks discussing the importance of choosing clear, specific words in your writing; during these discussions, we will focus on the importance of avoiding general or abstract terminology—unless you take the time to define any such terms that you use.

You will be reading several essays that discuss the meaning of a word, and, as a focal point for that discussion, present a subjective definition of a word or phrase. In the essay “Road Warrior,” author Dave Barry uses imagery, anecdotes, and wit to define and then explore “road rage”—a condition that affects drivers throughout the United States. Joan Didion’s “On Self-Respect” crafts an elaborate and nostalgic description of what she believes constitutes self-respect. You might also choose to read K.C. Cole’s “Uncertainty,” and Roland Barthes’ “Toys.” These essays are not written as academic essays, so they are not exact examples of what I expect you to do, but they can give you an idea of the amount of detail that can (and sometimes should) go into the definition of an important term.

For this assignment, you will write an essay that takes an abstract or general noun and crafts a subjective explanation of that term. You cannot simply offer up a dictionary definition. You must create an argument about what the “thing” you are describing truly is or what it means, and that argument must allow your paper to explore the term fully; your essay might examine what that term means, what it looks like, what its significance is, and what it represents. The body paragraphs within your paper will work to examine, show, and analyze your topic form your own unique perspective in order to illustrate the definition you present.

REQUIREMENTS
• All drafts must be a minimum of 2 full pages, have an introduction and conclusion, and be written in MLA format in order to be considered complete.
• The final essay must be at least 3 full pages.
• Failure to submit complete assignments for this essay (e.g. drafts and outlines) when they are due will result in an automatic deduction of 10 points per missing or incomplete submission.

ESSAY STRUCTURE
• All drafts of your paper must include:
  1. An introduction that gives background on your subject/topic.
  2. A thesis that responds directly to the essential question.
  3. Topic sentences that each make a unique claim about what your term is or what it means.
  4. Body paragraphs that develop the unique claims from the topic sentences using examples, details, and analysis.
  5. A conclusion that shows why your audience should care about this topic.

GRADING
• A major part of the grading for this paper is based on your ability to write an academic essay that effectively responds to a prompt, and that uses an introduction, a thesis statement, topic sentences, well-developed body paragraphs, and a conclusion.
• You will also be graded on your use of tone in this paper. You should identify a tone and be sure to develop and showcase that tone throughout the essay.
• Developing ideas in detail is another important focus of this assignment. You should use the techniques we learn in class and online to develop your paper. You should consider using sensory detail, thesauruscoping, examples, and anecdotes to support your points.
• You will be expected to carefully proofread this paper to ensure that it is clearly written, grammatically correct, and properly formatted.

TIPS
• Review this video on abstract and general terminology if you are having trouble identifying an abstract term. Use our in-class brainstorming activity to help identify an appropriate topic
• Try to narrow your topic down as much as possible. You can still be specific while using abstract terms. “True love” is more specific than just “love,” yet it is still abstract.
• You should not engage in any research for this paper. Your definitions must be subjective and reflect your own knowledge and opinions.
• Remember that you are not making a call to action in your thesis; you are defining a term.
• Although you are encouraged to describe anecdotes and emotions, they need not be your own; you may include one personal anecdote written in the first person, but the rest of this essay must be written entirely in the third person point of view.

RECOMMENDED WRITING AND READING CENTER ACTIVITIES
You are encouraged to visit the Writing and Reading Center throughout the process to receive feedback on your drafts. You may wish to work on any (or all) of the following activities:
• General 30-minute session (DLA 001)
• DLA 206 - Improving Detail
• DLA 208 - Splitting the Second

DUE DATES
Due dates are listed on the reading schedule. Additionally, you may want to review my syllabus to re-familiarize yourself with my policies on late work, incomplete work, technological difficulties, etc.

QUESTIONS
You should be able to answer these questions before beginning your paper if you hope to proceed in the right direction.

1. Which sentence(s) on this prompt act as the essential question/statement?

2. Based on the essential question/statement, what should the subject/topic of your thesis be?

3. Based on the essential question/statement, what should the claim of your thesis be?

4. Which of the topics from our readings (mentioned in the second paragraph) do you might be appropriate for this paper?

5. What makes a term abstract?

6. What does the word “subjective” mean?
Re-Write Contract

If you are unhappy with the final grade you receive on Essay 1, you may submit one re-write of your essay if you complete additional work to help you improve your skills. The due date for the re-write can be found on the Reading and Assignment Schedule. See the chart below for specific requirements based on your Essay 1 grade.

Please initial the following before submitting to indicate that you have read and understood all guidelines.

I understand that I must submit all Essay 2 work, completed and on time, for my Essay 1 re-write to be accepted.

I understand that a submitting a re-write does not guarantee that I will receive a higher grade.

I have read and understood all information on this contract. I understand that the instructor will not accept any re-writes that do not precisely follow all of the guidelines on this contract, including the due date and method of submission. I understand that there are no exceptions!

TO RE-SUBMIT, YOU MUST COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING REQUIREMENTS IN ORDER

☐ Make a list of problems with the final draft of your essay. You might review your final draft, the prompt, your notes from class and my rubric and/or comments.

☐ Visit my office hours. Bring:
  o This list of problems
  o A hard copy of your final draft.

☐ After visiting office hours, bring essay to _______ Writing and Reading Center sessions. (See chart below for the number of WRC visits required based on your grade.)
  o Ask for DLA 001.
  o You must bring an updated revision of your essay to each WRC visit.
  o Always bring a hard copy of your paper to the WRC.
  o Staple your paper to the DLA as soon as you leave the WRC.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Number of Writing Center Visits Required to Re-Submit</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (90-100 points)</td>
<td>Cannot re-submit. Focus your attention on Essay 2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B (80-89 points)</td>
<td>2 visits required.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C (70-79 points)</td>
<td>2 visits required.</td>
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<td>D (60-69 points)</td>
<td>3 visits required.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F (0-59 points)</td>
<td>3 visits required.</td>
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☐ At the start of class on the re-write due date, submit a folder with hard copies of the following:
  o Your list of problems
  o All printed drafts from office hours/WRC visits
  o All DLAs
  o Your final draft (dated and labeled clearly!)
  o This form