Project on Columnists

Due Date: October 14

During this quarter, you will be required to follow an opinion columnist in a national periodical. You must collect **five current, consecutive columns** by your author. (You may look at past articles and in fact will most likely have to. Five consecutive articles from 2016 will qualify for this project).

Attached you will find a list of newspaper web sites. All can be accessed in school or at home. To find the name of a columnist you would like to track, check the Editorials or Op-Ed sections of newspapers or these websites. Archives can be searched on these sites, but many publications require payment for articles older than one or two weeks. Therefore, do not let this go until the due date. The assignment has three parts:

Part 1: Annotation and Précis:
I. Each article must be **annotated** for the following:

        A. Speaker's tone, diction, syntax and figurative language
        B. Rhetorical strategies
        C. Appeals to logos (logic), ethos (ethics) or pathos (emotion) (Annotate by highlighting, underlining, circling and use abbreviations and phrases freely.)

*Provide a copy of your annotated text, a blank copy is unnecessary. Mark places in the text that evoke a reaction from you, be it laughter, anger, or confusion.

II. Write a Rhetorical Précis (pray-see) to turn in with annotations. (There will be separate information on the Précis

Part 2: Written response:

III. After annotating, **write a one and a half-page, single-spaced, three-paragraph typed response** that includes the following:

        A. A brief summary of the author's main points, especially if there seems to be a trend in topics
        B. The most salient strategies employed by the author especially one or two that s/he uses frequently and the effect on the reader
        C. React to the topic of one of the articles (this is your opinion about the topic)

Part 3: Imitation Writing:

III. The final task is to write **an opinion column of your own** that delineates the following:

        A. Imitates the author's general focus in columns (e.g. political, family, arts)
        B. Uses three of the author's oft-used stylistic devices
        C. Provides a clear and thoughtful opinion of your own on the topic you have chosen

The suggested format of this final essay is as follows:
1. Length should be one full page, single spaced, 12 point Times New Roman, one inch margins

and a byline.
2. Cite any facts or examples you use in text references.

*For the article annotations, you are to judge the author's writing style as convincing or ineffectual and explain why; it is not necessary that you agree with the author if you feel s/he has made a point forcefully. Specific examples must be provided from a variety of collected columns.

**Lists of syndicated columnists can be found online including at
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_syndicated_columnists**

- **The New York Times nytimes.com Click on Editorials/Op-Ed.**
  Maureen Dowd, Thomas L. Friedman, Ross Douthat, Frank Bruni, Paul Krugman, Nicholas Kristof, Charles Blow, Roger Cohen
- **The Washington Post www.washingtonpost.com** Click on Opinions to see a list of regular contributors.
  EJ Dionne, Kathleen Parker, George F. Will
- **The Boston Globe** www.boston.com/globe Click on Editorials/Op-Ed.
- **The Chicago Tribune**
  Clarence Page
- **The Nation http://www.thenation.com/** (note this is a left-wing publication…Republicans beware!)
  Gary Younge, Patricia Williams, Katha Pollitt, Eric Alterman

**Questions to consider for Analysis**: **Not all of these need be "answered." They are to provoke thought.**
General 1. Describe the impression the whole passage makes upon your mood and tone.
2. What is the most striking part of the passage?
Diction 3. Are most of the words abstract or concrete? List some examples.
4. Are there any unfamiliar or unusual words or usages? List them.
5. Does the passage use either first or second person pronouns?
6. Are adjectives or adverbs especially vivid? List examples.
Syntax 8. Are the sentences especially long (over 20 words) or short (under 8 words)?
9. Are most sentences simple or compound? Are most sentences complex or compound-complex? Are there many prepositional or other phrases?
10. Are there parallel series of three, four, or more than four?
Poetic 11. Does the passage use any symbols, i.e., simile or metaphor?
Devices 12. Does the passage have any strong images not already discussed? What senses are appealed to by the images?
13. Does rhythm or pace reinforce meaning?
14. Is there alliteration, consonance, assonance, repetition?

Part 2 (Written Response) of Columnist Project—What goes where? - Single Space 1- 1.5 pages 12 point type

First paragraph
   o Identify the author and the articles you read
   o What general themes does the writer tackle and how do you know? (use examples from the articles to support your thinking)
   o What publication does the writer compose for and how does this affect their topics and opinions?

In the second paragraph: analyze the writing for typical style
   o What are you seeing in all three articles (think the biggies: contrasts, diction, syntax, parallel structure, appeals, imagery, anecdotes…)
   o What would you say stylistically is characteristic of this writer?

In the third paragraph
   o Choose one topic from the articles
   o What do you personally believe about the topic (ie your opinion)?
   o How did the author influence your opinion?

Columnist Project Rubric – 40 points total

	10-8	7-6	5-4	3-2
Annotation/Precise	Article is thoroughly annotated for diction, rhetoric and syntax and argumentative appeal (more than three each); precis follows structure	Article is adequately annotated for two/three of the following: diction, rhetoric syntax, and argumentative appeal (at least twice each); precis follows structure somewhat	Article is sparsely annotated for one/two of the following: diction, rhetoric, argumentative appeal or syntax (1 each); precis does not follows structure	Article is annotated but the purpose of the annotation is unclear; precis does not follow structure
Response	Responses are two pages single spaced 12 pt or smaller, include a brief summary of the article, a detailed, specific analysis of rhetoric and an insightful reaction	Responses are one and a half pages single spaced 12 pt or smaller, include more than enough or not enough summary, a general analysis of rhetoric and a thoughtful reaction	Responses are short, include mostly summary and very little analysis of rhetoric and a unmoving reaction	Responses are short, all summary, no analysis or reaction
Essay (double this score)	An opinion on a relevant local topic that matches the	An opinion on a relevant local topic that at times matches	An opinion on a topic that doesn't match the author's	Less than a page, style not mirrored, no

author's genre. Writing style effectively mirrors the writer's in more than three ways. There is a balance of opinion and fact. NO conventions errors. Length matches author's	the author's genre. Writing style adequately mirrors the writer's in more than two ways. There is a bit more opinion than fact. Minor conventions errors. Length slightly shorter than author's.	genre or lacks relevancy. Writing style somewhat mirrors the writer's in more than one way. All opinion NO fact. Many conventions errors. Length much shorter than authors	thought or support used. Errors get in the way.

Columnist Analysis	Column 1 :	Column 2:	Column 3 :	Circle one:
Tone: describe it and provide an example				Similarity Difference
Syntax: describe it and provide an example				Similiarity Difference
Rhetoric: describe any patterns and provide an example				Similarity Difference
Appeals: describe it and provide an example				Similarity Difference
Diction: describe it and provide an example				Similarity Difference