

**Researching Identities**  
**Assignment Sequence for Fall 2006**  
***The New Humanities Reader and Another Way Home***

**Assignment #1: Argument Analysis**

Loffreda

In “*Selections from Losing Matt Shepard*,” Beth Loffreda examines the significance of Matt Shepard’s murder and why it captured the nation’s attention. As she investigates the nature of the media coverage and the various responses of individuals and groups, she uncovers a wide array of prejudices, not only about gays, but about Wyoming, the West, and Native Americans, thus revealing a multifaceted problem.

For this project, construct an account of Loffreda’s argument. In your paper, make clear how, in Loffreda’s view, the media frenzy, the community’s response, and the undercurrent of prejudices in Laramie create a multifaceted problem. Discuss how Loffreda organizes the piece and how the structure influences what she has to say. Finally, how is what she has to say significant for people interested in identity?

**Criteria for Evaluation**

Successful papers will:

- Describe for a reader unfamiliar with this text Loffreda’s project and argument and what you take to be her central claims;
- Describe how Loffreda organizes her text and how that this influences what she has to say;
- Show the various aspects of the problem Loffreda presents;
- Comment on how this article is significant—what difference it might make to readers;
- Use an effective structure that carefully guides the reader from one idea to the next;
- Be thoroughly edited so that sentences are readable and appropriate for an academic audience.

**Project #2 – Gathering Information and Managing Sources**

Hartfield, *Another Way Home: The Tangled Roots of Race in One Chicago Family*

Ronne Hartfield’s memoir, *Another Way Home: The Tangled Roots of Race in One Chicago Family*, chronicles the histories of her biracial family, in hopes to “make visible how one colored family created meaningful lives” (xvi). In contrast to existing tragic narratives within black literature, she makes clear the need for more celebratory stories. Through this narrative, she argues that the stories she tells “have implications both for history and for how we live now” (xiii). She makes connections between her particular family experiences and larger moments in African American history in order to

illustrate these possible implications.

After reviewing and evaluating the sources provided for you as part of this assignment, **choose a minimum of two** that help you understand Hartfield’s narrative accounts and her argument that there is a meaningful relationship between individual family histories and larger sociohistorical moments. How do those sources illustrate, clarify, extend, or complicate the argument that this piece makes—or the questions it raises—about the interplay between racial identity, family narratives, and the wider historical atmosphere? How do they contribute to your ideas about the significance of Hartfield’s argument?

**Criteria for Evaluation**

Successful papers will:

1. signal the topic, and give some indication of how the paper will proceed;
2. describe Hartfield’s project, showing—by using evidence from the text—what argument she makes concerning the connections between her particular family history and identity and the larger social and historical environment;
3. smoothly identify and integrate information and evidence from at least two sources;
4. explain how this information helps illustrate, clarify, extend, or complicate the argument Hartfield makes;
5. show what you take to be the significance of Hartfield’s argument;
6. use an effective structure that carefully guides the reader from one idea to the next;
7. be thoroughly edited so that sentences are readable and appropriate for an academic paper.

**Sources:**

De Santis, Christopher C., ed. *Langston Hughes and the Chicago Defender: Essays on Race, Politics, and Culture, 1942-62*. Chicago: U Illinois P, 1995. 8-21, 41-43, 49-51.

Doreski, C.K. “From News to History: Robert Abbott and Carl Sandburg Read the 1919 Chicago Race riot.” *African American Review* 26.4 (1992): 637-650.

Dutro, Elizabeth, Elham Kazemi, Ruth Balf, Ruth Trinidad Galvan, Richard Meyer. “Aftermath of ‘You’re Only Half’: Multiracial Identities in the Literacy Classroom.” *Language Arts* 83.2 (Nov. 2005). 96-106.

hooks, bell. “Homeplace: A site of Resistance.” In *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 41-49.

Miville, et al. “Chameleon Changes: An Exploration of Racial Identity Themes of Multiracial People.” *Journal of Counseling Psychology*. 52.4

(2005). 507-516.

Morgan, Francesca. "Epilogue," *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America*. Chapel Hill: U North Carolina Press, 2005. 152-163.

Rockquemore, Kerry Ann and Tracey Laszloffy. "Moving Beyond Tragedy: A Multidimensional Model of Mixed-Race Identity." *Raising Biracial Children*. Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2005: 1-17.

Thelen, David. "Memory and American History." *The Journal of American History* 75.4 (March, 1989): 1117-1129.

Weiss, Nancy J. "Eleanor Roosevelt" and selection from "The Second Roosevelt Administration." *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR*. Princeton, NY: Princeton U P, 1983. 120-135; 254-266.

### **Assignment #3: Explaining Rhetorical Strategies** Krakauer and Sacks

Krakauer and Sacks research and write about the lives of individuals who see and experience the world differently from the way many people do and who may even be said to confront a different reality. To describe and explain the way issues of identity are experienced by their research subjects, Krakauer and Sacks employ various rhetorical strategies. Identify some of the rhetorical strategies that Krakauer and Sacks use to present their representations of lives that may seem different in the eyes of many of their intended readers. Propose an explanation of some strategies that writers like these use to make it possible for us to connect not only to new information, but to people whose perspectives and sense of identity may differ significantly from our own. Be sure to comment on the significance of these authors' work for writers and/or for people interested in understanding identity.

### **Criteria for Evaluation**

Successful papers will:

- signal the topic, the scope of the project, and give some indication of how the paper will proceed;
- introduce each author, his text, and describe each author's respective project, explaining the particular cultural issues of difference, duality, or otherness each author's text responds to;
- give readers unfamiliar with these texts a thumbnail sketch of the arguments made by Krakauer and Sacks;
- use relevant evidence from each text to propose and support an explanation of the rhetorical strategies through which each author makes it possible for us to engage with information about difference, identity, and to connect to people whose life may be different from one's own;
- comment on the significance of these writers' work;

- use an effective structure that carefully guides the reader from one idea to the next;
- Be thoroughly edited so that sentences are readable and appropriate for an academic audience.

### **Assignment #4: Reading in New Contexts** Scott and Abu-Lughod

James C. Scott provides an approach to reading and understanding what occurs whenever the powerful and the disempowered engage with one another. Abu-Lughod, in telling Kamla's story, describes complex relations among Bedouins and between Bedouins and outsiders: youths versus tradition-oriented elders, Bedouin tribes versus Egyptians, Bedouins versus Europeans, and so forth. You have already charted the organization of Abu-Lughod's essay in order to understand her project and to construct the argument that she is making. Now consider that argument in terms of James C. Scott's "Behind the Official Story." How would Scott interpret the stories that Kamla has told? How many different transcripts are present in "Honor and Shame?" Who is best positioned to interpret these transcripts? How is the work of these researchers significant for understanding identities?

### **Criteria for evaluation:**

Successful papers will:

- Orient readers to the topic and indicate how the paper will proceed;
- describe Abu-Lughod's and Scott's projects, showing what each investigates and what central claims each makes;
- consider Abu-Lughod's examination of Kamla's life and of women's lives in the traditional Bedouin community in terms of Scott's argument, presenting examples that could be understood as dominant and hidden transcripts in Abu-Lughod's text;
- draw conclusions about to what extent Scott's theory can be applied to "Honor and Shame" and what the various transcripts reveal about the connection between power relations and dominant and hidden transcripts;
- show how these researchers' work is significant for understanding identities;
- use an effective structure that carefully guides the reader from one idea to the next;
- be thoroughly edited, with special attention to those sentences that quote, comment on, or link Abu-Lughod and Scott.