Expo E-25, Sect. 6 Cynthia Taft ([ctaft@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:ctaft@fas.harvard.edu))

**First essay assignment—First draft due Monday, February 24th**

Henry Beston, “Autumn, Ocean, and Birds, I” [1928]

Aldo Leopold, “Marshland Elegy” [pub. date 1949]

Loren Eiseley, “The Judgment of the Birds” [1957]

Rachel Carson, excerpt from Silent Spring (Am. Earth, 835-848) [1962]

Jack Turner, “The Song of the White Pelican” [1996]

Each of these authors draws upon the symbolic resonance of a particular bird or group of birds, but the power of each work depends upon carefully observed details. In a coherent essay that develops a unifying thesis, explore the role played by the particular bird or group of birds at the center of one of these texts. Be sure to consider the relationship between the observed or documented details and the symbolic associations of the bird. This assignment is deliberately open-ended to allow you to follow the distinctive path of your own thoughts, but the resulting essay must be tightly organized and well documented. .

**Questions to consider before you try to articulate your central idea:**

* Why did the author focus on this particular bird or group of birds?
* Why did the author write at this particular moment in time?
* Why should we trust the author’s observations? Insights?
* Is there any evidence of tension between the author’s view of this bird and more commonly held views?
* What effect does the author aim for?

**Questions that may help you articulate your central idea:**

* Why did you choose this text?
  + What is it about the text that intrigues you or bothers you?
  + Can you point to specific passages that prompted your response?
* What would you like your readers to understand about this text that they might not have noticed or considered on their first reading of it?
* Why does this aspect of the text matter? What does it reveal about the text as a whole? About some larger issue?
* How can you help your readers share your understanding of the text?
  + What is the logical starting point for your essay?
  + What is the logical sequence of points within your essay?

PREPARATION FOR ESSAY (required): By next Monday at 5pm, request approval of planned focus for your essay. Send email to [ctaft@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:ctaft@fas.harvard.edu) with two-sentence description of focus & thesis. The earlier you send this email, the sooner you will receive a response.

GUIDELINES FOR ESSAY:

* 1ST draft should be 3-4 pages long (1000-1300 words, double-spaced).
* Use MLA in-text citations. Remember Works Cited list.
* Edit and proofread your draft before submitting it.
* Post a copy on the isite before class and bring **three** copies to class.

Guidelines for Introduction:

* **Avoid cosmic claims**. Focus on your particular work.
* Assume that your readers are thoughtful and open-minded.