Expo E-25 Cynthia Taft

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Topic for the second essay

You will need to choose two texts to consider in your next paper, but you should not write an open-ended comparison of the two texts; instead, you should choose an issue or theme that emerges in both of them. Most of you will end up working with writers who share many basic values; you will need to read and think carefully to uncover meaningful distinctions between them.

In your critical essay, you will need to make clear why the issue you have chosen matters and to help your readers understand how and why the writers differ in their perspective on that issue. Make sure that you consider the deeper values that shape the writers’ thoughts on this particular issue. If the writers whom you have chosen share some basic values, you should explore this common ground as well as the noticeable distinctions. You may expose any weaknesses or fallacies that you observe in one or both texts. You should also identify particularly compelling arguments. By the end of the essay, your readers should understand why you have written about this issue and how you assess the position and reasoning of the two writers whose works you discuss. Your own thinking on this matter will inevitably emerge in the course of your discussion, but you should keep in mind that your primary responsibility is to investigate the two texts.

You may find it helpful to organize your critical essay so that the text that you consider last comes closest to expressing your own perspective. This strategy allows you to move easily from your detailed analysis of a particular text to the broader conclusion of your essay.

Feel free to draw on one or two brief supplementary readings (e.g. Pinchot’s 1913 testimony before Congress or McPhee’s sketches of Dominy or Brower in “Encounters with the Archdruid”), but be sure to include all of your sources in your Works Cited list.

It may help you to think of your critical essay from the perspective of your readers. Your completed essay should get your readers thinking about an issue that matters to you. Your analysis of two distinctive texts will help them recognize the complexities of the issue you have chosen. Your logic should carry them through the exploration of that issue and lead them toward a meaningful conclusion. You need not choose between the texts that you consider in your paper, but you should make clear what the readers gain by considering them side by side.

The first version of your second critical essay is due **Monday, April 7th by 6:00pm**. Please post the essay in the appropriate dropbox **by 6:00pm** and bring **three copies** of your essay to class. The first version should be at least 1200 words long.

See next page for list of works that you may consider in your second essay.

You may consider the following texts:

Aldo Leopold, “Axe in hand” (pdf on isite);

Edward Abbey, “Solitaire” (pdf on isite);

Wendell Berry, “Preserving Wildness” (*American Earth*: 516-530);

Aldo Leopold, “Marshland Elegy” (*Am. Earth*: 266-271);

Henry Beston, “Autumn, Ocean, and Birds, I” (isite link);

Loren Eiseley, “The Judgment of the Birds” (isite link)

Rachel Carson, “from *Silent Spring*” (*Am. Earth*: 366-376);

Jack Turner, “The Song of the White Pelican” (*Am. Earth*: 835-848);

William Cronon, “Seasons of Want and Plenty” (*Am.Earth*:632-658);

Michael Pollan, “Gardening Means War” (isite link to Pollan website);

Barbara Kingsolver, “Stalking the Vegetannual”(isite link to *Orion Magazine* website);

Michael Pollan, “Sustaining Vision” (isite link to Pollan website);

Michael Pollan, “Why Mow? The Case against Lawns” (isite link to Pollan website);

Elizabeth Kolbert, “Turf War” (isite link to *New Yorker* site);

Gifford Pinchot, “Prosperity” (*Am. Earth*: 173-180);

William Tucker, “Is Nature Too Good for Us?” (pdf on isite);

Eliot Porter, “The Living Canyon” (*Am. Earth*: 380-391);

Barry Lopez, “Gone Back into the Earth” (from *Crossing Open Ground*)

(pdf on isite);

Ellen Meloy, “The Flora and Fauna of Las Vegas” (*Am. Earth*: 793-808)