



ENG 2150H Writing II: Sources of Persuasion

Honors Section KTRH • Spring 2015 • Dr. Lisa Blankenship

Project 2 Assignment: Research-Based Argument

Building on our discussions about Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's concept of a "single story,"¹ your assignment in this second major project of the term is to research how a person or group has been constructed in popular culture and make a claim about the consequences of this construction. How would you characterize these portrayals? What metaphors are constructed through these portrayals? Do you see evidence of stereotyping or a "single story" arising out of these portrayals? As you think about how this person or group has been constructed in contemporary culture (could be US culture or beyond) focus on a few, specific examples that have gained a fairly wide circulation and therefore may be more generalizable than news stories or cultural artifacts that few see or consume.

In other words, I'll ask that you find examples of recurring metaphors or a "single story" arising out of news stories, portrayals in fiction, film, television, or video games, and defend (or refute) George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's² claim that metaphors "structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people" (3). How is this person or group created or constructed in these examples/texts, and how do you think these portrayals affect how this person/group is perceived and treated as a result? If you see examples of stories that refute the popular metaphor/story about this person or group, I'll ask that you make a claim about why these "under stories" have not gained more currency or circulation.

In a sense I'm asking that you explore and support a causal claim that I've made all semester, that language does more than reflect reality; it helps create reality. Your research will entail finding examples of cultural artifacts (film, fiction, news, video games, television) in which the person or group you select has been represented, then "coding" or looking for patterns in these representations, and finally, making a claim about what you find.

I'll ask that you incorporate sources from your research about this topic, at least two sources from our class and four additional sources, both academic and popular. Please use MLA style for citations and your Works Cited page. See the [Purdue OWL](#) for details on using MLA style.

¹ Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "The Danger of a Single Story." TED. July 2009. Lecture.

² Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

² Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980. Print.

PROCESS

As an example of the process you may explore for this project, if I want to focus on representations of transgender people, I would start by finding examples of portrayals and representations in popular fiction, television shows, films, and news stories. What roles do they play? Where are they present (and absent)? If in this case I find by looking at research that transgender people have had relatively few roles in major films or television shows, I would explore the most widely circulating examples (*Boys Don't Cry*, 1999; *TransAmerica*, 2005; *Orange is the New Black*, 2013-) and consider why more of their stories have not circulated. Among those stories which have gained some currency, such as those above, I would look for patterns in how trans people are portrayed. What stories are told about them? Are they sympathetic characters? Do they all meet tragic ends? What language is used to describe them? How do they describe themselves? Are they allowed to describe themselves? How much agency or power do they have over their lives?

The second part of this assignment is consider the consequences of the metaphors and “single stories” surrounding these constructions of this person or group. What have the responses to these characters been—or what have been the consequences of these portrayals? You will need to look at popular news sources as well as academic sources to find answers to this question. You also could ask your friends and people you know and trust for their opinions, though you need to consider how much credibility this information would have as you make your claim and support it. *Note: I'm not asking that you do person-based, primary research through surveys and interviews, but these could be good starting points for your research and certainly may help bolster your case and inform your thinking.

As before, you'll draft this paper in phases:

- You will write a formal prospectus for your project that will be due on Thursday, April 2
- Reflective Annotated Bibliographies of your four (4) outside sources are due after Spring Break on Tuesday, April 14
- Your first draft with writer's letter will be due on Thursday, April 16, and
- Your final draft with revisions and a final writer's letter on Tuesday, April 28

GRADING CRITERIA

For this paper I'll be looking for the following:

Thesis:

You should make a clear, compelling, focused claim about how the person or group you've chosen has been portrayed in 2-3 cultural artifacts you select, arguing either for or against the idea of a “single story” having formed around this person or group. You identify metaphors that have become associated with this person or group and their role in how people view and / or treat this person or group.

Support:

You support your argument with evidence from the show/film/game and media and from your research, using both popular and academic, peer-reviewed sources. You should choose support/evidence that will help you find answers to your questions and that will have credibility with your audience, whom I'll ask that you clearly identify. Unless you specify otherwise, your

audience for this piece is this class, so as before, you should not assume we are familiar with the media or cultural artifacts you engage with. You use at least two (2) of our readings from the course thus far and four (4) additional, outside sources to help you think about this question and to support your claim.

Organization:

You organize your paragraphs in such a way that your readers can clearly follow your main argument and how you're supporting it. You group information together that goes together, you use a new paragraph when you move to a new subject, and you use transition words and phrases to signal to your reader where you're going.

Editing:

You carefully edit and proofread your final draft to reduce, or ideally get rid of altogether, any grammar or proofreading errors.

Process/Revision/Writer's Letters:

You complete your first draft, you give feedback to your peer partner(s) on theirs, and you provide your readers (your peers and me) a writer's letter on your first draft that includes the following: your reflections on your writing process so far (how much time you've spent on the invention and drafting process, how "finished" the draft is, and what you still need to work on and what you're happy with). In other words, knowing your paper will be graded using the above criteria, how well have you addressed each one of them? You also include specific questions you have for your reviewers. For your final writer's letter, you revisit these questions and add a detailed explanation of what you changed after getting feedback (what you revised) and what you gained from this assignment.

DUE DATES

- Formal prospectus Th, Apr 2
- RefAnnBib of 4 outside sources Tues, Apr 14
- First draft with writer's letter: Th, Apr 16
- Revised draft with writer's letter: Th, Apr 28
3,500 words (~4-5 single-spaced pages)