**ENGL 2020: Women Immigrants and the American Dream**

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**True Blue Core Signature Assignment**

**Writing Project 3: Interview with an Immigrant**

Your final writing project for this course has been created to fulfill both MT Engage requirements and all True Blue Core objectives for ENGL 2020:

* **Explore** how literature reflects, informs, and shapes both personal and collective experience.
* **Articulate** cogent responses to literature that demonstrate cultural awareness and understanding.
* **Reflect** on how reading, writing, and interpreting literature initiates and contributes to cultural and social conversations.
* **Examine** how the production and interpretation of literature is shaped by historical, social, and cultural contexts.
* **Analyze** how literature from different cultures, movements, and time periods employ narrative and stylistic strategies to convey complex ideas and meanings.
* **Compose** projects (written, digital, or audio) that utilize critical thinking, analysis, and research to situate literature within diverse cultural and conceptual frameworks.
* **Identify** connections between literature and values, experiences, and practices of multiple cultures.
* **Develop** an approach to reading, writing, and interpretation that demonstrates an understanding of human experience from multiple cultural vantage points.

**OVERVIEW**

For your final project of the semester, we will reach beyond the classroom to explore the relationship between books and lived experience by conducting an interview and discussing the results. You will be required to interview an immigrant woman based on questions that interest you, and then compare the responses you receive to one or more of the women you have read about this semester in novels and memoirs. Through this experience, you will see in more depth the relationship between literature and less formal self-presentations (oral or written). You will perhaps uncover more direct emotional responses, less organized thoughts, and/or new ideas that emerge without the distance and careful processing through structured and polished writing for publication. You will then provide a commentary on what you observe and a written reflection on your experience.

**THE INTERVIEW**

To select a subject to interview, carefully consider whom you might most easily approach and how best to proceed. Selecting someone you know personally (family member, friend) or professionally (a coworker, a fellow student, someone you know from a club or place of worship, a past teacher) is ideal. The more distant your acquaintance, the more care you will want to take in when and how to approach them. Use respect and be professional. Avoid scenarios such asking a random restaurant server with an unfamiliar accent or woman checking out your groceries, “Hey, are you from another country? Can I interview you for my English class?”

For this online course, an email exchange will work well, in which you pose questions, the interviewee writes their answers, and then you follow up with any additional queries or requests for information. This material can then be cut and pasted into a document which you will be required to submit for credit. If you conduct an in-person or oral interview (by phone or Zoom), you will need to transcribe the interview and submit it for credit. Whatever the format, **your written transcript should be at least 700 words**. This likely means at least four questions (assuming you get detailed responses from your interviewee) or more if the answers are short. This is why you should let the interviewee in an email exchange know you may ask follow-up questions to get additional details.

If you ultimately do not succeed in finding someone to interview, you may select an interview with an immigrant woman available at the Archive of Immigrant Voices (<https://archiveofimmigrantvoices.omeka.net/>), a collection of interviews conducted by students at the University of Maryland from 2012 to the present day. Each interview there includes a photo, an audio file, and a written transcription of the interview. Note: While using one of these interviews means you do not have to transcribe (type out a recorded interview you conducted in person or cut and paste an email interview), the questions will not be your own. Thus, you may need to read more than one interview from the Archive that best meets your needs for this assignment. Instead of submitting a written transcript with your project, you will identify the individual interviewee you worked with, including the interviewees name and the URL. Appropriate URLs will look like this one for Bebe Lila Spooner Melville, born in Guyana: <https://archiveofimmigrantvoices.omeka.net/items/show/79>.

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

If you conduct your own interview, you get to decide what to ask and how. You want to include the basics (name, birthdate, birth nation, date, and reason for immigrating to the US) and then questions that come to you from the books we have read. These can include the interviewee’s family, education, work experience, religious beliefs, personal or political perspective on the US, how they define the American Dream. You can also ask questions about when and whether they have returned to their home country (or even consider it their “home” country vs. nation of birth) and how they feel about it. Think about what experiences, thoughts, and feelings the authors and/or their immigrant characters share, and base some questions on them. The more the interviewee’s answers interest you, the stronger the interview will be. Caution: Beware probing into deeply personal material unless the interviewee brings it up first. Again, be caring but professional. Also, if you work with a family member or close friend, pretend you do not know them for the sake of the interview. Include basic background information and ask questions you may already know the answers to.

**FORMAT**

Interviews should be single spaced with blank lines between your questions and comments and the interviewee’s answers. Use your first name or initials and the interviewee’s first name, first and last name, or initials followed by a colon, then the content. Visit the Archive of Immigrant Voices for some samples.

**COMMENTARY**

Once you have completed your interview, bring your interview into consideration or comparison with one or more of the immigrants we have read (about) in class. Consider how the interviewee’s story compares with the life details, experiences, and perspectives we read in one or more of the novels or memoirs for this course. What do they share? What is different? How has the interview enhanced your understanding of women immigrants (and the American Dream)?

Also consider the differences in styles of expression and detail. What did you observe and learn about the differences between formal, published writing and an interview with a living person? Did this help you to appreciate the art and skill of creative writing (memoir or novel)? Did it bring up any concerns about putting lived experience into book form?

**For this element, write at least 500 precise, vivid words.** Organize purposefully and clearly explain and illustrate all points you make and conclusions you draw.

**REFLECTION**

For the final section of this project, write about the meaning and value of this experience to you. Here are a few prompts to help you think through what you want to write:

* Why, in your opinion, is it important to talk to individuals in addition to reading literature to learn about the immigrant experience of women or other topics?
* Have you learned anything about your own thoughts (or experiences) related to the immigrant experience and/or the American Dream?
* How might you use what you have learned beyond this course?

Whatever you choose to write, dig deeply to avoid superficial, generalized, or generic responses. Avoid trying to please your professor; instead, share what you truly think.

**For this element, write at least 250 precise, vivid, well-organized words.**

**SUBMITTING YOUR PROJECT**

When you have completed all three elements (interview, commentary, and reflection), put them together in one document file, with page breaks between the elements. Single space the interview (with line breaks between questions and responses) and double space the commentary and reflection section. Title your file with your last name and assignment (e.g. HelfordWP3.docx) **Upload your single document file to the WP3 Dropbox by the deadline listed on D2L and the Course Assignments Chart.**

**EVALUATION**

WP3 will be evaluated based on the following elements:

* **Length**: Meets minimums for Interview (700 words), Commentary (500 words), and Reflection (250 words).
* **Content**: Interview asks appropriate questions to attain relevant, detailed information; Commentary offers detailed comparison and draws logical, productive conclusions; Reflection offers genuine insights based on careful self-analysis.
* **Expression**: Clear, precise, vivid, logical.
* **Mechanics**: All writing is carefully edited and proofread for grammatical errors and typos.