**The Columnist Project**

The Assignment. As a means of keeping abreast of public issues, you are required to follow a national columnist in a newspaper or magazine. You must collect five current, preferably consecutive, columns by your columnist. You should select a columnist from the handout I provide. You will find links to columnists and journalistic websites on the back of this handout that you can also select from, but I must approve the columnist from these sites. Archives can be searched on some of the columnist’s sites, but many publications require payment for articles older than one or two weeks. Therefore, check your columnist’s website weekly. The assignment has four parts.

Part I

Each article must be **annotated and appropriately highlighted** for the following (use your 4 highlighters as noted):

* Speaker’s tone and possible tone shifts (blue highlighter)
* Rhetorical strategies/ devices (green highlighter)
* Organization, arrangement, sentence structure (i.e., syntax) (yellow highlighter)
* Diction (pink highlighter)

Mark places in the text that evoke a reaction from you, be it laughter, anger, or confusion. Some questions to ask yourself as you read:

* How does s/he open the column?
* How does s/he close the column?
* How soon does s/he announce the thesis?
* How does s/he organize? What are the parts or sections of the column?
* How much is based on observation? Personal experience? Interviews? Facts?
* What audience does s/he assume? How do you know?
* What unstated assumptions (warrants, enthymemes) does the columnist make?

**Part II**

After annotating and highlighting, write a one-page précis.

Your first annotated article and one-page précis are due next Tuesday, Nov 14, 21, 28 Dec 5 and 12. The essay and final article are due Dec 12.

**Precis Writing**

Rationale: A précis reveals your understanding of the arguments and points authors make in a specific piece. Composing a précis can be particularly useful when organizing sources for a research project or determining their utility.

Directions: When writing your one-page response, objectively summarize the article accurately in your own words by composing a précis. Below the précis, compose your response, noting any questions, objections, or enlightenment generated by the column.

Note: Before you begin writing your précis, read the column several times to make sure you completely understand the author’s rhetorical situation.

**Example Precis**

**The first sentence** identifies the essay’s author and title, provides the article’s date in parentheses, and uses some form of the verb “says” (claims, asserts, suggests, argues) followed by “that,” and the essay’s thesis (paraphrased or quoted).

**The second sentence** describes the author’s support for the thesis, usually in chronological order.

Example: Rauch supports his position by providing anecdotal and historical evidence culled from segments of society that illustrate the futility and harm associated with attempts to eliminate prejudice.

**The third sentence** analyzes the author’s purpose using an “in order to” statement.

Example: Rauch hopes to shift the paradigm away from absolutism, the idea of punitive action against racism and prejudice, in order to move society toward rejection, the idea of societal pressure when grappling with racist and prejudicial attitudes.

**The fourth sentence** describes the essay’s intended audience and/or the relationship the author establishes with the audience.

Example: The author uses an erudite, yet defensive tone indicating that he primarily addresses a rather liberal intellectual audience.

**Part III**

**Synthesis Essay**

This question requires you to synthesize a variety of sources into a coherent, well-written essay. Synthesis refers to combining the sources and your position to form a cohesive, supported argument and accurately citing sources. Your argument should be central; the sources should support this argument. Avoid merely summarizing sources.

The final task is to write an essay that delineates the following:

- The author's general focus in columns

- Three of the author's oft-used stylistic/rhetorical devices

- An analysis of the efficacy of those devices

The format of this final essay is as follows:

* Length should be between two to three pages (No less than 750 words) AND include a Works Cited page.
* You should freely refer to the columns as a whole. Presume your reader is looking at your five columns and has read them. When you quote words, phrases, or lines from a specific column, follow the prescribed MLA format. ( [MLA Citations](chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/http:/mrbeland.weebly.com/uploads/3/0/5/5/30558007/mla.pdf))
* I would like to see two to four internal citations per paragraph for the following reasons:

1. to show you understand and can the MLA citation form in an academic essay
2. to show you know how to gracefully incorporate quotations.
3. to allow you to reinforce the validity of your argument by referring to “proof.”
4. I expect you to include specific examples in the body of your essay as you discuss various stylistic devices.)
5. This is a formal essay. You should write in the third person (avoiding passive writing at all costs.

**Resources to find columnists**

\*Note - some links send you to a publication's general opinions page. There you must do a little searching for the specific columnist.  
  
a. Fareed Zakaria - contributor to TIME magazine, Newsweek, The Washington Post, and CNN.com - he creatively calls himself a "radical centrist" but has been described by others as everything from a conservative to a moderate to a liberal. Judge for yourself.  
<http://fareedzakaria.com/category/washington-post/>

Time Magazine: <http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/0,28757,2110514,00.html>  
b. Anne Applebaum - Washington Post columnist.   
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/anne-applebaum/2011/02/24/ABLE5vI_page.html>  
  
c. Michael Kinsley –founder of slate.com. Syndicated columnist. L   
<http://www.newrepublic.com/authors/michael-kinsley>  
d. Richard Cohen – Washington Post columnist. l   
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/opinions/>  
  
e. Thomas Sowell – Hoover Institute scholar. Syndicated columnist C   
<http://www.townhall.com/columnists/thomassowell/archive.shtml>  
  
f. Ellen Goodman - Boston Globe columnist. L   
<http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/goodman/>  
  
g. George Will – Washington Post columnist. C   
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/opinions/>  
  
h. David Brooks - New York Times columnist. c   
<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/opinion/index.html>  
  
i. Paul Krugman - New York Times columnist. L   
<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/opinion/index.html>  
  
j. Thomas Friedman - New York Times columnist. l   
<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/opinion/index.html>  
  
k. LZ Granderson - various publications with a regular column at CNN.com. (Political leanings are all over the map.)  
<http://www.cnn.com/OPINION/granderson.commentaries/archive/>  
l. Jonah Goldberg - Los Angeles Times columnist. c   
<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-columnist-jgoldberg,0,7144959.columnist#axzz2tnhGegYM>  
  
m. Peggy Noonan - former presidential speechwriter; Wall Street Journal columnist. C   
<http://www.opinionjournal.com/columnists/pnoonan/>  
n. Maureen Dowd - ―Modo‖ New York Times columnist. L   
<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/opinion/index.html>  
o. Charles Krauthammer - Washington Post columnist. c   
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/pb/charles-krauthammer>  
p. Mona Charen - syndicated columnist. C   
<http://www.townhall.com/columnists/monacharen/archive.shtml>  
q. E.J. Dionne - Washington Post columnist. l   
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ej-dionne-jr/2011/02/24/ABhJNkM_page.html>

R. A source for a wide selection of (right-wing) columnists is http://drudgereport.com

s. Another source for a wide selection of columnist is <http://www.jewishworldreview.com/>

t. The New York Times: www.nytimes.com Click on Opinion and scroll down to Columnists on the left. Click on a columnist’s name.

u. The Washington Post: www.washingtonpost.com Click on Opinions and scroll to bottom to see a list of regular contributors.

v. The Boston Globe: www.boston.com/globe Click on Opinion. Scroll down and choose a columnist whose name you can click on. When you reach the current opinion piece, click on the author’s name above the article title.

w. The Nation : http://www.thenation.com/ Click on a columnist under “Nation Voices.”

x. Chicago Sun-Times: http://www.suntimes.com/index/ Click on the three bars in the top left corner, then on Opinion Home. Choose a columnist whose name is also in the dateline, then click on the name in the dateline.

y. Chicago Tribune: http://www.chicagotribune.com/ Click on Opinion, then scroll down and click on a Columnist.

z. The San Francisco Chronicle: http://www.sfgate.com/chronicle/ Click on Sections, then Opinion, then a columnist’s name.

aa. The Washington Times: http://www.washingtontimes.com/op-ed/ Click on Opinion, then Opinion Main, and scroll down. Click on columnist’s name.