

Be sure to structure your essay in terms of a thesis statement that you are explaining and defending. Your introduction should briefly discuss the subject matter of your paper and clearly state a thesis. Please be sure to put your thesis statement in boldface type.

In The Racial Contract, Charles Mills argues that racism is not a mistake or a deviation from standard western social contract theory. In fact, Mills argues, “Racism, racial self-identification, and race thinking are then not in the least “surprising,” “anomalous,” “puzzling,” incongruent with Enlightenment European humanism, but required by the Racial Contract as part of the terms for the European appropriation of the world”(122).

Explain and analyze Mills’ argument. Regardless of the view you defend, you must consult at least one additional source (Coates or Rothstein) and you must formulate and respond to one serious objection to your view.

The general purpose of an analytical essay is to present surprising and new interpretations of a text. The essay should grab the reader’s attention and make her wonder: “Really? How could that be?” The reader should want to see what you see happening in the text because your thesis and supporting claims are not obvious and are definitely interesting. Please keep in mind that I will be really, truly supremely bored by essays that are mostly summaries and by essays that simply offer your opinions about a controversy. Your essays should be free of errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, citation, etc.

In addition to your essay and references page, I am asking each of you to write me a short (no longer than one page) cover letter that you will hand in with your essay. In this cover letter I want you please to tell me anything you would like me to know about your essay, your experience writing the essay, etc.

Remember that one of my most important aims is to help you develop yourself as a curious and independent thinker, reader, writer, and speaker. Please, for your own sake, do not seek the opinions of others on non-scholarly websites, mass media, infotainment, etc. Wrestle with the texts. Read and re-read. Ask more, and more deeply engaged, questions in class. Pursue the ideas that other students raise in class. Disagree with what people say in class. Ask your parents, friends, co-workers what they think of your ideas, the subject matter of the readings, etc. And so on!

Please consider the following approaches to writing analytical essays:

Offering a different reading from the dominant, commonly accepted interpretation of a text.

Offering new ways to interpret the text by putting it in dialogue with another text.

Offering a reading of an aspect of a text that has largely been ignored or considered.

You have the option to try any of these approaches.

