Spring 2024 ENGL 105: Assignment Guide
Unit 1: Writing in the Social Sciences

Unit 1-at-a-Glance

Unit 1: Social Sciences	Agenda	Format	Due before start of class
M Jan 15	NO CLASS: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	N/A	
W Jan 17	Check-In #1; Unit 1 Introduction	In-person	
F Jan 19	Check-In #2; Close-Up #1	In-person	
M Jan 22	Check-In #3; Feeder 1.1 Assigned	In-person	
W Jan 24	Check-In #4	In-person	
F Jan 26	Feeder 1.1 Workshop; Close-Up #2	In-person	
M Jan 29	Check-In #5; Feeder 1.2 Assigned	In-person	Feeder 1.1
W Jan 31	Check-In #6	In-person	
F Feb 2	Feeder 1.2 Workshop; Close-Up #3	In-person	
M Feb 5	Check-In #7; Unit 1 Project Assigned	In-person	Feeder 1.2
W Feb 7	Check-In #8	In-person	
F Feb 9	Unit 1 Project Workshop; Close-Up #4	In-person	
M Feb 12	NO CLASS: Well-being Day	N/A	
W Feb 14	Unit 1 Project Conferences	Office Hours	
F Feb 16	Unit 1 Project Conferences	Office Hours	
M Feb 19			Unit 1 Project

Unit 1 Description

This Unit is designed to give you a strong foundation in the Social Sciences by challenging you to engage with the process of learning from and with others while we explore the concept of social groups. This overlaps with our course's focus on discourse communities, and, as we shall see, the Social Sciences present a rather unique ethical challenge in that scientific, data-driven approaches are tempered with the fact that scientists are studying their own species–both from within (as a human themselves) and without (from an objective, scientific perspective). As such, our work in this Unit will be a metacognitive process–one in which we interrogate how we learn from/with others, what we (and the cultures around us) do with what we learn, and which ethical, moral, and methodological components will facilitate our acts of learning.

As we head into an election year in 2024, we will be using this Unit to trouble the idea of voting monoliths, using as our example the many different priorities and positions adopted by those in the Latina/o/x community. Our Unit is designed to push back against the idea that a social or political label can predict voter behavior or encapsulate the realities of the group's lived experiences. Rather than trying to make sense of party affiliations or sociocultural labels, we are investigating in this Unit how and why such labels may be useful for those within any social group, only insofar that we also can note how they are potentially misappropriated or co-opted by individuals, and the culture more broadly, to erase nuanced understanding of individuals and social groups we don't identify with.

What this Unit will offer you is a chance to (re-)think through how we understand and categorize ourselves and others. We will begin the process by discussing the relevant terminology and ethical perspectives involved in learning from/with those in the Latina/o/x population, something you will then put into practice by turning inward to complete **Feeder 1.1**, an **Auto-Ethnography** in which you will investigate the political, social, religious, cultural, ethnic, or other group-identity signifiers you feel accurately describe you. From there, **Feeder 1.2**, the **Topic Proposal**, will call on you to identify a political issue or policy, a legal statute, or another sociopolitical factor that you can see may affect social groups within the Latina/o/x community in a unique way. In this way, you will be forming a comparative analysis that builds on your work in Feeder 1.1 and preparing a proposal, or tentative prediction, for the Unit Project. For the **Unit 1 Project**, you will prepare a **Policy Profile Op-Ed** piece that makes a case for the context of understanding why (or why not) you support the policy you have identified in Feeder 2. Your challenge for this assignment will be to demonstrate what you have learned from our Unit's use of the sources listed below as well as what understanding you have gained from your own research and our class discussions.

Sources

- ☐ "There's No Such Thing as 'The Latino Vote'" from *The Atlantic* by Geraldo L. Cadava
- ☐ "The Wall between Latinas and Latinos? Gender and Immigration Enforcement Attitudes Among U.S. Latina/o Voters" by Álvaro José Corral
- ☐ Excerpt from *Latino Political Power* by Sharon A. Navarro and Kim Geron
- ☐ Excerpt from "Finding the missing link? The impact of co-ethnicity, pan-ethnicity, and cross-ethnicity on Latino vote choice" in Political Research Quarterly by Ivelisse Cuevas-Molina.
- ☐ "The Role of Anti-Latino Prejudice in the 2024 U.S. Presidential Election" by Angela X. Ocampo

Feeder 1.1: Auto-Ethnography

Details
- ➤ **Format:** 2-page written assignment in double-spaced serif font
- ➤ **Due:** Before class on M Jan 29, on Canvas

Objective
- ➤ For this assignment, you will complete an **Auto-Ethnography**, or a two-page (double-spaced) written reflection, in which you will investigate the political, social, religious, cultural, ethnic, or other group-identity signifiers you feel accurately describe you.
- ➤ Choose 2-3 "labels" or other signifiers that you feel constructively demonstrate your identity and how you understand yourself. In a paragraph or so for each, explain your rationale for choosing these terms/labels. You may address any misgivings you have or qualifications you want to make about using these terms. Try to articulate both for yourself and for the reader the extent to which you identify with these signifiers.
- ➤ As you will likely find, this can be an uncomfortable process. It may feel limiting to have to choose only a few labels, and once you do, a sense of reassurance in your decision might quickly fade as you begin having to delineate what those labels mean. Try to examine that discomfort, if it arises. One of the key lessons in our Unit is how "data" in the Social Sciences can be both enlightening and confining. In this assignment's case, the "data" is linguistic, and a Social Scientist has many linguistic forms of data that they rely on, such as surveys, interviews, polls, journals, and other written or oral communication compiled, sometimes through the collaboration of the Social Scientist and their subject over a long period of time (which would be a traditional ethnographic approach). We are exploring the flipside, in which the subject of a study uses language independently to present themselves for the Social Scientist's linguistic "laboratory."
- ➤ The purpose of this assignment is to help you gain a deeper understanding of the limits of "data" in this discipline, however it is acquired. As we will cover in class, context is key, and your task is not to settle on iron-clad terminology so much as it is to reflect on the fact that easy answers (i.e. labels–even carefully administered ones) often come at the expense of more meaningful, ethical, and contextual understanding of ourselves and others.

Evaluation
- ➤ This assignment is worth 5 points.
- ➤ The format and structure of this assignment is up to you–you can think of it as a creative assignment, if that helps. What you will need to do for full credit, though, is engage as much as you can in the space allowed with the questions and problems described in the Objective section above.

Feeder 1.2: Topic Proposal

Details
- ➢ **Format:** 1-2 page written assignment in double-spaced serif font
- ➢ **Due:** Before class on M Feb 5, on Canvas

Objective
- ➢ For this assignment, you will be preparing a **Topic Proposal** for your Unit Project that functions like an abstract, clarifying your topic and gesturing to what you expect to find in conducting your research.
- ➢ A helpful approach for this Feeder may be to adopt a two-part structure.
  - ○ First, identify a political issue or policy, a legal statute, or another socio political factor that you can see affects those from other social groups within the Latina/o/x community in a way that doesn't affect you. As we are in an election year, I would suggest familiarizing yourself with some of the debates political candidates are drawing voters' attention to. Outline the policy, statute, or factor and address why it is of interest to you, explaining as you do its relevance to our Unit's themes.
  - ○ Second, you will gesture to what you expect to find, or what you hope to find more about, in respect to how this policy, statute, or factor affects those within a/the Latina/o/x community in a way that it doesn't affect you. You will be progressing outward from Feeder 1.1's "auto-ethnographic" focus and beginning to consider the experiences of others, equipped with some of the methodological sensitivity that completing Feeder 1 should help you develop. In other words, if you found yourself uncomfortable with using certain labels or signifiers, your job at this point in the Unit is to begin thinking about how that experience should inform how you learn *from* and *with* others rather than merely collecting information *about* them.

Evaluation
- ➢ This assignment is worth 5 points.
- ➢ You are not required to structure your assignment in line with the suggestion/s in the Objective section above, but you will need to address both points (the topic itself + what you hope or expect to find in your research) in the course of your Feeder. As always with Feeders, my focus in grading is on evidence of your engagement with the assignment prompt.

Unit 1 Project: Policy Profile Op-Ed

Details
- ➤ **Format:** 750-1000 word Op-Ed in double-spaced serif font
- ➤ **Due:** Before class on M Feb 19, on Canvas

Objective
- ➤ For this assignment, you will be composing an **Op-Ed**, or opinion column, in which you address the policy, statute, or other factor you chose for Feeder 2.2 by explaining its implications for social groups within the Latina/o/x community. You are free to focus on certain subsets of the Latina/o/x community, or you may take a more general approach and explain how the policy at the heart of your topic affects the community writ large. Keep in mind, though, that you will need to be sensitive and demonstrate a deep awareness of this Unit's lessons in referring to social groups in ethical ways, which in this case means avoiding generalizing or making assumptions of similarity.
- ➤ Recall, too, that our Unit is built to interrogate and trouble notions of a "Latino vote"—meaning you should cover in the Op-Ed how your topic may affect individuals in the group in unique ways, or, depending on your topic, how or why certain subsets of a/the Latina/o/x population might be in favor of or unsupportive of the policy or statute that your Op-Ed discusses.
- ➤ Cover the implications and effects of the policy (whether it is in-place now or is a proposed policy, law, or other sociopolitical factor) by explaining how it would likely be used (or mis-used) by the government and by the culture at large. Essentially, you need to explain what the topic denotes (essentially what it means) as well as what it *means* for the lived experiences for those in the Latina/o/x community.
- ➤ Your task is to use the Op-Ed to support, recommend changes, or reject the policy/statute you chose for your topic. Your perspective may play a role, but your rationale for what you recommend readers take away from the Op-Ed needs to be grounded in and informed by what you have heard from Latina/o/x voices and scholars.
- ➤ You should reference 4-7 external sources for this assignment, and at least one of them should be a peer-reviewed source. Pop sources should be from reputable outlets. All sources should be hyperlinked whenever you draw from them, either by direct quotes or by paraphrasing. (You will not need a Works Cited page.)
- ➤ You are free to use the Sources from our Unit 1 description, but these can not count toward your required 4-7 sources.

Evaluation
- ➤ 15 points
- ➤ To receive full credit, the main logistical requirements you must meet are the word count (at least 750 words) and the number of required sources (at least 4; one of which, at least, should be peer-reviewed).
- ➤ Beyond these requirements, I am looking for a pronounced understanding of this Unit's themes and skills across the Op-Ed. While I do want you to focus on preparing a polished piece of writing, I am more concerned with how well you operate in the writing as a Social Scientist making ethical, careful use of "data" and terminology related to social groups. I will be looking too, for fluency in how you discuss the policy, statute, or factor you chose for your topic, especially in regards to its implications for those in social groups within the Latina/o/x community.