

Essay II: Ocularcentrism & the Management of Vision

Perhaps because we have become largely dependent upon seeing as the primary way we experience our world and acquire new knowledge, arguments that praise ocularcentrism often point to the positive impact of privileging sight over other sensory experiences. *However, can overreliance on vision resulting from promoting ocularcentrism or passively taking ocularcentrism for granted affect us in ways (positive or negative) that we don't realize? In an ocularcentric society, how do we know that we are in control of our vision, of what we see, and, more importantly, of how we see?*

As early as ancient Greece (though arguably even earlier), philosophical thinkers, from Plato on, documented concerns about the mediation of human vision by external sources: whether people (Roman Catholic Church), visual technologies or apparatuses (cameras), or ideologies (power, surveillance) that interfere with how we see and experience reality?

How would you join a conversation about agency and vision? Essay 2 invites you to construct an argument to enter this conversation about the agency of human vision, a concern that arises when we consider that, even in an ocularcentric society, much of what we take to be the importance or dominance or power of sight, seeing, and vision is actually really **assisted, mediated, managed, or controlled**—whether due to good intentions or deceptive purposes. *What effects do the management of vision have upon human agency? On choosing what we see & how we see it? In what way & to what extent has ocularcentric privileging of sight, and visual technologies that enhance seeing, affected how we see?*

Essay II asks you to evolve & assume a Stance about your understanding of potential positive or negative consequences of ocularcentrism (as Jay explains this Keyterm in his introduction to *Downcast Eyes*) by connecting ocularcentrism to a “way of seeing” from Unit 2. As such, you will create a theoretical LENS to frame an argument about the management of vision. You will demonstrate your understanding of Ocularcentrism by defining & explaining it in your essay's introduction, while also connecting it to one or more Unit II Keyterms, authors, or readings. By framing an argument in this way, you will contribute your SAY to the conversation about concerns about human agency in a predominantly ocularcentric society.

You will develop your Essay II introduction in the same way that you did Essay I with one exception: after you explain the meaning & significance of the hook and use Stitching to transition to the essay's focus, you will introduce, connect, & define the “Lens” Keyterms you are connecting (ocularcentrism and X) by using a combination of Stitching, Quotation Weaving, and Rhetorical Structural Moves (RSMs) to introduce your argument & frame your THESIS. The position you take about the management of vision will contribute to your Stance.

I. Questions to help think about & choose a focus of your argument:

- What is the relationship between ocularcentrism and spectacle? Ocularcentrism and surveillance/Panopticism?
- What Unit II authors seem to share a negative view of ocularcentrism? Which authors share a positive view? For which authors is deciding whether the effects of ocularcentrism are positive or negative contingent?
- What parallels do I see between Plato and Foucault? Between “the cave” and “the Panopticon”? Between “the cave,” “the Panopticon,” and *1984*? Is Wilson the prisoner in Plato's cave who escapes and is then returned to “the cave”? Does the ocularcentrism that is part of these texts manipulate vision and, therefore, people, in ways that risk leading to totalitarianism? Is this similar to Benjamin's worry that mechanical reproduction, in the wrong hands and used for the wrong purposes—manipulation through brainwashing—can be used to further Fascism?
- Are mechanical reproduction and spectacle always necessarily problematic in negative ways?

**** Note:** You are NOT comparing Unit II readings, or Jay's introduction to a Unit II reading; rather, you are using ideas from a Unit I reading to contextualize & focus an argument about the management of vision in Unit II.

III. Questions to Help Develop a Thesis Statement Once You Have Chosen A “Len's Text” Focus:

- How might X's arguments about Y explain...
- What insights about the management of vision in X ...
- In what ways is our seeing, our vision, managed and by what apparatuses? By what people, groups, individuals, powers, rules, social customs, &/etc.
- What connections can you draw between how an individual's or group's identity and how or why their vision is managed, manipulated, limited, etc.?
- To what extent is the management of vision problematic? To what extent is the management of vision helpful or useful? To what extent does the management of vision help humans/society evolve? To what extent does the management of vision limit or prevent groups, society, or individuals from evolving?

IV. Your "I SAY" Questions: _____

V. "Lens Text" & Keyterms to help focus an argument about my I SAY question/s:

VI. Important Considerations for Developing a Strong Argument—your essay should:

- Have a fully developed **introduction** that begins with a hook, establishes motive, is focused, makes transitions using stitching, uses synthesis transitions to introduce & connect the "lens text" that frame & contextualizes your argument, and ends with an arguable, evaluative thesis. Remember that the frame for your argument—how you are using the lens text to make an argument about gender & work—must integrate a central **idea, issue, keyterm, assertion, or argument** from a Unit I "lens text" in the introduction.
- Have an arguable, evaluative **thesis** that a) emerges from connections you see between the language of work in your "lens text" (Unit I) and gender & work (Unit II); b) develops from the "lens text" frame; c) avoids setting up a 5-paragraph essay (Thesis should not be a list).
- Develop complex **paragraphs** that incorporate *A-C-E, Synthesis, Stance, Stitching, Quotations Weaving, G&B THEY SAY, I SAY templates, & Rhetorical Structural Moves (RSMs)*. 1-2 paragraphs should be synthesis paragraphs. All paragraphs should be focused ACE paragraphs, and all assertions should have a STRONG STANCE. End with a developed **conclusion** that *does more than* restate a thesis or recap the argument (see Intro/Conclusion handout)
- Incorporate the following "elements" from the "*Elements of the Essay*" handout:

- **Motive:** Why does the argument matter? Why is the issue important? Why should readers care?
- **Thesis:** an evaluative, focused, succinct claim framed by a "Lens Text"
- **Evidence:** *Cited quotations* from course readings that support SAY Thesis/Stance Assertions/Argument
- **Keyterms:** identifies/uses important Keyterms in Introduction, Thesis, Stance Assertions, analysis, etc.
- **Analysis:** clear, comprehensive explanations & interpretations of the meaning + significance of evidence that the writer cites to support I SAY Assertions & claims made in the argument.
- **Audience Assumptions:** beliefs or opinions that are misguided, outdated, cliché, reductive, erroneous
- **Stance:** a strong perspective, POV, and take about issues involving the management of vision; how the writer positions herself in relation to an audience using a Hook, Motive, Thesis, Stance, Evidence, diction, and tone.
- **Stitching:** the connections that help you transition between paragraphs, within paragraphs, or between major ideas and claims of the argument: your prose—and your argument—will flow logically & seamlessly.
- **Rhetorical Structural Moves (RSMs):** rhetorical strategies that add complexity to your argument/writing.

- A thoughtfully & completely developed Conference Draft of at least 4-5 pages! (NOT a Freewrite or Zero Draft!)

Essay II Conference Drafts (4-5 pages): Due by between 8pm Tuesday, March 21st —8am Wednesday, March 22nd

Essay II Revision Plans + Roadmaps + PRELIM IV: Evidence Chart: Due at your Essay II Conference.

Essay II Revisions + Revised Roadmap + Cover Letter: Due one week following your conference.