

# Moral Displays

## Controversies in Public Witness

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**Writing 20: Academic Writing**  
**Professor Hillard**  
**Fall 2001**

### **Texts**

Bolton, Richard. *Culture Wars: Documents from the Recent Controversies in the Arts*  
Crowley, Sharon and Debra Hawhee. *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*  
Harwit, Martin. *An Exhibit Denied: Lobbying the History of the Enola Gay*  
Haas, Kristin. *Carried to the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*  
Linenthal, Edward T. and Tom Englehardt. *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other  
Battles for the American Past*  
a standard college dictionary

### **Purpose of the Course**

This course has been designed to give you practice in the arts of scholarly reading and writing of the sort you will be expected to engage in throughout your university studies, regardless of your anticipated major. Necessarily, this will involve you in producing analytic and argumentative writing at a level more sophisticated and subtle than you most likely have had the occasion to practice earlier in your studies. Most university professors would agree that methodologic interpretation, deliberate analysis, and reasoned argument constitute the core of your intellectual activity as a student. Writing 20 takes up each of these practices, offering you critical tools with which to enhance your scholarly repertoire.

The course is built upon a pragmatic assumption: that one grows more savvy, more aware, and more conscious of the analytic and persuasive functions of language by actively engaging in reasoned discussion and argument (both verbal and written) in response to public disagreements that warrant closer and more complex inspection than they typically have been given in the popular press. To help this process take shape, our class is structured as a seminar, where all participants share in the interrogatory functions of analysis, and all participants stand ready to respond critically to the arguments forwarded by others. Critical response is a learned behavior that becomes more useful and more useable with practice. The seminar will offer you method for responding critically, as it introduces you to the tools of rhetorical analysis with which we will describe, evaluate, and assess the nature of the various public disagreements we study.

### **Design of the Course**

The course consists of four major writing projects, each focused upon an episode of disagreement in American culture involving questions of public display. Each project will be completed in three to four weeks, with attention given to various processes of deliberation and analysis necessary to developing a polished, public argument about the issue at hand. Each project is composed of a set of ancillary assignments and exercises designed to help you prepare to make a sophisticated argument. Your written argument for each major project will undergo an extensive process of review and revision before it is presented for its final

evaluation. Both the analytic steps leading to the composition of your argument, and the final argument itself will be assessed and graded.

The four major writing projects include:

Project #1: Disputes Constructing Public Memory: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Project #2: The Culture Wars: Moral Disagreements about the Display of American Art

Project #3: The Politics of Interpretation: Problematic American History Denied

Project #4: Virtual Display: The Ethics of Representing Lynching in America

Each of the projects centers upon a disagreement regarding the value of displaying certain materials in public, whether they be historic, artistic, or memorializing in nature. Citizens, politicians, journalists, and scholars have responded in their various ways to each of the controversies, some of their debates threatening to fracture American culture along lines of difference and moral division. You will have the opportunity to inspect the matter over which there is disagreement, to evaluate competing claims made in response, and to analyze the complexities of the controversy itself. Though this is a course in learning to argue well, it is fair to say that much of your work will involve you in analyzing others' arguments, to make arguments about arguments.

### **Why Study Issues of Display in a Writing Course?**

In this course, “display” involves the action of purposefully placing materials in public so as to prompt effects upon a viewing audience. Display may then be considered a persuasive action, as those creating displays often intend to move audiences to one or another idea about the nature of the world. Certainly, we all display ourselves each and every time we enter public space. Likewise, whenever we prepare documents to be read by others, we are displaying our information and ideas, hopeful of catalyzing certain effects and not others, eager at times for the response of our readers. Display involves both production and consumption, as the material to be displayed is prepared, assembled, and constructed by the agents of the display, and the display is then received, interpreted, and responded to by others. Every time you prepare a paper for class, you anticipate its display—a public event that is charged with a measure of significance and anticipation.

Each of the episodes of public display studied throughout the course has prompted anxieties, worries, and concerns held by citizens across the ideological spectrum—from the most conservative to the very liberal. Many of the controversies have not followed predictable patterns of political affiliation and argument, leading to complexities in the alignment and alliance of participants in dispute. These complications make the episodes all the more suitable for careful examination and critique—a project well-suited to those who study rhetoric. Though some of the disputes ended in a temporary deadlock of moral positions, it is important to continue to open them to contemporary inspection, as their issues continue to hold relevance in American life and culture.

### **The Writers' Forum: The Shape of Class Conversations**

As one would expect a public forum to provide a venue for the open exchange of opinions, the Writers' Forum approach is built upon the premise that writers can improve and refine the quality of their written arguments as they listen carefully to the feedback and critique of other classmates. In this exchange, writers discover how their arguments are received by readers, some of whom may hold different positions on the issue at hand.

The Writers' Forum also presents opportunities for writers to try out the effectiveness of a claim, to adjust, revise, and refine their arguments in response to peers' feedback. Similar to other civic forums, the Writers' Forum is a site dedicated to holding productive discussions about the form and presentation of works-in-progress. This involves the entire group in strategizing together about the

rhetorical situations at hand in ways that are mutually beneficial to writers and their readers, in a space where everyone's participation is honored. Writers deserve strong and generous readings of their work, a responsibility of everyone in class.

The Writers' Forum is also built on the belief that composing written arguments is not so much a set of skills to be mastered as it is an art to be set in motion by individual writers who engender individual readers. The only way to become a better writer is by composing analyses and arguments that matter both to oneself and to one's audience. One's notion of oneself as a writer, then, is both a personal as well as an interpersonal matter. Argumentative writing is a social rather than a solitary action. This is the condition of writing in both academic and professional contexts.

### **Grading**

Final written arguments for Projects 1, 2, 3, & 4	= 55%
Analytic Exercises	= 25%
Quality of Class Involvement	= 20%

Final written arguments for Projects 1,2,3, & 4 will receive letter grades. Analytic Exercises will receive grades of  $\sqrt{-}$ ,  $\sqrt{}$ , or  $\sqrt{+}$ . A word of Class Involvement: The success of the Writers' Forum depends upon both your active involvement in the work of the class and upon your careful and considered assessment of classmates' work-in-progress, brought to the table for collegial discussion. From time to time, you will be asked to present the results of an analysis to the rest of the class, and will be asked to present various drafts of your arguments for the class's critique. Because of the importance of these activities, the quality of your class participation will be evaluated daily.

### **Class Absences and Lateness**

You are permitted three absences from class. It is assumed that there is a good reason for your missing a class meeting; therefore, there is no need to offer "excuses" as to why you may have missed a meeting. However, if you do happen to miss a meeting, I assume that you will do the following:

1. Contact at least two classmates to learn what happened in class on the day that you were absent, and to receive any of the materials distributed in class on that day.
2. On the day you return to class, be prepared to initiate a discussion relevant to the material being worked on in that day's class.

If you miss more than three classes (with or without a Dean's Excuse), your final grade for the course will be lowered one full letter for any additional day missed (e.g., a "B" will become a "C"). I expect that you will arrive in class on time, ready to begin the day's work. You will be permitted three late arrivals over the course of the semester. Each additional lateness will count as a class absence.

### **Plagiarism, Academic Dishonesty**

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense which violates the ethic of mutual trust and regard operating in a university setting. Though we will discuss issues of citationality and learn strategies for appropriately referring to the work of others, you may want to review the Library's materials on "Plagiarism: Its Nature and Consequences" at [www.lib.duke.edu/libguide/plagiarism.htm](http://www.lib.duke.edu/libguide/plagiarism.htm). The penalty for plagiarism is both of failure of the course and prosecution by the University's judicial board of review, including possible suspension from the University.

### **The Duke University Writing Studio**

The Writing Studio is located on the second floor of the Academic Advising Center on East Campus, with satellites in both Perkins and Lilly libraries. You may visit The Writing Studio for free help in drafting, revising, or editing any writing project you are doing for any course at Duke. The professional consultants there will work with you on a one-time basis, or they can help you with your

writing regularly throughout the year. Though The Writing Studio is equipped to help you strategize about difficulties or struggles you may find with your writing, it also is ready to help you with your processes of analysis and is a good place to find an audience willing to listen to your trial claims and arguments. Visit the Studio's web page to make an appointment: [www.ctlw.duke.edu/wstudio](http://www.ctlw.duke.edu/wstudio).

### **Using the Course's Website**

You will need daily to refer to the course's website for updates, copies of assignments and other course documents. You will post all of your written assignments to the website's digital dropbox, a mechanism that will allow us to read and respond to work-in-progress in anticipation of participating in The Writers' Forum. Also, from time to time, you will be required to hold on-line discussions about certain questions and issues. You will be prompted on these conversations on the website as well. The website can be accessed in the following manner:

1. Go to Trinity College's homepage: [www.aas.duke.edu](http://www.aas.duke.edu).
2. Click on "Course Information"
3. Click on "My Blackboard"
4. Enter your email user id and password
5. Go to "Writing 20.26: Moral Displays: Controversies in Public Witness"

For Thursday, August 30, I would like you to read “Chapter 1: Ancient Rhetorics: Their Differences and the Differences They Make” in *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*. This is a dense introductory chapter, filled with rhetorical terms and distinctions that we will turn to again and again in our course. As an introduction to the study of rhetoric, the chapter focuses our attention on the nature and consequences of disagreement itself, and asks that we revalue the way the disagreement can—and should—function productively in our culture. As we’ll see over the course of the semester, controversy and public debate don’t always yield “productive” results. Still, our authors (Crowley and Hawhee) advance the premise that disagreement is both inevitable and an event to be valued as a treasured aspect of life in a democracy.

Please read through their chapter a first time, noting the progress of its parts, its general trajectory, and its key distinctions. Don’t make elaborate notes on this reading; instead, use this read-through simply to get a “lay of the land.” Then, return to the chapter for a second reading. This time through, mark passages that seem important or puzzling, and make note of key terms (e.g., *rhetoric*, *ideology*, *disagreement*, *fact*, *network of interpretation*, *proposition*, *commonplaces*, etc.) In class, we will tease out working definitions of these terms, utilizing them to analyze the documents assembled in response to the proposed Chapel Hill memorial.



Next, I ask that you read and reflect upon the various documents cast in response to the proposed construction of Thomas Sayre’s public installation, “621yards/.69seconds.” It could be argued that such documents—letters to the editor, minutes from a city council meeting, journalistic accounts—represent fairly typical sorts of public texts that emerge in the face of controversies all over this country. Here, we see citizens “weighing in” on a debate catalyzed by a public commission’s proposal to commemorate a community’s particular tragedy. We wouldn’t expect everyone to agree on its value and worth of the project, especially in light of a memorial as complex as the one Sayre has proposed.

For Thursday’s class, I would like you to develop a set of notes in response to the following questions, each of which we’ll take up together in seminar:

1. What seems to be the nature of the disagreement here? What positions are advanced? How might they best be characterized (named and defined)?
2. How might you describe the *networks of interpretation* that have led to the articulation of various positions? Do some positions seem predictable (given the shape of American culture and its tolerance for artistic expression)?
3. Can you identify the use/reliance upon any *commonplaces* used by various interlocutors?
4. Finally, what’s your assessment of the quality of the arguments and claims advanced? Do some seem stronger or weaker than others? Can you envision better arguments? More sophisticated claims? A better discussion altogether? What exactly would you recommend to improve the nature of the conversation of those involved?

For Tuesday, September 4, I would like you to read “Chapter 3: Kairos and the Rhetorical Situation” in *ARCS*. When a rhetor (writer, speaker, artist) decides to construct a text (or other symbolic form) he/she typically does so as a particular way of responding to a particular set of concerns, often as a way of attending to some identifiable need. When Maya Lin created her proposal for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, she was responding *kairotically* both to the competition for designs and to the need to memorialize those fallen in Vietnam. We might say that she “seized the moment,” perceived an opportunity for new action, constructed her proposal to the public meanings attached to the war in Vietnam. It is not accident that those who consider the operations of kairos often deploy sports metaphors to explain its workings. Envision, for instance, a basketball player “in the zone,” finding just the right moment to stop, square off, and take a shot. Clearly, the player must be supremely aware of context—nearby players, teammates and opponents alike, the game clock’s ticking down, the current score, the feasibility of the angle, etc. We’ll come to see that writing is much like this, as you discern the ambient context to find your opening, to forge your claim, to cast your argument in response to the situation at hand. As you read through the chapter, please make special note of its key terms and key concepts, as we’ll be deploying these in our seminar conversation.



After you’ve read through the chapter, please map out some time between now and Tuesday’s class to view “Maya Lin: A Strong, Clear Vision,” a videotape on reserve in Lilly Library. [Go up to the front desk and ask for the video, on reserve for Writing 20, section 26. You will be able to watch the video in Lilly; they’ll give you the particulars.] Though the major portion of the two hour production is devoted to Lin’s work on the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial, other parts of the video concentrate on other memorializing projects (one, the Civil Rights Memorial; the other the Womens’ Table at Yale University). I’d like you to view the material with the concept of *kairos* in mind: In what ways does Lin’s work emerge in response to public situations and contexts? Does she overtly or implicitly define her work—and herself as a sculptor—kairotically, that is, as responsively poised, ready to address circumstances, vigilant of the need to “say something” in response to what’s already been said and done? You’ll want to take some notes while you watch, jotting down key phrases, making observations about the project(s) she’s involved with.

Then, I would like you to compose a short (1½-2 page) paper in response to the question: What do you feel was the most important thing that the producers of this documentary wanted us to understand about Lin and/or her work?

For Thursday, September 6, I would like you to read Chapter 3: Stasis Theory: Asking the Right Questions in *ARCS*. The stasis questions are vital to the creative and critical side of rhetoric. With questions of conjecture, definition, value, and procedure at your disposal, you can choose where and how you would like to enter into a discussion on a controversial subject. The four stases define the types of claims that you might forge in response to a disagreement. They are, in other words, useful inventional tools. But they're also instrumental to the kinds of analytic and critical work you'll be doing in the course. With them, you can discern the kinds of claims and arguments that have been made by others and begin the process of evaluating the nature and use of such claims. Using the stases, we'll attempt to "map the territory" of the disagreement surrounding the construction of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM).

Crowley & Hawhee offer a number of contemporary public disagreements in order to exemplify the workings of the stases (abortion and hate speech among them). In class on Thursday, we'll revisit their exemplifications together. Please be ready to refer to their examples and make use of them to elucidate the nature of the stasis questions.

If you would like some extra help in understanding the nature of the stases, I have prepared a document that you can access on the web. Visit the Center for Teaching, Learning, & Writing's homepage at [www.ctlw.duke.edu](http://www.ctlw.duke.edu). Next, click on "University Writing Program." Once there, click on "Resources." Finally, click on "Stasis Theory: An Introduction."



Next, I would like you to read an overview of the controversy surrounding the design of the memorial, prepared by Jan Scruggs (you may remember him from the video; he's the person who first suggested the construction of the VVM) and Joel Swerdlow, a journalist. The section I am asking you to read document significant aspects of the disagreement surrounding the proposed construction and design of the memorial. Please read the document through a first time, getting a general sense of the shape of the disagreement. Then, on a second reading, note the various claims about the proposed design that circulated before, during, and after the design competition. Group these according to the stases: Do some seem concerned with aspects of conjecture? Do others cast claims of definition? Of value? Where do procedural claims enter the dispute?

As an adjunct to your classification, I have provided two other documents: Maya Lin's statement that accompanied her proposal, and the statements made in response to the proposal by Tom Carhart, one of the chief detractors of the venture (perhaps you'll remember him from the video as well; he's the fellow with the handlebar mustache who spoke out at the Arts Commission hearing). You'll want to add Lin's and Carhart's claims to your work on classifying claims.

Once you've assembled your claims and have differentiated them according to conjecture, definition, value, and procedure, I would like you to step back from your fine work for a moment and ask: **What's the general quality of the conversation surrounding this disagreement? Does it seem similar to the public conversation surrounding Sayre's proposed memorial? Is it characteristically different in some way?** Please develop a set of notes in response to the question so that you'll be prepared to offer your response in Thursday's class.

## Assignment 4

For Tuesday, September 11, I would like you to read Kristin Hass' *Carried to the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, a book-length examination of the ways in which citizens respond to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Focusing her attention on the material that visitors have left (and continue to leave) at the wall, Hass attempts to make sense of the nature, purpose, and value of this response. Drawing upon the history of American war memorializing, the traditions of funerary culture, and upon classification schemes for ordering the meanings of everyday material objects, Hass forwards a central claim regarding the wall's function in helping Americans negotiate new forms of public memory.

Before you read her text, spend a few moments browsing its contents. Note the nature and use of photographs, chapter titles, her fondness for epigraphs (quotes, lists, and other statements set forth at the beginning of most chapters), the number and kind of footnotes used (28 pages of them), the presence of a "selected bibliography," the index. Notice the general arrangement of parts—the way in which chapter titles announce the movement of the text from place to place to place. As with other book-length arguments you'll be reading at the University, you will want to think about things like pacing your reading, annotating the text, marking passages that seem especially interesting or puzzling or otherwise significant. Later, I'll ask that you utilize quoted passages, key terms, key distinctions, and key concepts in assembling your own argument about the wall. You will want to devise a system that will allow you to easily access the places in the text that interest you. You may want to think about the advantages of notation systems other than highlighters: Customize your marking of the text to suit your own reading quirks and habits.



Whether or not we find ourselves in agreement or disagreement or partial agreement with Hass' claims, it is clear that she is someone who has spent intellectual energy puzzling over the meanings and uses of the VVM. Reading her document, it is also clear that she has engaged in a measure of research: unearthing public documents about the proposal and construction of the wall; making visits to the site; connecting the present uses of the wall to the nature of other memorials in other places, at other times; cataloging the array of objects left at the wall. These sorts of intellectual activities mark her writing as characteristically different from the other materials about the wall that we've witnessed so far (the documentary on Maya Lin and the texts recounting the shape of the controversy over design and construction).

One way to name this difference is to say that those texts are "popular" and that Haas' work is "scholarly." Or, one might suggest that those texts are "journalistic" and that Haas' work is "intellectual." I would like you to spend some time thinking about what such terms mean and how it is—in your experience as a reader, and as someone studying the wall—that such terms are more than mere labels. For a moment, I would like you to reflect not only on what differences you see between journalistic and scholarly writing (say, Scruggs and Swerdlow's writing versus Haas'), but to go on identify what *difference the differences make*. You will need, in other words, to locate differences (the presence of footnotes, or the use of extended historical comparisons, or even the repetition of "I will argue that..." in Hass) and then go on to speak about what such features permit readers of scholarly texts to do differently than readers of journalistic texts are invited to do. What are the "benefits" of scholarly analysis, or extended argument, of the very act of research?

Please prepare your remarks in the form of a two page essay. You will probably want to utilize examples from texts in your discussion. For now, simply include page numbers in parentheses following quoted material.

## Assignment 5

In Thursday's class, I would like us as a group to consider trial introductory paragraphs that you compose, paragraphs that will eventually serve as introductions to a 3-5 page argument regarding the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. In order to accomplish this, you'll first need to discover what sort of conceptual argument you would like to cast. This will no doubt be difficult work; you'll need to review what you've read, and to look back over what sorts of issues we've begun to discuss in class. Within this context, you will need to decide which among the many various kinds of conceptual issues you would like to work on. You'll need, in other words to find your particular way into a debate or discussion that you've witnessed or heard, to decide how you'd like to respond to these prior conversations, how it is that your claim about the memorial exists within or against the grain of prior investigations, disputes, or interpretations.

Your argument should respond to the following general question:

**From the time of its inception, and in the years following its construction, it is clear that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial has tended to catalyze new understandings about public aesthetics, the politics of memorializing practices, the appearance of personal memory in public space, and the nature of the Vietnam War itself. Out of the many ways in which the presence of the wall has mattered to various Americans, what would you say is the most important concept that the construction of the wall and/or its utilization by citizens has taught us? What, might you argue, has it helped Americans to understand better or differently?**

This will involve you in making a conceptual argument. Your response to “what the wall has taught Americans” will necessarily involve you in locating some idea—about the operations of memory, or about the nature of public sculpture, or about the actions of everyday citizens, or about the unexpected public responses—that you'll go on to show is an interesting, worthwhile, or otherwise significant concept that the wall and American's experiences responding to the wall has prompted. When forging your claim, you'll want to consider its substantiality, specificity, and contestability. Principally, you'll want to envision how other knowledgeable persons studying the phenomenon of the wall might choose to respond differently, how they might disagree with your claim. (You'll want to begin to imagine: What might they say? How might I respond to their counterclaims?)

I would like you to situate this claim within an introductory paragraph, a paragraph that follows the structure typical of academic writing. This is the structure we saw at work in the two examples of student writing from *Deliberations* that we read over together. If you remember, the structure is as follows:

Common ground → Disruption → Resolution

In other words, the paragraph begins by stating in a number of sentences the typical or “common” ways in which the phenomenon under consideration has been approached, or interpreted, or otherwise inquired into. What, typically, has been said? What, generally, has been the nature of past discussion about the phenomenon. Then, you disrupt (however, but, on the other hand, etc.) this past inquiry. What has been left out? What

deserves closer inspection, warrants a different kind of scrutiny, more subtle or careful analysis? The resolution is the place where you offer your claim, your claim being one “answer” or response to the problem to correcting the incomplete or inadequate analyses or past interpretations you’ve shown to be a problem. Together in class, we’ll read through your introductions, offering suggestions for modification and strengthening.



I would like you to post your introduction to our class website by no later than tomorrow at 8:00 p.m. This should give you enough time to print up everyone else’s paragraphs and read them over before Thursday’s class. Here’s the procedure I would like you to use for doing this:

1. To get your CourseInfo password, go to the CourseInfo password secure retrieval web site at <https://ing.acpub.duke.edu/cgi/pass.cgi>. You will need to use your ACPUB ID (the letters coming before the @ in your email address) and password to retrieve your CourseInfo password.
2. Then go to the course website at <https://courses.duke.edu/courses/WRITING20.26-F2001/> and log in using your ACPUB ID as your User ID and your new password.
3. Compose your document in Microsoft Word; save and name it according to this formula: **lastname.assignment#.draft#.doc**. For example, if I were submitting my introduction, I would title it: Hillard.a5.d1.doc. A subsequent draft of the assignment would be: Hillard.a5.d2.doc.
4. Log on to the course website and click on the Communication button, then on the Group Pages icon, then click on the “Entire Class” group. Click on the File Exchange button at the bottom of the page.
5. Click on the Browse button to select the file you want to upload from your hard drive or disk. Give this file *exactly the same link name* as your Word document. Click the Submit button.

**\*\*Make sure to keep copies of all of your documents on a back-up disk or on your personal space on the Duke servers.**

Some time before Thursdays class, I would like you to print up a copy of each of your colleagues’ paragraphs, and to read them over once in order to prepare for a class discussion of them.

## Assignment 6

As you know, I would like you to draft a 3-5 page argument in response to the general question:

From the time of its inception, and in the years following its construction, it is clear that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial has tended to catalyze new understandings about public aesthetics, the politics of memorializing practices, the appearance of personal memory in public space, and the nature of the Vietnam War itself. Out of the many ways in which the presence of the wall has mattered to various Americans, what would you say is the most important concept that the construction of the wall and/or its utilization by citizens has taught us? What, might you argue, has it helped Americans to understand better or differently?

This will necessarily involve you in casting a claim regarding what you take to be a significant “lesson” that public experience with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial has held for Americans, a claim that you can envision others who, like you, have studied the wall and the responses to the memorial could choose to disagree with—claiming either that some other lesson is more significant than the one you locate, or perhaps that the wall has little or nothing to teach Americans. In other words, somewhere in your written argument, you’ll probably want to demonstrate the importance of your “lesson” in the face of other possible meanings that might be discovered, or to locate the significance of the lesson “beyond the wall,” the memorial catalyzing a concept or idea that might apply to other aspects of one’s life as a citizen.

I expect that you will refer, when appropriate and useful, to others’ texts, others’ analyses and arguments about the memorial. When you quote from another’s text, please place the material within quotation marks and indicate the page number on which the quoted material appears in parentheses.

Though you already have at hand a number of others’ texts from which to draw evidence, counter-arguments, analytic examples, key distinctions, and key concepts (these include the video documentary on Maya Lin, the Scruggs and Swerdlow narrative piece, Hass’ book-length study, Lin’s design statement) I would like to add two other scholarly texts to this body of work. You should read and make use of them only if you feel that they would enhance your argument. They’re, in other words, optional readings. Later on, when I read your work, I may refer you to one or the other if I feel that reference to either of them would strengthen your analysis, or help you to make a point in your essay.

The first article is Charles L. Griswold’s “The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography” This article appeared in *Critical Inquiry*, a scholarly journal devoted to analyzing cultural and political issues. Griswold is a political theorist, who (as his title suggests) contrasts the VVM with other monuments and memorials on the mall, all the while revealing how Americans gain ideologic and patriotic meanings from the built environment of this most important of national public spaces. I have provided a photocopy of this piece.

The second article is Robin Wagner-Pacifici’s and Barry Schwartz’s “The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past,” an essay that appeared in the

*American Journal of Sociology*. Though long, the article provides a rich account of the design controversy, with Congressional Records and other documents represented (that we've not yet had available to us). Also, Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz offer us a few more of the detractors' voices. It's an excellent sociologic analysis, bringing various social theories to bear on the very notions of public memory and commemoration.

To access their article, use the following procedure:

1. Visit the Duke Library homepage.
2. Click on "Research Databases"
3. Choose "P" from the alphabet range to the right.
4. Choose Proquest (the full text databases where you can find the article)
5. Once in Proquest, enter "commemorating a difficult past" in the keyword field, and set the Date Range for "Backfile (1986-1998).
6. After you locate the citation, click on the camera icon (in order to access a reproduction of the article as it originally appeared in the *American Journal of Sociology*).
7. Print the article (it's 45 pages long).

I ask that you submit the draft of your argument to the "Student Drop Box" area of our CourseInfo site no later than **2:00 p.m., Monday, September 17<sup>th</sup>**. After you go to the Student Drop Box area, you'll find instructions for uploading your file and sending it to me. Please recall our file naming system: Last name. a6. d1.doc. (Mac users need to remember to append "doc" to the end of the file name). Also, as a back-up, please email me the file as an attachment through regular email ([vhillard@duke.edu](mailto:vhillard@duke.edu)).

## Assignment 7

For Tuesday, September 25, I ask that you read Chapter 5: The Commonplaces in *ARCS*. As our authors explain, commonplaces are bits of language—words and phrases—that members of communities utilize as a shorthand method for making claims about what is exists, what is good, and what is possible. Perhaps you’ve already heard people in our community speak of Duke as a “work hard; play hard” university. That phrase tends to be unquestioned as far as its true value is concerned. Rarely, will Duke students say: “What do people mean by that, exactly?” or “Can someone reasonably both play as vigorously as one works?” or “Is it necessary to do both?” Instead, the phrase—and its apparent truth—is readily-accepted. What’s more, its acceptance (and adherence) by Duke students tends to bind the community of students together as a group. Commonplaces have incredible cohesive force. They bind us together with other like-minded people; together, we become a collective public force. This social value of commonplaces distinguishes them from mere clichés, which are understood as worn-out terms or phrases that tend toward no meaning. “Work hard; play hard” may be worn-out and over-used to the point of weakened significance, but the fact that it continues to enhance collective self-identity on this campus is enough for it to earn status as a commonplace.

To enhance, extend, or clarify your reading in *ARCS*, I invite you to consider the handout that a colleague and I have composed on commonplaces. This document may help you to define and to recognize them. It can be found at the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Writing’s website. Go to [www.ctlw.duke.edu](http://www.ctlw.duke.edu), then click on “University Writing Program,” then go to “Resources” and on to the document called “Commonplaces.” In Tuesday’s class, I’ll offer a mini-lecture on commonplaces, and will help this important concept become a useable principle in your rhetorical tool box.



Also for Tuesday, I would like you to consider an instance where questions of moral display are very much alive, the presence of a large banner reading “God Bless America/Woe to Our Enemies” hung on the outside wall of a predominant Chapel Hill restaurant. Printed and displayed in response to our nation’s recent terrorist attack, the sign was ordered to be removed by Chapel Hill zoning inspectors.

Please read the attached article from *The Durham Herald-Sun*, detailing the controversy. Consider what’s at issue and the kinds of claims circulating in response. (The rhetorically adventurous may wish to attempt classifying these claims according to the stases). Then, I would like you to envision the following commonplace being uttered in response to the question of whether the banner should be displayed or taken down. Imagine someone saying:

“In this country we have the precious right of free speech. To order that the banner be removed is a violation of our freedom of speech.”

Which sorts of arguments, claims, and taken-for-granted ideals undergird the use of that particular commonplace in this instance? Do you agree with them? Disagree with them? For whom would this be an effective commonplace to deploy? What would you have to

believe (and what would you have to ignore in order for the commonplace to be a persuasive claim? Be prepared to address these questions in Tuesday's class.

## Assignment 8

For Tuesday, October 2, I ask that you read a first section (pages vii-149) of Martin Harwitt's *An Exhibit Denied: Lobbying the History of Enola Gay*. As perhaps you have noticed in our reading so far, Harwitt, the National Air and Space Museum's director and chief architect of the exhibit, was the object of criticism (and at times outright vilification) in response to his vision on how best to display the *Enola Gay*. This is his story, an opportunity to "set the record straight," as journalists sometimes say, "straight from the horse's mouth." In counterpoint to the flattened characterizations of Harwitt promulgated at times in the press, and in contradistinction to the cartoonish demonizations of Harwitt made by his most ardent detractors, his lengthy narrative—his version of "what happened"—may help us to reach a more balanced conception of the history and shape of the controversy than we might otherwise be able to hold without it.

As researchers into the nature of the controversy we may come to value Harwitt's text as among the most detailed sequential accounts available. It contains a vast number of "primary documents" (letters, memoranda, transcriptions of conversations), some of which you may find interesting and significant to developing your own argument about the nature of the controversy. Though we'll be reading a number of scholars who cast a variety of claims about the dispute and its consequences, Harwitt's autobiographic account permits us to glimpse the personal and political motives that combine to create one person's vision. I expect that many of you will go on to occupy various leadership roles—in corporations, in non-profit organizations, within churches and synagogues, in court rooms, in boardrooms. Harwitt's account reminds us of the complexities and perils of working in professional sites where vision matters. At the same time, it is vital to remember that the version of "what happened" represented here is filtered through the interests, preferences, and desires of a single key player in a complicated public drama.



After you've completed your reading of this first section, I would like you to consider in a two-page paper, the following question:

Granting that autobiographic accounts tend, by nature, to provide individual (or, to put it more negatively, "one-sided" versions of events), what would you say is the value to analysts like yourself of having an autobiographic account available for critical inspection? What, in other words, does Harwitt's special lens permit that other interpretive lenses would not? Please refer your readers to several passages from his text in order to support your response.

Please post your response in the "Communications" area of the course website. Recall that from "Communications" you'll go to "Group Pages" then on to "Entire Class" and finally to the "File Exchange" button at the bottom of the page. Remember the template for naming your file: "Last name.a9.d1.doc" (Mac users will need to append ".doc" to the end of file names.) Please post your response no later than Monday, October 1 at 6:00 p.m. Please come to class having read at least four of your classmates' responses.

## Assignment 9

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After you've completed your reading of this first section, I would like you to consider in a two-page paper, the following question:

Granting that autobiographic accounts tend, by nature, to provide individual (or, to put it more negatively, "one-sided" versions of events), what would you say is the value to analysts like yourself of having an autobiographic account available for critical inspection? What, in other words, does Harwitt's special lens permit that other interpretive lenses would not? Please refer your readers to several passages from his text in order to support your response.

Please post your response in the "Communications" area of the course website. Recall that from "Communications" you'll go to "Group Pages" then on to "Entire Class" and finally to the "File Exchange" button at the bottom of the page. Remember the template for naming your file: "Last name.a9.d1.doc" (Mac users will need to append ".doc" to the end of file names.) Please post your response no later than Monday, October 1 at 6:00 p.m. Please come to class having read at least four of your classmates' responses.

## Assignment 10

For Tuesday, October 9, I ask that you read Chapter 6: “Ethical Proof” in *ARCS*. The chapter provides a richly-detailed discussion of this important persuasive proof, one that is central to composing effective scholarly and professional writing. Ethical proof relates to everything a rhetor does to appear as a person of “good character,” a virtue realized through, among other things: word choice; a scrupulous attention to correct presentation; a reach for the most just and fair presentation of material; a forthright and deliberate addressing of counter arguments, counter evidence, and important alternate points of view and ideologies; thoroughness in research; and a sensitivity to appropriate and accurate quoting of others’ texts. These kinds of concerns represent certain moral requirements of good writing, “moral” because they concern the workings of virtues—intended by writers and realized by audiences.

As you read, please note the various rhetorical techniques that can be used to enhance one’s *ethos*: demonstrating intelligence by doing the homework, establishing good character, achieving good will, choices of voice and rhetorical distance, word size, correct grammar and mechanics, and the use of qualifiers. Soon, I’ll be asking you to attend to these qualities in your own writing, and classmates will be working to describe the *ethos* you create in your work. This is a most important aspect of academic writing since virtues such as scrupulous note-taking, accurate quoting and paraphrasing, judicious presentation of past research and prior arguments, correctness, and qualified claim-making are all valued in intellectual writing.



For Tuesday, I would like you to prepare a brief (1½ - 2 page) written analysis of Martin Harwit’s *ethos* as represented in one of his written responses to his detractors. You might consider examining Harwit’s written responses in the “Losing Friends” chapter (194-210), or his letter to the Congressional Committee on Rules and Administration (246), or his reply to Correll’s *Air Force* magazine editorial (248), or any of the other written replies made during the controversy.

Your analysis should clearly describe the nature of ethical proofs that Harwit seems to be deploying in the text you choose. How would you characterize his *ethos*? What textual evidence would you point to in order to elucidate your characterization? Please refer to *specific* passages in the text you choose. If you wish, go on to indicate how potentially effective you envision his ethical proofs to have been? Would his audience likely value his strategy? Could Harwit have done a better job at projecting a positive *ethos* at moments?

Please post your analyses to our course’s CourseInfo site under “Communications” as before.

## Assignment 11

For Thursday, October 11, I ask that you finish *An Exhibit Denied*. I realize that this has been a long read (all 429 pages!!) and I want openly to honor your fortitude and perseverance at making it through what at times must have seemed a detailed (if not tedious) narrative. Remember, though, that you'll soon be composing an analysis of the shape of the controversy, and will need to refer to its specific documents, key moments of exchange, and use of persuasive techniques. Harwit's text will be a useful mechanism for accessing these documents and for making sense of the controversy overall. In Thursday's class we'll discuss your analyses of Harwit's *ethos*, and will together note important places in his narrative as it reaches its conclusion.

To help you to prepare for your particular use of Harwit's book in your own upcoming arguments, I would like you to search for a review of the book. Following the searching procedure discussed in today's library instruction, please locate and read one review of *An Exhibit Denied*. Note the way in which the book has been evaluated:

- How has it been rated overall?
- What does the reviewer claim as the strengths and/or limits of the book?
- With what criteria do these judgments seem to have been formed? (Which network of interpretation seems to guide these valuations?)
- Does the review seem fair? (Have some elements been overemphasized, or others omitted altogether?)

For Thursday, October 18<sup>th</sup>, I would like you to compose a 1½ -2 page paper addressing the question: How does your use reading (and potential use) of Harwit's narrative differ from this reviewer's reading of the book? Please quote from the review in your paper in order to demonstrate the way in which the reviewer reads Harwit.

Also, for Thursday, I would like you to read three essays from our *History Wars* text. These will complete your required reading for Project #2. Soon, based upon the copia and trial claims you've been formulating about the nature of the controversy, you'll begin to work on the first draft of the project. The essays I ask you to read are:

Michael S. Sherry, "Patriotic Orthodoxy and American Decline"  
Richard Kohn, "History at Risk: The Case of the *Enola Gay*"  
Tom Englehardt, "The Victors and the Vanquished"

Please be prepared to identify their central claims and to speak about the way in which these writers reach their conclusions about the controversy.

## Assignment 12

For Tuesday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, I ask that you compose a five-page written argument that offers and supports a claim regarding the significance of the controversy surrounding the proposed exhibit of the *Enola Gay*. You have by now developed a measure of expertise on the controversy: you've read two extended narrative summaries of the controversy's most critical moments (Edward T. Linenthal's "Anatomy of a Controversy" and Mike Wallace's "The Battle of the *Enola Gay*"); Martin Harwit's 400-page autobiographical account of the controversy, told from his particular point of view; and three scholars' arguments, each situating the controversy within a different context of significance: Michael Sherry's analysis of the development of "patriotic orthodoxy" as catalyst for the exhibition's critique, Richard H. Kohn's inquiry into the *kairos* of the event, and the narratives that entangled to suppress the exhibit, and Tom Englehardt's "The Victors and the Vanquished," a comparative account of how public memories of war have become less unified according to a single national vision, something evinced in both the *Enola Gay*'s proposed display and in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Clearly, you have lots of material to provoke your own "take" on the controversy, and plenty of material to draw from to help you support your position. As we move from draft to finished essay, the rest of the class and I will work to help you refine your claim, to focus upon useful and pointed evidence offered in its support, and to help you make effective use of "source material." One of our class efforts in reviewing drafts will be to help writers frame and focus their use of quoted and summarized material from the scholarly and popular texts we've read. We'll continue to work on introductions and will take a shot at utilizing informational footnotes in the paper. We'll assess the *ethos* that writers construct in their papers, and offer suggestions about how they might be enhanced. Also, we'll have the chance to meet individually about your project in individual conferences devoted to strengthening your arguments.



Your essay should grapple with the following question:

The controversy surrounding the proposed exhibit of the *Enola Gay* is a richly-detailed episode involving (among other things): the taking of sides, the entrenchment of positions, the clash of ideologies, contests of meaning and definition, and at times vitriolic disagreements about the purpose, propriety, and style of exhibition and display. But beyond the important particulars of the controversy, the *Enola Gay* episode points to other issues in American culture, and life, represented within, but also larger than the controversy over the proposed exhibit itself. What, for you, is the most interesting issue in American culture that the controversy helps to elucidate or to illuminate? A response to the question will inevitably involve you both in working with specifics from the controversy itself, and in gesturing beyond it, to aspects of American culture and life that you feel the controversy is connected to a representative part of.

Please post your drafts to the “Group Pages” area of our CourseInfo page by 10:00 p.m., Monday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>.

## Assignment 13

Our study of both the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the *Enola Gay* controversies has led us to important concerns regarding what typically is at stake and what is at issue in putting something on public display. Especially in those cases where either federal funds have been allocated to create the display (as in the National Air and Space Museum), or where a broad cross-section of the American public has contributed to the creation of a public monument or piece of art (as was the case with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial), questions regarding whose “version” of events will predominate, or which artistic form will finally be used to represent a collective experience seem, inevitably to come forward. Like other public displays, much “public art” in the United States (art displayed in a public space and/or art that has been produced with public funds) has been scrutinized by citizens and critics who pose such questions as: Does a particular artwork adequately represent the “collective vision” of a majority of citizens? Is it fair that public funds be used to support art that questions predominant American values, virtues, and commonplaces? Is there such a thing as truly “democratic art?” Can art please everyone? a majority? And, how does one determine this? Should public artists be bounded by the desires and interests of “the masses?” Should public artists hold creative freedoms? Should there be constraints on what they produce? If you recall, these were the sorts of questions that we say emerging in the controversy over the proposed public sculpture commemorating the shootings in Chapel Hill. These are also the kinds of questions that we’ll be moving now to consider in relation to the so-called “culture wars,” questions sparked by controversies surrounding the display of problematic photographs and other art funded, in part, by the National Endowment for the Arts, controversies which rocked Congress and divided the country along what are perhaps too-predictable ideologic lines.



For Tuesday, October 30, I would like you to read two chapters from art historian Erika Doss’ recent book-length examination of public art controversies, *Spirit Poles and Flying Pigs: Public Art and Cultural Democracy in American Communities*. The first chapter, “Contemporary Public Art Controversy: An Introduction” offers a general history of the recent disputes, giving us a “lay of the land” of the key issues and key arguments that have circulated regarding the arts, public funding, and public taste. Also, I would like you to read another chapter, “Public Spirit and *Spirit Poles*: Public Art Controversy in the Civic Sphere,” where Doss offers us an overview of a recent controversy surrounding the installation of public art in Concord, California. As you read, I would like you to think about the issues that emerge, and to envision how these issues are connected to similar concerns we’ve seen in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and *Enola Gay* disputes. What’s echoed here that we heard voiced there? Does the controversy seem “predictable,” to be expected?

Then, I would like you to look at a recent attempt by two sociologists to determine what exactly “democratic art” might look like. Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid polled 1000 Americans in order to discover what their “most wanted” painting

would be. I'm interested in what you think of it. Do you like it? (If not, are you not like most Americans?) Also, where do the elements in the painting seem to come from? Are there commonplace elements at work in the painting?

For your information, here's how the process for discovering the "most wanted" painting was orchestrated:

"Beginning on December 10, 1993, trained professionals working from a central, monitored location in Indiana telephone Americans to find out what they want in art—fine art, specifically painting. For eleven days the survey continued, as people throughout the forty-eight contiguous states pondered: soft curves or sharp angles? brush strokes or smooth surfaces? "realistic-looking" or "different-looking?" serious or festive? outdoor scenes or indoor? wild animals or domestic? famous people or ordinary? at work or leisure? On and on, for an average of twenty-four minutes, until all 102 questions had been asked. When it was over, 1,0001 adult Americans had been interviewed. They were a statistically representative group, having been selected from all households by a random-probability sampling procedure that included unlisted numbers and was stratified according to state. Their collective responses, the poll results, are statistically accurate within a margin or error of +/- 3.2 percent, at a 95 percent confidence level.

This first-ever comprehensive scientific poll of American tastes in art was commissioned by the Russian émigré artists Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid in conjunction with The Nation Institute, a nonprofit offshoot of *The Nation* magazine. It was conducted by Marttila & Kiley, Inc., a Boston-based public-opinion research firm whose previous clients include the American Cancer Society, the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, CBS-TV, among others. The results of the Komar and Melamid/Nation Institute poll were documented in January of 1994. After studying the data, Komar and Melamid commenced to produce two paintings, *America's Most Wanted* and *America's Most Unwanted*. These were unveiled that spring in an exhibition, "The People's Choice," at the Alternative Museum in New York City's SoHo district. Extensive public discussion of the project began in the March 14, 1994 issue of *The Nation* and was continued in town meetings in various cities at home and abroad over the next three years. During this same period, Komar and Melamid, aided by international polling firms using variations on the American questionnaire, penetrated Europe, Asia, and Africa with their "People's Choice" project. Additional sample populations continue to be identified as the polling goes on."

--Wypijewski, JoAnn, Ed. *Painting by Numbers: Komar and Melamid's Scientific Guide to Art*. Berkeley: U California Press, 1997.

## Assignment 14

For Tuesday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, I would like you to read Chapter 7: “Pathetic Proof” in *ARCS*, a chapter which focuses on the nature and use of *pathos*, appeals used by rhetors in order to activate emotional and psychological responses in the audience. As we’ve already begun to see, public art often arouses deeply-felt emotions in viewers, who then depend upon such responses to make judgments regarding the quality and value of a piece of art. Likewise, those who wish to have a hand in directing viewers’ responses often depend upon pathos to help them formulate their arguments. By appealing to deep-felt national values such as “courage,” “heroism,” and “patriotism,” detractors to both the proposed *Enola Gay* exhibit and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial touched their audience “where they live” targeting the very sense of one’s being and identity. Read the chapter through carefully, making note of the various techniques for mustering pathetic proof in one’s argument. Though Aristotle considered *pathos* among the weakest of proofs (I held for him neither the highest faculty of reason nor the moral imperatives of character), he nonetheless granted it an important status, especially insofar as an attention to *pathos* typically involves a rather acute sense of audience—its psychology, its weaknesses, its proclivities—making “manipulation” all the more possible.



Also for Tuesday, I would like you to read both the Preface and Introduction to *The Culture Wars: Documents from the Recent Controversies in the Arts*, edited by Richard Bolton. The Preface explains where the documents in the book “came from,” offering a general “lay of the land” of the controversy. The Introduction details the specifics of the controversy: naming key players, offering the key narrative of events, indicating what was at stake and what was at issue in this public debate. As you read, see if you can identify what may seem now-familiar claims and arguments; note the operation of conservative and liberal ideologies; trace out the assumptions made about “the people” and about “public art.” In class, I’ll ask you to compare this controversy with the others we’ve worked with: What seems similar? What seems significantly different here? What new concerns have been added to familiar disputes?

Finally, I would like you to read several of the responses made to both Serrano’s *Piss Christ* and to Robert Mapplethorpe’s photographs. These include:

Rev. Donald Wildmon’s letter, page 27

Senators D’Amato and Helm’s statement to the Senate, page 28

Patrick Buchanan’s editorial, page 31

*Washington Times*’ editorial, “Mapplethorpe Agonistes,” page 39

Samuel Lipman’s editorial, page 41

In class, be prepared to discuss the uses of pathetic proof in these pieces. When and how do they wield *pathos* as a persuasive instrument? With what results?

## Assignment 15

For Tuesday, November 13<sup>th</sup>, I would like you to spend some time with the fuller context of Robert Mapplethorpe's photographic images. The collection of images that you will be viewing includes a rich range of photographs presented in the contested exhibition (still lifes, celebrity portraits, stylized designs, as well as the more controversial pieces). The CD that houses this collection (entitled "Robert Mapplethorpe: The Controversy") is on reserve in Lilly Library. When you open the CD, please go through the guided discussion of the photographs found under the "RM" area of the disk. Then, work your way through the "Photo Gallery" in order to access other images not included in the presentation.

As you listen to and view the presentation, make note of the ways in which his images are described (you'll hear terms circulating such as "technical mastery," "idealized figures," "beauty," "transcendent grace"). Try, for at least a moment, to identify how the photographs are valued in these formulations (regardless of your own interpretation): What about them could be seen in this way? How might a range of viewers respond to the images differently? What do the responses focus upon? What do they neglect to account for? What do they omit? How may networks of interpretation vary for a range of viewers?



After you have viewed the images, and have had a chance to develop a set of notes acknowledging others' responses, and beginning to attend to your own, I would like you to develop a two-page essay in which you respond to the following question:

Given that certain photographs have historically been singled out for attention, does it make a difference to view the "problematic" photographs in the context of many other photographs in the exhibition? What—if anything—happens to our understanding of his images when they are conceived as a whole body of work, one photograph put in relationship to others?

Please be specific in your reference to Mapplethorpe's work. Anchor your analysis to specific photographs and to the particular qualities (of whatever sort) you feel that they exhibit. Please post your essays to the Communications area of our website *no later than 8:00 p.m. Monday, November 11<sup>th</sup>*. Please print up everyone's essay and bring all 12 papers to class on Tuesday morning.

## Assignment 16

For Thursday, November 8<sup>th</sup>, I would like you to read the enclosed chapter from a recent rhetoric textbook, *The Elements of Reasoning*. The chapter, “Becoming a Citizen Critic: Where Rhetoric Meets the Road,” will serve as our key chapter on *logos*. Here, we’ll learn about various “logical fallacies,” that plague most public discourses (and are certainly in abundance in the documents cast in response to the NEA funding disputes). Recall that one important feature of learning rhetoric is the “critical” capacity in confers; with an understanding of lapses in logic at hand, you have a ready way to unveil the quality of others’ arguments, giving you a certain advantage over others who may sense that “something is wrong” but may not have the mechanisms to identify the “bad persuasion” in front of them.

The “diversions of reasoning” that I’d like you to familiarize yourself with include:

- Overgeneralizing
- Begging the question
- Personal attacks
- WYSIWYG
- False analogy
- Pandering
- Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc
- Faulty Use of Authority
- Red Herring
- Equivocation
- False Dilemma
- Slippery Slope
- Straw Man
- Scapegoating

After you’ve read through the definitions and their examples, I’d like you to turn to the following documents in our *Culture Wars* text.

Richard Grenier, “A Burning Issue Lights Artistic Ire” (44)

Hilton Kramer, “Is Art Above the Laws of Decency?” (51)

American Family Association, “Press Release on the NEA” (71)

Debate in Senate over Helms Amendment” (73)

Patrick Buchanan, “Pursued by Baying Yahoos” (86)

Allen Ginsburg, “Letter Concerning NEA” (92)

“Down with the Senate Art Police!” (92)

Frederick Hart, “Contemporary Art is Perverted Art” (98)

I’d like you to think about the quality of these documents (their arguments, their reasoning) using the logical fallacies as your guide. Do you see in any of them evidence of any of the fallacies above? Are some of the documents less “logical” than others thereby? In class, we’ll look at the passages you’ve identified as possible candidates for fallacies.

## Assignment 17

For Thursday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, I would like you to read an essay composed by Arthur Danto, a preeminent art historian and critic. “Looking at Robert Mapplethorpe’s Art: Two Moments in History” serves as the introductory essay to Danto’s book-length examination of Mapplethorpe entitled *Playing With the Edge: The Photographic Achievement of Robert Mapplethorpe*. (If you would like to look at the entire book that this essay is excerpted from, I have placed it on reserve in Lily Library.)

Danto’s essay is, I believe, an interesting piece of writing for us to look at because it gestures toward an overall appraisal of the value of Mapplethorpe’s photographs, while also acknowledging the difficulty of viewing them. Danto composes a first-person narrative of the complicated process of preparing to give Mapplethorpe’s photographs a fair and judicious analysis. He’s careful to let us know where he stands, as someone who wishes to say something that can matter for his audience, but also to present himself as someone who is at moments mystified, startled, and surprised by what he finds.

I would like us to read and to consider Danto’s writing because I believe that many of us have found, continue to find, or will perhaps find ourselves in a similar position of difficulty in viewing—let alone responding to—certain photographs. What I would like us to focus on is the way in which Danto constructs his *ethos* in the piece. This will involve us in identifying the various ethical proofs used, and in defining the overall effect such tactics have on Danto’s ethos.



Before you begin your analysis, you may want to refresh your memory regarding ethical proof. Recall that it involves choices about, among other things, grammatical person, word choice, and the uses of qualification. Recall, too, that ethos is an issue of *character*. For intellectual writers, character is typically tied to how one treats one’s object of study (with haste, with care, laboriously, lightly, courageous, frivolously, with over-confidence, with delicacy, with a questioning spirit, etc.). These ethics of inquiry exist apart from the exact nature of one’s final conclusions about the object under scrutiny. They are sensibilities, attitudes for research, that inform academic writing.

You might begin your analysis of Danto’s ethos with such questions as:

1. What does Danto’s use of the first person allow him to achieve?
2. Why do you suppose Danto spends time telling us “what happened” as he encountered the photographs at the museum? Are the details of his process of viewing helpful? To what larger end?
3. What’s the value of detailing his emotions after viewing? Beyond pointing to his own experience, how might his recognition of his responses “help” us as viewers?
4. If you had to come up with one word to describe his attitude toward the photographs, what would that be?

You will notice that Danto refers to the complexities of preparing to review the Mapplethorpe exhibit for *The Nation*, for which Danto is the art editor and chief critic. I

would like you to read the piece as it was published in *The Nation*. You will be able to access it online through Academic Index, Expanded one of the Duke University Library databases. You can enter “Mapplethorpe” in the subject field, and delimit the search by date. *The Nation* article was published on September 26, 1988. Please be prepared to talk about the review in terms of the question: Does the review work to help viewers access Mapplethorpe’s images in ways they may have been less able to do without the review?

## Assignment 18

For Tuesday, November 20<sup>th</sup>, I would like you to continue your reading of various documents that emerged during the public debates over the question of federal support for the arts and the exhibition of Mapplethorpe's photographs. These conclude our formal readings for the course, and round out exposure to the kinds of claims and arguments that circulated at the time. The required readings in the *Culture Wars* text include the following:

Vance, Carole. "The War on Culture"	106
Stopford, John. "Speakeasy"	114
101 <sup>st</sup> Congress Public Law #101-121	121
Robertson, Pat. "Christian Coalition mailing"	123
Heartney, Eleanor. "Social Responsibility and Censorship"	140
Havel, Vaclav. "Statement for Arts Advocacy Day"	156
Gray, Don. "Letter to Senate Subcommittee on Education"	168
Abrams, Floyd and Lipman, Samuel. "What's Obscene?"	175
Lippard, Lucy. "Andres Serrano: The Spirit and the Letter"	201
Sullivan, Kathleen. "A Free Society Doesn't Dictate to Artists"	211
Vance, Carole. "Misunderstanding Obscenity"	220
Independent Commission to Congress	261
Spillane, Margaret. "The Culture of Narcissism"	300

As you read the remainder of the documents, please note similarities to claims and arguments you've seen forwarded previously in the controversy. Also, note any important differences in these arguments: new claims, new evidence, the presence of other issues, etc. And, as before, note any "diversions of reasoning:" personal attacks, slippery slope arguments, overgeneralizations, equivocations, etc. By the time you finish your reading, you should have at your disposal a ready supply of the variety of claims forwarded during the controversy. Also, I mentioned, it will be helpful as you move into your own arguments to have developed some system for classifying the various arguments. You may want to group them under headings that you devise so that you can make ready reference to them as you compose. [For these arguments, I'll be looking for a more generous and sophisticated use of passages quoted from others' documents than I've requested in our previous assignments.]



After you've read the documents closely, and have taken an opportunity to gather together your notes and to sort things out—to get a sense of the "territory" of the dispute, I would like you to think carefully about the general shape of the controversy as you've witnessed it "acted out" in the documents included in Bolton's collection. How do these public documents compare with those you're familiar with in the other display controversies we've studied this semester? What would you say about the quality of reasoning they exhibit? Do they, on the whole, seem a "just and fair" treatment of the subject? Are they too heavily guided by special interests, by political interests that lie beyond the scope of the display itself? On the whole, what do they suggest about the

nature of public disagreement in the United States when it comes to deliberating about the use and value of public displays?

Then, I would like you to make a first pass at the written argument that will constitute your final project for the course. This is a first step toward creating a robust and richly-detailed argument about the controversy. In a three-page paper, I would like you to respond to the following (two part) question:

First: In a paragraph or two, characterize the written controversy that you've witnessed in whatever way seems most accurate to you. Here, you'll want both to describe the predominant kinds of writing and sorts of exchanges you noticed carried out in the documents *and* to assess the quality of these documents *as examples of public discourse in the United States*. What are they obsessed with? What do they focus on? Do they seem like fair and reasonable arguments? Do they make hasty claims? Do they do justice to the importance of the issues on the table?

Next: In several remaining paragraphs, argue for what you feel is missing or overlooked or given inadequate treatment in the debate as represented in the documents. Is there something that you feel deserves greater attention, a richer exposition, more sophisticated investigation, closer inspection? Are there distinctions that you feel should have been made but were not? Did the argument "deadlock" into "pro/con" camps that you feel do not adequately represent the complexity of the controversy? Did the dispute ever get "hung up" on an issue that garnered attention at the expense of some other set of discussions?

Finally: Somewhere near the end of your essay, I would like you to gesture toward what you feel the costs or consequences of leaving this important matter unattended would be. Why, in other words, might those interested in this episode of public disagreement in America benefit from the perspective on the matter that your analysis will provide?

Please post your work to the "Discussion" area of the course website *no later than midnight, Monday, September 19<sup>th</sup>*. Please print up copies of your colleagues' essays to bring to Tuesday's class. [If you have difficulty posting to the CourseInfo site, please use the back-up procedure of emailing the entire class with an attached copy of your work in Word. You can use the "Communication" area of the website for this.]

## Assignment 19

For Monday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, I ask that you compose a first draft of your argument in response to the so-called “culture wars” in America that were initiated by concerns regarding the appropriateness of federal funds used to support the public display of the highly-charged art of Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano. Already, you have cast a brief analysis of the controversy, whereby you worked to identify an issue or concern that you felt was underrepresented or altogether missing from the many documents that were produced during the dispute. Also, I have asked from time to time that spend some time thinking about the *quality* of the debate as a event of public disagreement. By now, you have mapped the parameters of the controversy, identifying key players and key claims. And, you have discerned certain themes or threads of interest that emerge here and there among the documents: concerns about censorship, free speech, the educational function of government, the very idea of democratic art (and how that concept has been variously defined within various interpretive networks).



Now it’s time to get down to business—to cast a 7-page essay that argues for a certain perspective on the culture wars that draws upon both the documents collected in Richard Bolton’s anthology and upon other reading you’ve done in the course. Given the progress of the debate you’ve witnessed, and given your understanding of the dynamics of public display in this country (as you have come to know these in other case studies we’ve examined) what, finally, do you find to be the most interesting claim to forward, supported by which sorts of evidence?

Obviously, you have an the advantage of hindsight in reviewing and assessing the progress of the controversy over federal funds given to display the work of Mapplethorpe and Serrano. More than a decade has passed since the fires of those debates were fueled. But, more importantly, you have the benefit of a larger frame of understanding through which to analyze the controversy. You have been examining cases and issues of public display for thirteen weeks. You’ve read many, many texts reflecting on the dynamics of public display, and have witnessed how several controversies unfurled in response to proposed and actualized exhibits. Unlike many analysts of the controversy, you have an understanding about the complex relationship between art and the public sphere, between democratic values and public spaces. This knowledge can help you find your bearings, as perhaps you’ll wish to gesture outside the boundaries of the culture wars, to other instances, other contexts. If nothing else, your knowledge of the other cases can help you to frame your specific argument about the culture wars, as you identify patterns, tendencies, continuities between this instance and any of the others. I offer you these tactics not as requirements, but as suggested routes that may make reaching the end of your own argument more efficacious.

Though we’ve been pretty loose in the past regarding citational form, I would like you to “stay by the rules” in this paper. We’ll be using MLA Documentation Style. You can find a guided explanation of how 1) to cite quotations within the text of your paper; and 2) to create a list of “Works Cited” at the end of your paper. The citational formats can be found at: <http://www.lib.duke.edu/libguide/citing.htm>.

After I receive your first draft on Monday evening, I'll read, make comments, and then you and I will meet to talk about how to move the draft forward. Please post your first drafts to the "Communications" area of the website (file format as usual), **by 10:00 p.m., Monday, December 5.**

**\*\*If you find yourself in the midst of unmitigated struggle or difficulty, don't hesitate to either email me or to contact me at my home at 493-3257. Good luck to you.**