

ESSAY #3
(See page three for deadlines)

Background:

As we have seen thus far this term, current views of technology and its effects on cultural and popular discourses are deeply polarized. Neil Postman exemplifies one point of view that strongly argues that technology and its innovations—particularly the innovations that offer entertainment—have damaged public discourse, making us a nation of viewers and consumers rather than active, critical thinkers. Mark Bauerlein goes further and argues that the damage goes even deeper than public discourse, to the very fabric of American education, knowledge, and thought.

Writing Task:

Choose one of the following topics

- 1) Using all three of the major texts we have read this term (Postman, Bauerlein, and Johnson) make an argument in which you seek to prove either
 - A) Which of these three writers you think is right and most correct in his analysis and argument
 - or
 - B) Why none of these three writers is accurate or correct.
- 2) Johnson claims that
 - ...far more than books or movies or music, games force you to make decisions. Novels may activate our imagination, and music may conjure up powerful emotions, but games force you to decide, to choose, to prioritize. (41)

Using Bauerlein, Postman, and other outside sources, analyze and evaluate the strength of Johnson's claim here (and elsewhere in his book) with regard to games.

Below are some things you may want to think about as you work on your analysis. (Again, as with Topic 1, you are not obligated to tackle one of these questions. They are here to jump-start your brain.)

- What kinds of decision-making is Johnson talking about and valuing? What kinds of decision-making does Bauerlein prize and value? Are there any overlaps between their valuations and categorizations?
- How do we value decision-making at the social level? Are Johnson and Bauerlein's disagreements due to fundamentally incompatible schemes of social values?
- Does it matter if a game involves killing people or other creatures, as long as it teaches us useful skills such as quick decision-making, strategy-planning and multitasking? Or is "virtual killing" of any life form morally reprehensible? Or is it critical that any "killing" involved in game play has some kind of positive moral framework to it (that is, the player only kills villains or life-threatening creatures, etc.)?

- 3) Design a class lesson for one of the subjects/disciplines that Bauerlein describes that students are grossly underachieving in. You may want to pay close attention to Johnson since he also may give you clues and hints regarding what kinds of approaches or teaching may reach the current student/classroom audience.

Once you have designed your Lesson Plan, use Bauerlein, Johnson, and any other applicable sources to write an argumentative essay that seeks to demonstrate why and how this lesson will be more successful with the current generation of students who have grown up in "the twitch-speed, multitasking, random-access, graphics-first, active, connected, fun, fantasy, quick-payoff world of their video games, MTV, and the Internet"? (Prensky 5).

- 4) Create an analytical and argumentative topic of your own design that incorporates at least Bauerlein and Johnson. (Note: You must clear this topic with me before you commit to it and start writing.)

Some Observations and Requirements:

- 1) Take time to do some pre-writing exercises.
 - 2) Your essay must be at least seven paragraphs long.
 - 3) Your essay must include a clearly defined thesis statement, and it must be focused in its development of your ideas and issues.
 - 4) Your essay must include
 - A) A minimum of four outside sources in addition to Bauerlein, Johnson, and Postman.
 - B) At least two of these sources must be scholarly sources.
 - 5) Remember that any fact or idea that you borrow from another writer needs some type of proper M.L.A. citation. This includes paraphrases. Failure to follow proper M.L.A. format will equal a full letter grade deduction.
 - 6) In your Final/Polished draft highlight or underline at least two sentences in each paragraph that use the sentence combining and fluency patterns that we have been studying and looking at.
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