Video Writing Assignments (100 points)

Be sure to listen for your name when I assign writers at the beginning of the video. The class will be divided into 5 roughly equal-sized groups based on alphabetical order of last name. The first group will write about the first video, the second group will write about the second video, and so on. For those who miss their assigned writing time (and only those people), there will be a makeup video at our last class meeting and although you may not be writing about the makeup video, you are responsible for the information presented in the video.

The assignment is due one week after the video is shown in class. Those writing on the makeup video should turn in their paper at the final exam. Late papers will be penalized heavily; i.e. 50%.

Choose one of the following three types of writing for your assignment. Your choice should be based on your writing skills and the subject of the video.

- Creative Writing - Natural History
- White Paper - Op-Ed Newspaper Article
- Technical Scientific Writing - Experimental Design

Preliminary Instructions (same for all types)

Answer the following questions (you'll be provided with an appropriate form when you see the video). Your assignment will be written based on these answers. It is probably easiest to jot down answers during the video, rather than try to remember afterwards. Realize that there are no right answers, in the sense of a standard exam (that is, one correct answer and everything else is incorrect). Rather, the correctness of your answers will depend on your ability to apply the answers to your writing assignment.

Question #1: What is the main subject or issue of the video?

Question #2: Given the subject above, what is/are the theme(s) explored in the video? If you feel there is more than one theme, you may choose to address the one that is most interesting to you.

Question #3: Choose the single most interesting theme (if you wrote down more than one). List up to five facts you learned in the video which support this theme.

Specific Instructions

Natural History Essay

In Natural History writing, the writer is attempting to connect with the reader through a story, sometimes an allegory (story with a moral), based on the natural world. Many natural history writers weave together a theme drawn from the natural world, often the world of ecology, with a personal trial or experience. For example, in the essay Thinking Like A Mountain, the author Aldo Leopold explores the theme of ecological succession and human disturbance through a biographical story of hunting wolves as a young man, and his ability to look back on that episode of his life with the wisdom of experience and knowledge about what removing that top predator did to the ecosystem.
Starting with the theme that is most interesting to you (your answer to Question #2), develop a 1 page single-spaced essay, which explores this theme. You may draw from personal experience, if appropriate, or use the material from the video. You must use facts listed in Question #3 to support your theme.

**Op-Ed Newspaper Article**

In an Op-Ed (Opinion-Editorial) article, the author is trying to convince the reader of a particular point-of-view or value set, relative to a specific issue. Pick up any newspaper for an example - just turn to the editorial page. The vast majority of Op-Ed pieces deal with how a certain sector of the community (for instance, Democrats, truck drivers, students, the unborn, etc.) should be treated by society. Sometimes an Op-Ed piece will argue for how society should treat non-humans, including specific species, ecosystems, or places. It is this latter type of Op-Ed article you will be writing.

Starting with the theme, which is most interesting to you (your answer to Question #2), develop a 1 page single-spaced essay, which explores this theme in light of how society should think about, interact with, or treat the subject of the video. Note that you may choose to support a theme presented in the video, or argue against it. Either way, you must use facts listed in Question #3 to support your theme.

**Technical Writing – Experimental Design**

Scientific writing is based on conveying specific experimental ideas or results, both the data and the interpretation of those data by the scientific author, to the scientific community. Ideas are usually conveyed in a Grant Proposal, in which an author lays out a plan for an experiment, which will prove a specific, often contested, point. Results (often from experiments outlined in Grant Proposals), are conveyed in Scientific Papers, not unlike lab reports you may have had to write up for other classes. You will be conducting a modified version of these technical writing types.

Starting with the theme, which is most interesting to you (your answer to Question #2), develop a 1 page single-spaced proposal for how you would design one or more experiments to test whether the theme statement is true. A good place to start is with the facts listed in Question #3. If these facts were proved right (or wrong) would this strengthen (weaken) support for the theme?

Outline each experiment by describing your approach in general terms. What are you going to test? How will you conduct this test? What types of equipment will you need to conduct your test? How will you know whether your test has been successful or not - what types of data will you collect? Where will your test take place - in a laboratory, in the natural world, in a human community? Finally, what do you expect the outcome of your experiment to be?

**Words of Wisdom**

This is NOT a book report assignment. I do not need you to write a recap of the video (I've already seen them many times). Instead, I am asking you to (1) Pay attention during the video, (2) Take notes to remember the themes and facts you learned, (3) Think about the theme and (4) Be creative.
You should NOT mention the video by name in your writing assignment. Write as if you hadn’t seen the video, but already knew the information (this is the creative part). Do NOT attempt to be cute. It is more difficult to pull off a good writing piece with cute than with serious. Also, steer clear of dialogue.

Writing mechanics count in this assignment. Make sure your essay is written clearly. Paragraphs should have a single main point and a topic sentence. Transition sentences should connect paragraphs. Spelling, punctuation and grammar count. Let your roommate read it as a test or read it out loud to listen to what you’ve written. If your roommate or you can’t figure out what you were trying to say, re-write your essay.

In order to score a perfect 100 on this paper your paper must at the very least meet ALL of the following criteria:

1. perfect spelling and grammar
2. one page in length
3. single spaced
4. 10 or 12 point font: Times, Helvetica or Comic Sans MS is recommended
5. left, right, top and bottom margins between 1/2” and 1”
6. coversheet stapled to front of paper (no paper clips or corner folding)
7. movie not mentioned in paper
8. overall neatness
9. excellent organization