

SOCY 3151 Self: Grading Rubric for Read/Analyze Essay

Amy Leisenring, "Confronting Victim Discourses"

Question #1 Leisenring argues that discourse constructs subjectivity, and her work focuses on the institutional construction of identity. Explain, in your own words, what this means. In other words, what does it mean to say that institutions discursively construct identity?

Grading Points:

1. *Should in some way explain what discursively means – that the institutions come about defining the identity labels (even if unintentionally). The institutions set the "public discourses" surrounding violence. "Current cultural discourses surrounding violence against women commonly depict them as blameworthy or as weak and powerless" (307). The institutions through labels and definitions construct the "victim identity" for the public and for the victims themselves. Images of a helpless and passive victim were meant to counter discourses that depicted battered women as culpable for the abuse they experienced.*
2. *Explain that the *labels* come from the institutional biases and perpetuate the constructed identity.*

Question #2 Leisenring uses the concept of "victim empowerment." Isn't this an oxymoron? How does she define this concept, and what evidence does she use to demonstrate its existence?

Grading Points:

1. *Think of "victim empowerment" more as "You can do it" and less as "You're on your own; it's up to you."*
2. *Meant to be positive, but can perpetuate negative (blaming the victim).*
3. *Many magazine articles and talk shows utilize what Berns terms a "victim empowerment" model of framing domestic violence that, while sympathetic to victims, holds them responsible for solving the problem of violence in their lives. Berns states that battered women "are told to find solutions within themselves: 'Change your personality.' 'Increase your self-esteem.' 'Take control of your life.' 'Refuse to be a victim.' 'You have the power to end the abuse'" (p. 55). Thus domestic violence is understood by many people to be a private problem of the victim.*

Question #3 Can you think of other situations in which being a victim could be empowering? Give examples, and explain how victimhood might work in these instances.

Grading Points:

1. *Subjective/personal answers...but must contain:*
 - a. *Example*
 - b. *Explanation of how victim empowerment could come into play*

Jennifer Lois, "Peaks and Valleys"

Question #1 Lois analyzes the gendered emotional culture of edgework. Explain, in your own words, what this means. Describe an emotional culture, and explain how it can be gendered. Describe Peak's emotional culture, and explain the role of edgework in it.

Grading Points:

1. *Emotional culture is defined by how members deal with degrees of trauma, risk, excitement, failure, and success (Student A).*
2. *Explain how this can be “gendered” – why differences between female and male.*
3. *This may all roll into question #2*
4. *Other notes:*
 - a. *Suppressed emotions to get the job done, released later.*
 - b. *Notes from article...*

Any social group may construct its own norms and vocabularies to express and reinforce beliefs about particular emotions. The group's members then interact with each other and their environment based, in part, on their shared emotional belief system. Gordon (1989, 115) termed this phenomenon an “emotional culture defining it as “the patterns of meanings embodied in symbols, by which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward emotions.” As such, emotional cultures include beliefs about what emotions will result from particular situations as well as how such emotions should be interpreted, acted on, and expressed. These beliefs, by definition, vary from one emotional culture to the next.

Question #2 How did men and women manage emotion differently in Peak? What accounts for the gendered differences in preparation strategies?

Grading Points:

1. *Men show bravado; women apprehensive/unsure.
Men excitement first, unwinding later. Women anxiety first, outburst/tears later.*
2. *Why?
Men more experienced.
Masculine nature of rescue work.
Women's insecurities due to cultural stereotype about men's superior rescue ability.*

Question #3 How do the members of Peak understand and manage fear?

Grading Points:

1. *Suppress fear! Men and women manage the same way – suppress fear.*
2. *Seen as an “adrenaline rush.” Enough fear to perform at a higher level, but not too much as to be overcome and lose rationality.*

John Gagnon, “The Self, Its Voices, and Their Discord”

Question #1 Gagnon writes that at the beginning of The Enlightenment, most people “experienced their individuality as being constituted by a limited and seemingly coherent bundle of socially given roles that changed only slowly during the course of their lives.” Explain what Gagnon means, giving examples if useful. Contrast the Enlightenment situation with what most people experience today.

the conditions for radical changes in mental life in the future.

To begin at the beginning: At the end of the Enlightenment, the vast majority of people, including most of the urban intelligentsia, experienced their individuality as being constituted by a limited and seemingly coherent bundle of socially given roles that changed only slowly during the course of their lives. At this time, the worth of individuals was evaluated primarily by the competence of their public performance of these given roles. By the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, a few individuals had begun to experience their relation to social life in ways that would be premonitory of the new forms of mental life that would emerge across the next century. An increasing number of people began to experience the relationships that they had with others, what we would now call "the roles that they were required to play," as detached from or alien to who they "truly" were or who they wanted to be. Thus a private protoself was being detached from public roles, a protoself that would change, though not isomorphically, as the roles that were played changed. This new mental formation, perhaps a private role that judged public roles, would "decide" what was inside and what was outside, what was self and what was other.

Mead's work comes a little more than halfway in this now 200-year-long

Grading Points:

1. *During the Enlightenment, identity was mostly ascribed and static. People were born into their roles, were defined by those roles, and stayed in those roles (and therefore identity) their entire lives.*
2. *Contrast with today, where we are defined by our roles less and less (transient, career changes, etc.)*

Question #2 Explain what Gagnon means when he describes a connection between mental and material life. How does this connection produce the self, its voices, and their discord? Give examples.

Grading Points:

1. *Explain how the material world was expanding through modernization and industrialization and that this dramatic increase in the complexity of the material world led to challenges and complexity in the mental world – too many choices, conflicts with what one wants "to be" or "to have" vs. the opportunities afforded, etc.*
2. *Notes from article:
... a dual mental and material process. Modernization, he explains, was "taking place on the ground, in the creation of new spaces, new scales and new patterns of segregation and specialization as well as new forms of technology." "But," he adds, it "was also taking place in the mind, in how cities were spoken and written about, how they were visualised, mapped, painted and photographed."*

Gagnon (cont.)

Question #3 What does Gagnon say about the possibility of making rational choices among the many voices of the self? Do you agree?

Grading Points:

1. *Gagnon believes that making rational choices between the many voices of the self is not possible until after interaction.*
2. *Believed that if all the voices were "not prioritized" (made equal), the self would then have an fair and equal opportunity to come to a correct decision.*
3. *Must give opinion and explain why.*

a. *Might question, "Could we even function if every act required rational thought?"*

Arthur W. Frank, "The Rhetoric of Self-Change: Illness Experience as Narrative"

Question #1 What does Frank mean by "turning illness into narrative"?

Grading Points:

1. *Turn illness into narrative by providing an account of their personal experiences and telling a story of self-change. Stories of self change, telling others in order to identify self – the self must be told.*
2. *The physical illness might prompt an autobiographical narrative which shapes the construction of the self.*
3. *"Excellent" points for more thoughtful discussion of Frank's discussion (Phoenix, examples, etc.)*

Question #2 How is self-change rhetorical?

Grading Points:

1. *Rhetoric involves language (written or spoken). Must explain that it involves the narrative (story telling) rather than defining self through consumptive patterns (for example).*

Question #3 What are the types of self-change Frank describes

Grading Points:

1. *Must name all of these and explain each:*
 - a. *"What I have always been."*
 - b. *"Who I might become."*
 - c. *"Cumulative epiphanies."*
 - d. *"Reluctant Phoenixes" (residual) claim little if any self-change following illness.*

Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi and Robert Zussman, "High School Reunions and the Management of Identity"

Question #1 What are some of the problems that reunions raise for identity? What other social events or situations raise similar problems?

Grading Points:

1. *"Reunions raise fundamental issues about the possibilities of the alignment and misalignment of different aspects of identity..."*
2. *Must give examples of other similar events and how the problems relate.*

Question #2 How does the position held by the authors contrast with the arguments about identity raised by what they call "critics of American culture"?

What position would you take on the question of whether identity is disappearing, and what evidence would you use to support your claim?

Critics say identity is fast disappearing; authors disagree..."reunions, even examined at a single point in time, provide evidence for the persistent power of inner understandings of the self."

"More specifically, as bounded events, rarely lasting more than two days and often limited to a few hours in a single site, reunions tempt those who attend to sacrifice their inner understandings to the dramaturgical exigencies of the moment. Put a little differently, reunions are case studies in the possibilities and limits of impression management."

Grading Points:

1. *What do the critics say? Identity is fast disappearing.*
2. *May say more about critics say we are now more concerned with appearances than identity/integrity.*
3. *MUST then contrast with what the authors say – one of the main points of the article is that we *do* care about our integrity and will sacrifice our staged appearance/status in order to maintain our integrity (will tell everyone the truth).*
4. *What's your position? What supports your position? Must give examples and evidence. Subjective with objective examples.*

Question #3 Why does "inner identity" require impression management?

"Because an inner identity involves something internally felt as well as socially enacted, it cannot be constructed out of material the actor himself or herself believes to be untrue."

Grading Points:

1. *Mention of "truth" and the strain untruth will cause.*