

Assignment #1

1) WRITE a letter to me introducing yourself to me as a writer: What's your relationship to writing? What are your hopes (and fears?) for this class? What happened with you and writing in high school, or elsewhere? Anything else about you & writing you want to tell me? —e.g., is English your second language, writing you've done on your own, what you like to read . . .

➤ *1-1½ pages, word processed, single-spaced with space between paragraphs(i.e., letter format)*

2) READ

- Phillip Lopate's "Why I Remain a Baseball Fan." Lopate is an essayist who teaches at Columbia.
- "Hub Fans Bid Kid Adieu" by John Updike (1932-2009), a prolific novelist and essayist. This is one of the most famous baseball essays ever published—partly because of Ted Williams' quality as a hitter, partly because of his character, partly because of Updike's skill as a writer and partly, of course, because of the remarkable moment that Updike chronicles.

IMPORTANT: Read these and all homework assignments actively. That is:

- Notice who wrote it, her or his background, and the context for the piece (i.e., what discussion is the piece entering? What events, issues, concerns, values, texts, make up the situation that the writer is responding to?)
- Mark passages you like, that puzzle you, and that you think contain the essay's core ideas.
- Ask questions in the margin, summarize points, and/or talk back to the writer.
- Leave time to read each essay or article thoroughly—and ideally, more than once.

3) FOR CLASS DISCUSSION Why does Lopate remain a baseball fan? Can you relate—either in terms of baseball or another sport? Why are you a fan of your favorite sport(s)? Also: Part of being a fan is how we feel about particular athletes, as well as how they behave toward their public. Ted Williams was famously uninterested in playing to the crowd—and yet many people were passionate about him as a player. Does Updike's essay help you understand this paradox? And: Look for examples of good writing in both essays—we'll discuss these in class.

4) LOOKING AHEAD

- It might be useful to familiarize yourself with the rest of the course, in particular the Resources section, as well as taking a peek at the rest of our readings (including the supplemental ones), in order to get ideas for what you'd like to focus on for your investigative essay.
- If you want to read ahead, begin reading the group of essays for our next homework assignment.

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21W.015 Writing and Rhetoric: Writing about Sports
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