

Second Writing Assignment

This assignment asks you to compare two key texts of the early American republic. It is also a chance for you to work together with your colleagues on developing effective written arguments. In this assignment, participation in pre-writing and group editing activities is as important as the final product itself.

Consider the following two questions. Your finished essay should answer these questions in **three to five** pages. It should have a clear statement of your interpretation of the texts, and use direct quotations from the original works to demonstrate your points. The paper should be double-spaced with standard margins. As with all assignments, extensions will be granted only for good reasons explained well in advance; computer malfunctions are never an acceptable excuse for a late submission. Proper academic citation is required, but you may use whichever standard style you prefer.

1. Historians have long debated the relationship between the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Some have argued that the Constitution was a fulfillment of the aims expressed in the Declaration of Independence, while others believe that the Constitution was a betrayal of those aims. What is your interpretation? In your essay, you should discuss specific features of the Constitution and relate them directly to the ideas expressed in the Declaration.
2. Thomas Jefferson has been described by writers as a puzzle, a contradiction, and, in the title of a recent book, a sphinx. Many historians are puzzled by how the (primary) author of the stirring vision of freedom and equality expressed in the Declaration of Independence could also have written the passages about slavery and race in *Notes on the State of Virginia*. What do you think? Do these two works by Jefferson contradict each other? If so, explain how, using specific textual references from both works. Or do the works express a coherent vision? If you believe this to be the case, you should explain what that vision is, using specific textual references from both works.

What to Do for Class #10.

You do not have to write a finished paper for class #10. You should write as much as you want to get feedback on in a peer editing session much like the one we did for the last paper. You can bring a complete rough draft if you want. At the very least, you should bring the first paragraph of the essay together with examples and quotes that support the argument that you have laid out in the paragraph. (If you want to do what you did last time and write up both essay topics, you can do that too.) Be prepared to explain to your peer editors what you want them to look for—that means that you should spend some time thinking about it yourself. Make sure you bring a clean copy of the draft with you on class #10.

What to Do for Class #11.

You should hand in a finished essay at the beginning of class. Please submit all of the materials (rough draft, peer editing notes, etc.) with your final essay.

We will also DEFINITELY discuss Ralph Waldo Emerson on class #11, so be sure to leave yourself time to read for class as well.