

## Community Power – REACTION PAPERS

During the course of the semester you will turn in 3 SHORT reaction papers. I've put 5 due dates on the syllabus – you choose the 3 dates you want to turn them in. *\*These reaction papers serve the purpose of tests or quizzes – they are a way for me to see that you are making sense of course material. Keep this in mind as you complete these papers. \**

Choose one of these types of reactions papers for each of your 3 assignments. You may use a different type of paper for each assignment, or you may choose the same one more than once.

### **REACTION PAPER OPTIONS:**

1. **Case study**. We'll be discussing processes, institutions and outcomes that can shake out very differently in various places. Perhaps we'll read about political machines in New York and Philadelphia, but you want to know about West Coast political machines (or the one in operation in Atlanta/Dekalb county – fascinating). Do some searching on your own for news or scholarly sources (or blog posts, all is on the table here) about our current topics and findings, but relate them to another location. Your write-up should include an overview of the issue/concept/approach that you are drawing from class, as well as description of your case study. Explain how what you've seen in St. Louis or Racine relates (or not) to what we've explored in class. Be sure to cite your sources.
2. **Critical synthesis**. Draw from 2-3 of our readings in the current section of the course. Provide a very brief summary of them; devote the bulk of your paper towards explaining how these pieces relate to each other. Do they work in concert, or do they contradict each other? What should we conclude from any contradictions? Are there gaps or weaknesses in any/each of these pieces? What more do we need to know? Cite your sources.
3. **Newspaper editorial**. Identify an aspect of what we've been exploring in this section of the class that has contemporary, public relevance. Craft an editorial to an appropriate newspaper about this topic. Draw on the ideas behind what we've been reading and discussing, but write for a general audience, and remember that editorials are typically persuasive, even if just persuading us to consider an issue seriously. If you need to support your argument with information more locally relevant (to whatever community), do so. Unlike a traditional editorial, you need to cite all of your sources.
4. **Community plan analysis**. Pick a city/town/county of interest to you. Go to their website (trust me, they have one), and pick one of their community plans you'd like to examine. This could be a neighborhood plan, a transportation plan, a school board plan, a public health planning document. Choose one and read it. Now identify strengths and weaknesses of this plan, derived from the work we've been doing in this section of the class. Your write-up should include a brief summary of the plan you've read, and the strengths and weaknesses you've identified. Be sure that it is clear how these strengths/weaknesses came from course materials, ideas. Be sure to cite all sources.
5. If there is something else that you really want to do – propose it to me!

## THE PARTICULARS:

### Length:

It is really hard for me to give you a solid “page limit” for these assignments. You can see, can’t you, how they could each lend themselves to being different lengths? For instance, the editorial is bound to be the shortest. The others – who knows? I can guess that you need at least 2 pages for each of these; if you go past 5 pages, you’re possibly doing too much. (I’ll take longer assignments, but I don’t want these to be super-burdensome. 2-5 seems like it should get it done.)

### Format:

Similarly, in terms of format – use the basic idea I’ve given you about write-up for each. ALWAYS have an introduction and conclusion. Pay attention to how you organize your paper. **Don’t ever turn something in without proofreading it.** Other than that – use your good judgment.

### Submission method:

That whole discussion of length? That was just to give you a ball-park idea of how long the assignment could/should be. But you won’t be turning in a “paper:” I want you to post each of your reaction papers to the class blog/website. Please read the “tech how-to” on the course blog to explain how to post, and especially how to put your paper/post into the relevant category.

And please don’t hesitate to come to me with questions!