



Cornish College of the Arts  
Humanities and Sciences Department, Spring 2009  
**Birds & Whistles: Making a Literary & Arts Magazine**

## Essay Assignment Options 1 & 2

**For this class you are required to write 2 Short Essays** of about 2 pages each. There are 5 options, each with its own due date, distributed across semester:

- A Review of a literary journal or arts magazine
- An Aesthetics Manifesto
- A Writers on Writing essay
- A Constructive Critique of a “maybe” submission
- An Editor’s Rant
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These essays will be graded on: quality of writing (including style and organization), quality of ideas, responsiveness to the assignment, punctuality, and correctness of grammar, punctuation, etc.

This handout describes Options 1 and 2

### Option 1: Review of a Literary Journal or Arts Magazine

**Due :** Friday January 30

#### What is a Review?

A Review is an essay that is written for a specific audience and purpose. The presumed reader is someone who has not yet read the book, viewed the film, or seen/heard the work reviewed, but might want to. Its purpose is to advise its reader whether to do so by explaining the work’s merits and flaws. A Review, therefore, must accomplish two tasks - synopsis and examination. Some Reviews first synopsizes then examine, while others weave the two together.

#### The Assignment:

Write a Review of the literary/arts magazine you chose to buy after our Elliot Bay field trip – or one you found in the Cornish or Seattle Public library. It should be recent – an issue that came out in the last 8 months.

Your Review should include both synopsis and examination – first one then the other, or woven together.

Your **synopsis** should focus on the magazine’s *content*. **Describe** specific pieces of art and literature included in this issue *and explain* the magazine’s overall character, as you see it . For this section, stay “with” the magazine. Describe the contents even-handedly or positively and try to identify the character the editors intended.

Your **examination** should include both praise and critique, but the balance between them is up to you. Keep the magazine’s *intent* in mind; don’t criticize it for not being something other than what it intends to be (i.e. if it seems to intend to be a literary magazine that includes some art, don’t criticize it for not having enough art – or vice-versa). Rather, assess how successfully it seems (to you) to accomplish the goals it sets for itself. As your essay progresses, work towards a conclusion that is larger and more interesting than whether it is a good magazine or a bad magazine.

Be sure to infuse your paper – both synopsis and examination parts – with specific references to pieces included in the magazine. These references can be direct quotes, paraphrases, observations\* or combinations thereof.

The following links provide resources that can help you accomplish this task:

Paraphrasing, Summarizing and Quoting : <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/01/>

Paraphrase: Write it In Your Own Words: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/619/01/>

A Brief Guide to Writing Evaluation Essays: <http://www.rsc.c.c.tn.us/owl&writingcenter/OWL/Evaluation.html>

## Option 2: An Aesthetics Manifesto

Due : Friday February 6

### What is a Manifesto?

A Manifesto is a public declaration of ideals, goals or vision that is intended to manifest something, that is to make something happen or come into being: a call to action, a method of doing art, a new society or new way of seeing. Manifestos can be political, philosophical or artistic; each kind often has something of the other in it. Some of the best known manifestos include The Communist Manifesto, Port Huron Statement and The Surrealist Manifesto and, of course, the United States Declaration of Independence. Recent adaptations of the idea include Donna Haraway's A Cyborg Manifesto and Michael Pollan's "An Eaters' Manifesto". Manifestos are usually written by a member (or a few members) of a group to articulate a collective vision. That group may be a named, organized one, as in the first 2 examples above respectively: The Communist Party and Students for a Democratic Society). Or, as with "Cyborgs" the Manifesto may conceptualize a new collective; or as with "Eaters" it may define a collective vision for a set of people that already exists but has not previously seen itself as a group with collective interests. A manifesto seeks to codify the beliefs of the group, and often to recruit others to the group or to the cause.

A Manifesto often contains certain parts:

- background or history,
- a set of points that articulate the groups claims or goals or defining principles,
- a vision statement,
- a call to action.

The example Manifestos suggest other possibilities for parts.

### The Assignment

You may do this assignment individually or work with one or two other students from the class. (If collectively written, I will expect a longer essay.)

Write your own Aesthetics Manifesto in which you speak for and to a Collective you see yourself as a part of. As described above, that group may be named, /organized one, newly defined, or a set of people that already exists but has not previously seen itself as a group with collective interests. Give that collective a name in your Manifesto's title.

Write with passion and attempt to inspire. Declare a collective vision or set of ideals and call for something to be made, or some action to be taken, by that collective.

Write *to* this collective as well as *for* it. Your aim is to declare the ideals, goals or visions you believe that collective shares already, as well as to inspire people within that collective to *act* in some way – join the group or work to advance its goals.

A Manifesto does not have a particular form, but some parts you might include are listed above.

Here's a fun resource on Persuasive writing: <http://www.copyblogger.com/persuasive-writing/>

Here are links to the sample Manifestos:

The Communist Manifesto:

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/index.htm>

Port Huron Statement :

[http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML\\_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/SDS\\_Port\\_Huron.html](http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/SDS_Port_Huron.html)

Surrealist Manifesto: [http://wikilivres.info/wiki/Surrealist\\_Manifesto](http://wikilivres.info/wiki/Surrealist_Manifesto)

A Cyborg Manifesto: <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/Haraway/CyborgManifesto.html>

"An Eaters' Manifesto" (<http://www.michaelpollan.com/indefense.php>).