

CityScope: New Orleans

4.001J/11.004J

Assignment 1

Draft an essay, five pages type written double spaced, addressing one of the key controversies concerning Katrina discussed in class. Lay out the two sides of the argument, describe how each side connects to one or more of the broader arguments about how democracy should work discussed in the Nuts and Bolts of Democracy handout, then argue a position on one side or another of the controversy. Your essay should state where you agree/differ with other positions in the controversy, it should discuss where your position fits within larger discussions about building democracy, it should draw on evidence from either the history or recent events in New Orleans - and it should be clearly written.

In your response to these readings think clearly about what you believe and how best to structure your response. Can you analyze the evidence supporting the claim or claims in the readings? Can you refute, elaborate upon, or modify the argument or arguments that you chose to respond to? Use clear and detailed evidence from the readings and your own experience and observations in constructing your response. If you grew up outside of the United States, you may argue how applicable the readings are to your own culture.

Due February 27 (2 weeks from today)

Your essay will be evaluated for the following elements:

1. **Focus** – your essay should be developed around a clear central thesis or argument, integrating your own views with material from the articles.
2. **Structure** – your essay should be clearly organized in a way that elaborates on and supports your central thesis. Individual paragraphs should be cohesive, and your reader should be able to follow the logical progression of your ideas from one paragraph to the next.
3. **Evidence/Analysis** – make sure you support your claims with well-chosen examples from your own experience and from the articles - and that you explain how these examples support your points.
4. **Style** -- your word choices and sentence structures should enhance the clarity and argumentative effectiveness of your essay. Essays using ordinary, unpretentious language will receive a higher grade than verbose essays. Your writing should also adhere to the standard contemporary conventions for grammar, spelling, and usage.

Journals

This class is designed to challenge your views, ideas, and assumptions on a variety of issues including: race, class, justice, history, infrastructure, physical planning, among many others. As you work through this material, it is important that you keep a journal, which will be given to you, of your thoughts, apprehensions, feelings and frustrations about the class and the material. You will find that these first thoughts and impressions will help you as you work on later assignments that ask you to take and defend a position about some issue or problem in New Orleans. You may also find that what you write in this journal may provide you with a better sense of what you want to study while you are here at MIT.

As mentioned in class, the writing you do in this journal is not for us, your instructors, but rather a record for you. We will be checking that you are doing this writing (by looking at the dates) but we will not be reading your writing. To this end, you are required to write 1 to 2 pages of random writing five days each week. Random writing can be anything – poetry, phrases, meandering sentences, sketches, etc, but mostly we are hoping you will use your journal to reflect on what you read, see and hear in and for class.