

Unit 1 Assignment: Flashpoints Portfolio

The best you can do as a reader is to try to show *why* you view a text in a certain way, both in terms of the values you bring to the text and the moments you notice in it. Your readers can then point to different values and different moments, and your ways of reading the text can then be contrasted and argued for, if not resolved.

You can see quotations as *flashpoints* in a text, moments given a special intensity, made to stand for key concepts and issues. A useful rule of thumb, then, is to quote only those phrases or passages that you want to do further work with or bring pressure upon—whose particular implications and resonances you want to analyze, elaborate, counter, revise, echo, or transform.

– Joseph Harris, “Coming to Terms” (22)

Although summarizing a text may seem like a simple task, understanding and accurately representing what a text *does* is challenging. Your first formal assignment is to revise and polish some of the work that you have already completed this unit and to develop researchable questions specific to our course inquiry. You will create a portfolio that investigates your own interests within our inquiry of [Everyday Representations of Dis/Ability](#).

The Flashpoints Portfolio is the beginning of your own critical research project. Good research isn't simply finding a few sources that reinforce what we already think. Rather, it involves reading in a subject area with the intention of learning more, complicating our assumptions and belief systems, and being generous with the new ideas that we encounter. Reading, then, is a crucial step in the development of a research project. The goal of this assignment is to encourage you to become invested and curious readers who can develop your own relevant, meaningful, researchable questions.

The Flashpoints Portfolio has 3 essential parts.

1) Revise & Polish.

Joe Harris explains that our summaries are never neutral or objective and that we always understand a text's project through our own interests and experiences. You will need to revise the summaries you wrote for homework this unit so that they accurately represent each writer's project *and* your particular interpretation or investment in the project. Your understanding of the unit texts will deepen as you re-read them, as we discuss them in class, and as we share our initial summaries. Your revision of the critical summaries, then, is *crucial*. You want the summaries you turn in for a

Part 1: (3 pages) Revised summary of the project of three of the shared readings (1 page summaries of each); these should each be framed by **one crucial flashpoint** from the text.

Part 2: (1 page) Summary of a *secondary source* that you found; this should also be framed by **one crucial flashpoint**.

Part 3: (1 page) Response to the set of readings that ends with a **set of precise research questions** that the readings point to and that you might be interested in pursuing.

grade to reflect the newest, most updated, richest engagement with the readings. You also want to be mindful of the relationship between the flashpoint that prefaces each summary and the summary itself; they should speak to or interact with each other.

2) Research & Do It Again.

For the second part, you will essentially do the first step (above) on a text of your choice. That is, you will spend some time researching Everyday Representations of Dis/Ability and locating a text that you feel speaks to your own interests within the inquiry. After you have found an appropriate text, you will use Harris's strategies to read the text. Then you will choose a flashpoint and write a one-page summary of the writer's project that frames the summary through the flashpoint. Again, remember to strike the appropriate balance between your interests in the text and an accurate representation of the project of the author.

3) Respond & Ask Questions.

The third and final part is a one-page response to the collection of flashpoint summaries *and* a set of questions that you might pursue for future research. Although this is only a one-page response, you need to cover significant ground:

- What ideas circulating in the texts draw your attention, and why?
- How are the texts encouraging you to re-think or complicate your assumptions?
- How is your relationship to the course inquiry changing or evolving as a result of engaging with the readings?

In your reflection, you should articulate a focus or interest that has developed out of these texts. This page should function as a springboard for further research. In other words, what would you like to continue researching, reading, and thinking about? Within your response, you should include a set of at least 3-4 very precise research questions that these readings have prompted and that you might continue to investigate during the rest of the semester.

The Nitty Gritty.

The Unit 1 Flashpoint Portfolio should be 5 pages, 12 pt. font, double-spaced, and formatted according to MLA guidelines. Please include a Works Cited page and an appropriate title. The Unit 1 Flashpoint Portfolio is due on **Wednesday, February 6.**