

Unit 2: Access Analysis

Who has access to civic participation?

It is not the differences that are the causes of inequality in our culture. Rather, it is the meanings and values applied to these differences that makes them harmful. For example, it is not that people of color are defined as different from whites in the United States but that whites are viewed as superior and as the cultural standard against which all others are judged that transforms categories of race differences into a system of racial inequality.

– Tracy E. Ore, *The Social Construction of Difference and Inequality* (1-2)

Systems of inequality contribute to what Ore identifies as **social stratification**, which ranks and categorizes different types of people into hierarchies. The issue here, of course, is that this stratification privileges particular types of people and devalues other. This is important for our purposes because this privileging gives some bodies access to civic engagement while barring access for others.

After gaining some theoretical bearing in Unit 1—defining and redefining our understandings of civic engagement, participation, and action—we will begin in Unit 2 to think about the rhetorical, social, and political forces at work in civic issues. Specifically, we will turn our attention to civic spaces and how particular groups of people have historically accessed (or been denied access to) civic spaces and how writing influenced that inclusion/exclusion. That is, if writing worked to further exclude, whether writing mediated that access in any way, or even if writing became a way for unauthorized groups to empower themselves and join in civic discussions.

You will choose a current issue and explore how it has been addressed using different media outlets (eg. Twitter, Facebook, CNN, Fox News, political blogs, local and national newspapers, public art). Using **Storify**, you will curate the different ways this issue has been represented, whose voices were included and excluded, and analyze the situation in order to highlight the tensions with civic participation across different sites.



(photo by Tom Olin)

Guidelines.

You do *not* have to use the historical texts we read in class during this unit as sources for your analysis. You should, however, **think about how the issue you've chosen has historical roots**. That is, if you choose drone protests at the Syracuse-Hancock Airport, it might be useful to think about the context of similar situations in the city.

Ideally, **you should pick something local** (whether Syracuse, your hometown, or a very particular situation or group of people) so that your analysis doesn't spin out of control. Ask yourself:

- Who does this issue directly and indirectly impact?
- Whose voices are included and excluded from this discussion?
- What does it mean—socially and politically—that certain people are excluded from either this discussion or the space where decisions are made?
- What is the civic space where this issue is discussed? Is it physical or digital? Does that change who has access to it?
- How do the different genres through which this issue is mediated affect how the issue is rhetorically represented and whose voices are highlighted?

If you've never used Storify, don't worry! I've scheduled days for us to play in the computer lab.

The screenshot shows a Storify page with the following content:

- Title:** Responses to Slacktivism #wrt301
- Description:** Student responses to two articles used to jumpstart our Civic Writing class: "The Ultimate Guide to Civic Engagement" (Tom Spengler, Huffington Post) and "UNICEF"
- News Articles:**
 - The Ultimate Guide to Civic Engagement** by Tom Spengler. Text: "We all like to believe we live our lives in a way that's socially-conscious and politically-aware -- after all, we cast our vote for a ne..."
- Tweets:**
 - Erica Franceschini: "I am a woman, but I like doing things that the 'typical' woman supposed to...like playing tackle football #wrt301"
 - Erica Franceschini: "I completely believe in social construction theory and that so cannot be derived from the laws of nature #wrt301"
 - Erica Franceschini: "cultural relativism is so difficult to accomplish today because"

The Deets.

The Unit 2 Access Analysis—because of the genre we're using—will not have a page requirement but should be approximately 1,000 words and formatted according to MLA guidelines. Your analysis should demonstrate a thorough understanding of the issue you have chosen and a critical rhetorical awareness of the genres that issue is mediated across. Please include a Works Cited section and an appropriate title. The analysis is due by midnight on **Thursday, October 24**. Please email it to ahhitt@sy.edu.