Assignment 2  An Open Letter: Applying Ideas to a new Context

Overview: Every one of us has been in a conversation where we heard an idea or an argument we loved so much we couldn’t wait to share it with someone. In this assignment we will expand this type of conversation by spreading ideas between contexts. First we will read and listen to ideas and arguments, analyze them, and explore a new context that might benefit from the idea. We will convince an appropriate audience through an open letter that the new idea is worthy of their consideration.

Purpose: Your purpose, generally, is to convince your audience of the usefulness of an idea. This means, more specifically, that you will, analyze, summarize and respond in a way that argues in support of an idea or argument in its application to a new context. Using a critical analysis, you will identify how a compelling argument could be useful in another context. Next you will summarize the idea for your audience before responding by arguing for the ideas potential in the new context. For example, you may decide that Roger Ebert’s idea that social media (originating context) can “give [people] a substitute for every day conversations,” should be heard by your grandparents (new context) in order to address the problem of isolation and immobilization in the elderly.

Genre: You will write an open letter, which is specifically addressed to a person or organization but is intended for a larger audience to read. Open letters are often published in a newspaper or magazine.

Audience: Foremost you should chose an audience who is worthy of receiving the idea. The audience will be associated with the new context where you are spreading the idea. For instance, if you are spreading an idea from the context of marketing to the context of education, some worthy audience possibilities may be teachers, principals, students or parents.

Texts to Choose from:

Ted Talk Lectures
- Ted Talk 1: Clay Shirky: How social media can make history
- Ted Talk 2: Evan Williams on listening to Twitter users
- Ted Talk 3: James Surowiecki: When social media became news
- Ted Talk 4: Johanna Blakley: Social media and the end of gender
- Ted Talk 5: Seth Godin on the tribes we lead
- Ted Talk 6: Stefana Broadbent: How the Internet enables intimacy
- Ted Talk 7: Roger Ebert: Remaking My Voice
- Ted Talk 8: Alexis Ohanian: How to make a splash in social media

Essays
- “Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not be Tweeted,” Malcolm Gladwell
- “Political Power of Social Media,” by Clay Shirky
- "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" by Nicholas Carr
- "Get Smarter," by Jamais Cascio

Speech
- Internet Rights and Wrongs: Choices and Challenges in a Networked World,” by Hillary Clinton
Websites


Requirements:

- We will review how people approach the task of spreading their ideas and arguments. We will look at twelve texts, in a mix of genres, paying particular attention to the rhetorical choices these authors make in order to effectively "spread their ideas."

- **Summary and Analysis:** provide a relevant summary of the idea for your audience, paying particular attention to the parts of the text which will transfer to the new context and be of most interest to your audience.

- **Informed Response:** You will respond by arguing to your audience that the idea you are asking them to consider will be useful to their context, emphasizing why the idea is important (your reasons), what is at stake, and providing evidence from the original text (and, potentially, from other texts we've read so far this semester) to back up your argument. Your informed response shows that you've listened to the broader conversation surrounding these issues and your analysis and response is based on an accurate knowledge and understanding of the situation or subject in question. Your audience is depending on you to provide more than first reaction opinions; they desire informed opinions.

- **Critical Thinking Approach:** Your essay should be informed by all of the texts we have read thus far. You should also investigate the idea’s originating context as well as the context where you are exploring the idea anew.

**Paper Length:** 900-1200 words (3-4 pages)

**Workshop Date:**

**Due Date:**

**Worth:** 20% of your final course grade

**NOTE:** At the end of your paper, include the following honor pledge: "I have not given, received, or used any unauthorized assistance."
### Assignment 2 Grading Rubric

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<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
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<td><strong>Making an Argument:</strong> The letter clearly and effectively argues that the idea you are spreading will be useful in the new context. The letter emphasizes reasons why the idea is important, evidence to support the reasons, and discusses what is at stake in the conversation. The letter goes beyond first reaction opinions about the idea and instead presents informed opinions based on careful consideration of the conversation surrounding the idea.</td>
<td>Although it is clear that the letter writer has thought about how the idea will be useful in the new context, the letter could more clearly and effectively argue about the idea’s usefulness. The letter mentions why the idea is important and what is at stake, though the reasons and/or evidence could use more development. The letter goes beyond first reaction opinions, though the letter writer may need to consider the conversation surrounding the idea more carefully.</td>
<td>It is unclear from the letter why and how the idea will be useful in the new context and/or why it is important and what is at stake. The letter may rely too heavily on first reaction opinions, rather than informed opinions, and may cite few reasons and/or little or no evidence to support the position. The letter may need to more carefully consider the entire conversation surrounding the idea in order to more effectively craft an informed response.</td>
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<td><strong>Considering Context and Appealing to an Audience:</strong> It is obvious from the letter that the student has carefully considered the new context and has thoughtfully crafted a letter aimed at convincing the new audience in the new context of the idea’s worthiness. The letter writer has considered the values and assumptions of the new audience in the new context, and speaks clearly to those needs.</td>
<td>Though the letter has put some consideration into the new context, the letter could more clearly explain how the idea is applicable to the new context. The letter also pays some attention to the needs of the new audience in the new context, but consideration of the values and assumptions of the new audience could be more thorough.</td>
<td>The letter seems to show little consideration of the new context, and/or it is unclear from the letter that the student understands what context is and how it plays a role in the rhetorical situation. The letter may have little or no consideration of the values and assumptions of the new audience in the new context.</td>
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<td><strong>Representing the Text:</strong> The letter accurately and objectively summarizes the argument in the original text, paying particular attention to the parts of the text that will transfer to the new context and be of most interest to the audience. The letter cites the author, title, date, and publication of the text; using author tags and/or proper attribution for all borrowed material; and framing summary, paraphrases, and quotations with careful and effective explanation.</td>
<td>Overall, the letter accurately and objectively represents the text, though there may be some minor inaccuracies and/or the reader may need more information in order to fully understand the text’s idea. The letter writer may need to pay more attention to the key parts of the text that will be of most interest to the audience. The letter makes clear references to the text, but it could use more variation in author tags and/or it needs to make better choices of summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting. References may be effective but framing is thin or missing.</td>
<td>The letter shows that the student may have an incomplete understanding of the text because it contains incomplete and/or inaccurate information, causing the audience to be unsure of the main ideas and supporting points in the text. Essays that contain only opinions about the texts are also unsatisfactory. Because the essay does not have sufficient references to the text, it is hard to tell when the student is referring to it and when the student is expressing his/her own thoughts. Ineffective use of summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting raise concerns about plagiarism and/or understanding.</td>
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<td><strong>Conventions &amp; Style:</strong> The language, tone, and voice of the letter are those of a careful and critical reader, and the letter is edited for clear communication that is free of distracting errors.</td>
<td>While the letter could be more careful edited for style, it is generally clear and readable.</td>
<td>Because of poor editing and/or style choices, the letter is confusing or unclear for readers.</td>
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