

Seeds of Change: Food, Culture, and Work
Fall 2007
Synthesis Essay #1 (Apples)

Learning Objective: To form a more holistic understanding of the case study of apples, integrating program materials on food (agriculture), culture, and work.

Due Dates: (1) Your solidly-written three-page draft is due Tuesday, October 16, at the writing workshop; bring six copies to class for peer review; you will not have time to print between lab and workshop, so print before class begins at 9am.

(2) You will sign up for an appointment with the writing tutor to revise your work at some point in the process, before the final due date.

(3) Your final draft is due Thursday, October 18, 3pm, in hard copy form, to your seminar leader (under office door or in door envelope) or in faculty mailbox (Sem 2 A2117 for Tony or Alice; Lab 1 for Martha).

Format: 3-5 pages, typed, double-spaced, 12-point type, 1" margins, paginated, stapled.

This quarter you will complete a synthesis essay about each of the three crops studied (apples, sugar, bananas). By "synthesis," we mean bringing the different elements of the program together to form an integrated whole. These essay assignments provide you with the opportunity to form a more holistic understanding of each crop studied, by connecting the various (inter-) disciplinary perspectives offered in our readings, lectures, films, labs, and fieldwork.

Topics: Your essay should be organized around a common theme or issue that is prominent in the materials. Here are two possible starting points:

- (1) We have encountered several "dominant narratives" in our work so far (e.g., Manifest Destiny, conventional agriculture, the Johnny Appleseed myth, etc.). We have also encountered "alternative stories" that contest these dominant narratives (e.g., the Yakama Cultural Center history, organic agriculture, Johnny Appleseed debunked by Pollan). Focusing on one or two examples (these or others from our materials), please address: What's the function of the dominant narrative? What interests does it serve? What do alternative stories seek to reveal? What narrative strategies do both sorts of stories employ? What are these stories' relationship to change? Be sure to link your comments as much as possible to APPLES specifically.
- (2) A variation on one of our guiding questions: How are the power relations within US society manifested in food and diet, in farm work, and in our stories, representations, and knowledge of APPLES? What "seeds of change" to these power relations have you seen so far?

Parameters:

- (1) Your essay must meaningfully address all three major dimensions of the program: food (agriculture), culture, and work.
- (2) Your essay must refer, at minimum, to one film and three written texts, and include one or two field trip references. Include supporting material from lectures, labs, and other fieldwork as needed.

Structure:

This is an **argumentative, thesis-driven essay**, so make sure you have an engaging introduction that sets up your clearly focused thesis. Remember a thesis statement includes a **topic + assertion + context** within which you will prove that assertion. In this case, your thesis should include an answer to one cluster of questions above and set up your paper's argument.

The **body** should offer a well focused, in-depth argument illustrated and supported with evidence drawn from the relevant program materials. Be selective and strategic about your use of quotes, including only those most important to your argument. Remember that quotes don't speak for themselves; you must make them speak to your argument. To that end, use the following strategies for incorporating and analyzing quotations:

- (1) introduce the quotation;
- (2) offer the quotation itself;
- (3) after quotation, paraphrase the important ideas in your own words and analyze key words, symbols, and/or the logic of the quote's argument;
- (4) state the significance of the point in terms of your own thesis/argument.

The **conclusion** should restate your argument and discuss its implications (why it matters).

Use the MLA citation format and include a bibliography of works cited.

Process:

- (1) Without limiting yourself to your specific topic, brainstorm broadly the connections you see between each pair of terms: food (agriculture)-culture; culture-work; work-food (agriculture), with relation to apples. We will do this in writing workshop week 3.
- (2) Considering your specific topic as well as the brainstormed connections, revisit your texts and notes on lab, fieldwork, films, etc. Gather together and assess the evidence presented on your topic. At this stage you'll begin to develop a working thesis or argument for your paper. The process of writing should help you pin down your thesis more precisely, so you may revise it in subsequent drafts.
- (3) Write with the following in mind: What connections do you see for your topic across program materials? What points of difference do you notice? Beware of generalizing: be very specific in your analysis in terms of time, place, groups of people, etc, and always relate your evidence back to your working thesis.
- (4) Refine your arguments, choosing those very best examples to make your case. Solidify your thesis, allowing for the complexities you discover. Polish your prose, making explicit links between ideas.

Remember that writing is a process of discovery and represents new learning. Give yourself ample time to consolidate and develop your ideas, and to revise and refine your prose.

Evaluation criteria for essay and research paper assignments

Thesis	Evidence	Argument	Style	Spelling, punctuation, grammar
A fresh and original thesis that opens a complex topic to a focused argument	Astutely selected evidence supports the argument, and is closely analyzed	Persuasively leads the reader through a sequence of closely linked ideas; excellent logic; excellent transitions	Excellent word choice; varied sentence structure; outstanding rhetorical impact; fresh and lively	Flawless
A clearly stated thesis, clearly linked to the argument	Good evidence; good analysis	Overall good development; maybe some gaps that compromise persuasiveness	Clear communication in correct English; concise	A few misspellings or punctuation errors
Thesis states the main idea, but that idea is too simple or too complex, or isn't linked to the argument	More or better evidence is needed; insufficient analysis of that evidence; excessive summary in lieu of analysis	Ideas are developed in fits and starts; weak or no transitions; heavily relies on summary rather than analysis	Too many or too few words to convey the idea; bloated or anemic sentences	Problems such as confusing commas with semi-colons; which with that; it's with its, etc.
<i>A preponderance of the characteristics below will lead to no credit for the essay</i>				
A confusing or non-existent thesis	Weak evidence	Disjointed or illogical	Poor word choice, poor sentence structure	Many errors, making the meaning difficult to follow