

Media Response Assignment

This semester, students will be asked to respond to sources of media - songs, news articles, and/or podcasts - within the context of their learning. Students will select the media themselves and use their *American Yawp* text, lecture notes, course vocabulary, and any other pertinent readings in their response. (Students struggling to find a source of media may contact Professor Donawho for help within a reasonable timeframe of the due date.)

Assignment Instructions

In the first part of the assignment, students should analyze their media source by completing three (3) of the following. Each should be explained (specifically) in *no less than 3 sentences each*. Students may choose to do three (3) of one, or mix-and-match from the list:

- Identify something that they learned, found interesting, or that contradicted previously held knowledge/beliefs.
- Compare/Contrast an argument/point made in the media source to that made in another academic text- either primary (can include images, cartoons, etc.) or secondary OR in another *specific* historical event.*
- Explain how their media source or an argument/point made in the media source is a continuity/change from another point in American history.

In the second part of the assignment, students will ask two (2) questions that they either thought while analyzing the media source, or wish they could ask the author of the media source. The purpose of these questions is to think like a social scientist; therefore, questions must be complex in nature. *Questions should be those that require a complex understanding of the topic at hand to answer*. Questions that could be answered by Google will not count!

Students should also use **no less than 5 vocabulary (proper noun) terms from the list or their *American Yawp* text** in their total response (either analysis or questions). These terms need to be **BOLDED** in the response when it is submitted. The vocabulary list provided is divided into sections based on when these assignments are due. Students are free to jump around and use words from any part of the overall list, but should be aware that they will have to research any words not yet covered in the course in order to adequately and appropriately convey their meaning in the assignment.

*Responses making reference to other texts need to either include a URL to that text on the internet, or otherwise provide a PDF copy or other digital form of the source included with their assignment submission.

See the following page for an example using a podcast.

Name

You're Wrong About: Why Didn't Anyone Go to Prison for the Financial Crisis?

Analysis:

1. The point made in the podcast that the 2008 crisis was the fault primarily of elite bankers and those in the financial business is easily comparable to the perspective in the cartoon "A Wise Economist Asks a Question" from 1931 (attached below). In the Great Depression-era cartoon, the squirrel - known for wisely storing food away for the winter - asks the downcast man why he didn't also put money away in a bank. The man's solemn response is that he did. In very much the same way that Americans in the early 2000s looked at bank failure (and government bailout of banks) as the reason for their frustration and problems, men who had placed their life savings in banks - thinking it to be safe - found themselves without a penny. This is why part of the federal government's response during the **New Deal** was to create the **Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC)** - to insure at least *some* of each person's future deposits. And just like the squirrel, some people in both the Great Depression and Great Recession who were less impacted looked at those who lost the most and wondered why they didn't do more to protect their assets before-hand. As if they could have prevented the backlash of corporate greed from reaching them. In both periods, this was especially true for working class people and communities of color, whose financial institutions started off disadvantaged from the beginning.
2. Part of the problem here is a break-down in systems that are continuities of old systems from former financial crises. Some government agencies seem to be stuck in a system of cyclical arguments where the public (and other parts of the government) tell them they need to do a better job in order to get more money, but they need more money in order to do a better job. When it comes to a lot of the government, but especially regulating and law enforcement agencies, this doesn't really work. For example, the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the **Securities and Exchange Commission** (created as a result of the Great Depression) require massive funding to be effective at their jobs. Once they are effective at their jobs, that money will eventually be able to funnel back to the government in the form of an improved economy or taxes actually being paid (rather than sheltered, etc.). Another, slightly different, example is the repeal of the **Glass-Steagall Act** from the Great Depression. This law was created to prevent speculative banking practices *exactly* like the ones that led to high-risk mortgages in the 2008 financial crisis - but it was repealed in 1999. The lack of regulatory continuity leads to gaps and loopholes where problems can build.
3. One thing I learned was that the facts in white-collar cases are hardly ever in dispute. There are usually mile-long paper trails of facts that people are "guilty." The problem is that because of the way that the courts have chipped away at laws over time, prosecutors now have to prove that bankers, corporations, etc. *intended* to defraud or harm consumers. Essentially like the idea that we knew **Robber Barons** like **John D. Rockefeller** and **J.P. Morgan** were bad, but we didn't have the legal means at the time to really *do* anything about it (plus politicians during the Gilded Age didn't necessarily want to). It is incredibly difficult to prove intent because people simply claim they didn't realize what they were doing. Stupidity makes a great defense.

Questions:

1. According to Michael Hobbs, prosecution for white collar crime is at its lowest level ever. If this is the case, why is that? If we have more technology and resources now than ever before, what social, economic, and political reasons are there for not harnessing those resources behind busting white-collar crime that truly hurts American consumers?
2. If so much of our broken justice system is based on the premise that wealthy people can cheat the system with their lawyers, why don't we at least *attempt* to even the playing field by offering or requiring rudimentary law classes or legal classes in high schools and colleges?



Title: A Wise Economist Asks a Question
Publication: The Chicago Tribune (931)
Author: John McCutcheon

Rubric

A (25-23)	B (22-20)	C (19-18)	D (17-15)	F (14-0)
<p>Analysis of the media source reflects specific, analytical thought as defined by a mixture of the three options given in the list. Response includes significant levels of personal analysis and nuanced historical thinking about the topic.</p> <p>Questions are both analytically complex and show an understanding of specific social problems and/or the types of questions social scientists seek to tackle.</p> <p>Total response uses <i>more than five (5) terms</i> from the vocabulary list or other academic sources such as the course text.</p>	<p>Analysis of the media source reflects specific, analytical thought as defined by a mixture of the three options given in the list. Response includes some levels of personal analysis or nuanced historical thinking about the topic. This analysis may be slightly vague or may be incomplete.</p> <p>Questions are generally both analytically complex and show an understanding of specific social problems and/or the types of questions social scientists seek to tackle. However, one question may be slightly weaker than the other.</p> <p>Total response uses <i>at least five (5) terms</i> from the vocabulary list or other academic sources such as the course text.</p>	<p>Analysis of the media source reflects specific, analytical thought as defined by a mixture of the three options given in the list. Response may or may not attempt to include personal analysis beyond that required to meet the basic requirements of answering the prompt.</p> <p>Questions adequately show an understanding of social problems and/or the types of analytical questions social scientists seek to tackle, but may be lacking in specificity or limited to listing social categories. (i.e. “How are college students hurt by <i>economic</i> policies?”)</p> <p>Total response uses <i>at least five (5) terms</i> from the vocabulary list or other academic sources such as the course text.</p>	<p>Response attempts to analyze the media source as defined by a mixture of the three options in the list, but falls short. Response may incorrectly interpret the modern media source, or make incorrect connections between present and past. OR Response may correctly analyze the source, but attempt further analysis in several parts of the response that render the initial understanding unusable.</p> <p>Questions show an understanding of the topic at hand, but may be vague (one or both) or make incorrect assumptions.</p> <p>Total response uses <i>less than five (5) terms</i> from the vocabulary list or other academic sources such as the course text.</p>	<p>Response attempts to analyze the media source as defined by a mixture of the three options in the list, but falls short or does so incorrectly. Response may provide a wealth of incorrect information OR fail to respond to the prompt altogether.</p> <p>Questions either do not respond to the topic at hand OR are extremely vague OR response fails to provide questions.</p> <p>Total response uses <i>significantly less than five (5) terms</i> from the vocabulary list or other academic sources such as the course text.</p>

***Responses that do not fall neatly into one category will be graded at the instructor’s discretion