HMXP 102

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Second Essay Assignment

Self and Community

In recent weeks, you have been asked to consider the individual’s relationship to the larger community.  Often this relationship reflects a tension that exists between individual identities and the common good.  Ultimately, we are being asked to consider how the communities to which we belong contribute to making us who we are.

**Topic:**

People like belonging to groups.  In his piece “Ingroup and Outgroup,” David Myers suggests that our social definitions help to explain how we, as individuals, find connections to the larger community.  Community sustains the commonality that brings people together. The connection among community members often leads to a preference for similar people, and being alike positively reinforces the mutual identity.  Groups sharing a common identification experience group cohesion, which can promote a sense of belonging rooted in healthy group pride. As McIntosh notes, at times our ascriptive characteristics offer us a sense of privilege of which we are often unaware. However, group membership can also breed stereotypes, feelings of prejudice and superiority, and can contribute to negative feelings about other groups which may lead to ranking other organizations, races, and cultures.  Additionally, while the connections and commonalities with others give us security, groups can pressure us to comply with internal norms. Human behavior is governed by norms and we follow the rules to receive acceptance and approval. Conformity brings many rewards and society prefers the status quo, so defying those demands often elicits punishments, exclusion, and deviant labels.

Taking a holistic approach, explore the following questions in a four-to-five page well-argued and coherent essay:

**What influences do your social ingroups have on your identity?  How do your ingroups confer a sense of privilege or a lack of privilege (or both)?**

In approaching this topic, first you must clearly define your social definition.  How specifically do you define yourself in relation to others (race, gender, class, sexual orientation, etc)?  You only need to discuss what seems relevant to your experience….in other words, choose one lens for the essay.  An intersection of lenses may work (as in race and gender, for example) but be careful to make sure the essay is specifically focused.  Next, you should consider how this definition shapes your experience in the larger community. Examining your experiences within your own “group(s)” as well as how your “group(s)” is/are perceived by others is the place to begin this self-examination. Are you strengthened or victimized by the labels you carry?  How does your conformity (or lack thereof) to group or social expectations define your experience? In some ways, aren’t we all subjected to DuBois’ idea of double consciousness? You may want to reflect on the ideas of Myers, DuBois, McIntosh, hooks, Rodriguez and others as you consider your response. Be sure to reference the ideas of at least two of the authors we have discussed in HMXP 102 this semester.

**Other Specifics**:

Your paper should have a solid thesis and should present a thoughtful, clear, and well organized argument.  Be sure to offer valid arguments for the position you take and provide clear and specific supporting details.  Touching on too many ideas can result in a “thin” essay. Instead, aim to convince through a persuasive essay, which offers focus, depth, insight and originality.  Your argument should be logical and free from errors in reasoning. Avoid emotional or unsupported opinions and convince your reader through supporting evidence that is specific and detailed.  Your paper must consider the ideas of at least two of the authors we have discussed (to support or refute your ideas as necessary).  You may also choose to incorporate outside sources (Be sure to cite them!!). Your paper should be typed in a standard, 12 point font.  For typing, documentation, and works cited use the MLA format presented in WRIT 101 and addressed in the Rules for Writers guide. Do not forget the Works Cited Page!!  To improve your writing, start early, write multiple drafts, receive constructive feedback, revise, and edit. I am willing to review drafts of this paper if they are received at least one week prior to the paper due date.  The Writing Center, located at 242 Bancroft, also provides a useful resource for help.

Please note that a hard copy of this essay needs to be submitted by the beginning of class on the paper due date.  An electronic copy of this essay must also be submitted to turnitin.com before midnight on the paper due date. A paper that does not meet these expectations will be considered late and point will be deducted according to the policy explained on the syllabus.