Short Paper 2: Close Reading Of

Close reading is a necessary skill that will be very useful to you no matter your interests, discipline, or job. Your classes, your work, and even your pastimes will require you to read or evaluate something difficult, to find hand- and footholds in the material, and make sense of it. Basically, "close reading" simply means paying close attention to a text, analyzing a text very carefully — be it a photograph, a scholarly essay, an operation manual, a website, a tax form — and then drawing conclusions or making decisions based on your analysis. Depending on the class or your discipline, the kind of close reading you will be asked to do will vary. Different disciplines and contexts ask you to pay attention to different things. In this class, we will be primarily close reading written texts, analyzing writing and arguments, paying close attention to what is being said, how it is being said, and why it is being said. In general, for our purposes, there are three levels of close reading: literary, rhetorical, and social/cultural close reading:

Literary Close Reading: The first level of close reading is the most basic, literal analysis of a text. Most of you are familiar with this kind of close reading, where you identify themes, symbols, figures of speech, patterns, language, and other rhetorical features. The claim for a literary close reading is usually superficial, general, descriptive, and local to just the words on the page.

Rhetorical Close Reading: The second level of close reading not only identifies the rhetorical features of a text but goes on to analyze and argue something about how the author uses those features for a certain purpose. In other words, a rhetorical close reading does more than describe what is in the text but how it is being used, why it is persuasive, and argues whether the text is rhetorically successful or not. You might encounter a specific kind of rhetorical close reading based on the three, classical rhetorical appeals: ethos, pathos, and logos. The claim for rhetorical close reading is more analytical and has bigger stakes than a literary close reading, but it still stays close to the argument of the passage.

Social/Cultural Close Reading: The third level of close reading is the hardest to do and has the biggest stakes. This third level of close reading is built on top of a literary or rhetorical close reading. This kind of close reading connects what is being said and why it is being said to how and why it is important for a larger social or cultural context. In other words, the claim for social/cultural close reading links your analysis to the goals of the whole text, to contexts surrounding the text, and to some larger scholarly or political stakes.

Goals and Outcomes

For this assignment, you will do a close reading of a specific passage from **one** of the literary readings we have done so far in class. Your paper should **not** be a simple summary. **Read carefully, read conscientiously, and read closely**. Keep in mind our work on argument, claim, and evidence. Your close reading should include and address the following:

> 1) A brief introduction to the text, author, and more importantly, your selected passage and its context
> 2) Generate a specific analytical claim for the close reading; do more than a literary close reading
> 3) Support your summary with quotes or examples directly from the text

An outstanding close reading does more than describe what the text is about or what the author is saying. As with summary, be selective, precise, and connect the passage to the text's bigger picture. Outstanding close readings identify a central main idea or argument made by the text, analyze how the idea or argument is made, and articulate how and why your close reading is important.

Format: Formal, academic paper, 1-2 pages, typed, no title page, 1" margins, doubled-spaced body, proper name block & title, single-sided print, bibliography

Due: no later than Monday, March 5, via Blackboard, by the start of class