Unit 2 – *The Mind at Work*: What Do Others Make of It?

**Assignment #2 — *The Mind at Work* Research Synthesis & Evaluation**

This assignment corresponds primarily to the second of the five learning outcomes for the course:

2. **Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing**
   
   By the end of first year composition, students should
   
   - Use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating
   - Understand a writing assignment as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources
   - Integrate their own ideas with those of others
   - Understand the relationships among language, knowledge, and power

**Background**

✓ In this unit, we address:
   
   - what research is (being curious about something/asking questions/seeking answers);
   - the forms it can take (basic/applied; quantitative/qualitative/mixed methods);
   - some of the many venues in which it’s presented (scholarly conferences and journals; scholarly books; trade books; internet, including even Wikipedia; “school” papers, as in this class and others you’ll take);
   - what synthesis is (putting many parts together);
   - ways of discerning whether the research you encounter is good (researcher’s credentials, peer review, place of publication, kind and quality of press, etc.).
   - aspects of Rose’s research, such as methodology & scholarly apparatus (footnotes, bibliography, etc.)

✓ We will discuss the ongoing nature of scholarship, along with the difficulties of knowing how and when to “enter the conversation” (Burke’s parlor metaphor—next page).

✓ You will read “Searching for Better Research Habits” posted on Blackboard for class discussion.

Today, you will begin to identify an aspect of Rose’s research that has piqued your own curiosity, and you will follow that aspect to see what you can find on your own. You will submit a preliminary working bibliography showing where your research has led. And you will present two possible research questions to your classmates.

While everything that you need to know about doing research in all your college courses will not be covered this unit this semester, you will be introduced to many of the central principles of scholarship.

**Assignment** (think of it in three parts). Sequentially, you will:

1. Select an aspect related to *The Mind at Work* or to Rose’s work that you want to know more about
2. Formulate a research question that will lead you into a productive search, and
3. Write a two-page single-spaced synthesis and evaluation of the research you have done.

**Details**

Your **primary audience** is educated readers who care about social issues. Your **secondary audience** is Dr. Marty, who will evaluate your work.

Your **primary purpose** is to convince both audiences that you have explored one angle related to Rose’s thinking in some depth and detail and that you can bring together (synthesize) and evaluate multiple sources. Your **secondary (and deeper) purpose** is to “internalize” the ability to evaluate and synthesize external sources (which is a way of thinking) so that you apply these automatically to all texts that you read in college, for professional purposes, and those you read for pleasure.
Keep in mind:

- You are not being asked, yet, for your personal opinion about the book or the author. (Your personal response—which is more than simple opinion—will come in Assignment #3.)
- You are pulling through the knowledge you gained about rhetorical analysis from Unit 1.
- You are secondarily (and simultaneously) practicing the other learning outcomes for this course, too: processes; conventions; and technology.
- You will use examples from the text and outside sources to illustrate your points.
- Use Times font, size 12.
- Use block format (a single, blank line between paragraphs) & do not indent paragraphs.
- Your title is simply “Mind at Work Research Synthesis & Evaluation – Your Name – Date” centered on the top line.

Tentative timeline:

2/26  From “Eggs to Hippies” (finding research questions); brainstorm possible threads to follow for #2
3/3   Research question is due; discuss Burke & “Searching for Better Research Habits”
3/5   Ellis Library data base instruction in Ellis Library (to be confirmed)
3/10  Working bibliography due; student reports on research-in-progress
3/12  Discuss critical evaluation of sources; review sample papers from previous students
3/17  Research/writing day to work independently (no class; send Dr. M. an email memo about what you did)
3/19  Research/writing day to work independently (no class; send Dr. M. an email memo about what you did)
3/31  In-class peer review of Assign #2—BRING 2 COPIES
4/2   Instructor-led workshop on Assign #2 based on work-in-progress; one-on-one consultations
4/7   Final draft due for grading; Formal Paper #3 assigned

Peer review and grade will be based on:

- definition of a question about which Rose’s work has spurred your own curiosity
- your inclusion of at least six scholarly sources that lead to answering that question
- your ability to select appropriate sources & evaluate them
- your ability to synthesize those sources
- how well you address your audience (this includes college-level conventions for writing)
- whether you follow formatting instructions

Burke's "Unending Conversation" (Parlor) Metaphor

(Kenneth Burke, 1897 – 1993, was a major American literary theorist and philosopher. Burke's primary interests were in rhetoric and aesthetics)

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.

The Philosophy of Literary Form 110-111
http://english.ttu.edu/kairos/2.1/features/brent/burke.htm (9/29/08)