

Assignment #1: What is a scandal? (Given the First day of class)

Many of the things we remember most about politics center around times of scandal. Watergate, Iran-Contra, Clinton-Lewinsky, and the Abramoff Affair each made headlines and still do, sometimes decades later.

What I want to know is what you consider a scandal. What makes it a scandal and what sorts of things are not scandalous? How would you define scandal? What about your “case” makes it a scandal?

What I am looking for here are your thoughts, so please don’t look in our text or anywhere else. Please post your thoughts on Blackboard. Be thoughtful when you post, as ‘yeah, what he/she said’ posts will not be looked on kindly when it comes time for me to review. Also, be prepared to respond to commentary from me and/or other students.

Assignment #2: Select a Scandal

Now that we have read and discussed more about what constitutes a scandal, we move a little deeper into the analytical portion of the course. Before class, browse through the last 200-odd years of world history and select something that fits with Thompson’s definition of scandal and that is interesting to you. This selection will form the core of your writing assignment from here out, so I find myself reemphasizing that you should be interested in it. It does not have to be from American history. After all, the US is far from the only place in the world and, for much of its history, didn’t even have a claim to being all that important for the rest of the world. Explain what makes this a scandal.

Please post this assignment on Blackboard.

Note: Only one person will be allowed to research each specific scandal. This will usually be first-come-first-served, but I reserve the right to reject choices and/or assign specific scandals on the strength of the summary and the appropriateness of the selection for other assignments later in the semester.

Minimum 250 words.

Assignment #3: Reexamine Your Scandal

Discuss with your group in class Thompson’s definition of scandals. Discuss how each member’s scandal selection fits into that definition. Consider the following questions as you discuss each group member’s interpretation of Thompson and each member’s definition of *scandal*:

- What is Thompson’s understanding of this concept/activity?
- What ideas are important to his understanding of *scandal*?
- How does each member’s example of scandal contrast or correspond with Thompson’s definition of scandals?
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Write, from your individual perspective, an explanation of this discussion in your group. Does your selection fit Thompson’s definition? If it does not, you may either need to select another scandal (which might require rewriting assignment #2) or explain how this particular scandal challenges Thompson’s definition.

Minimum 500 words.

Assignment #4: Look at the Actions and Reactions

Examine Thompson's list of possible reactions and consequences. Place your scandal into these descriptions with your group. Write a description for the next class of what you and your group discussed about your specific scandal.

In addition to this discussion paper, develop a timeline of important events for your scandal.

Minimum 250 words for each paper.

Assignment #5: The Butterfly Effect

Read Ray Bradbury's short story "A Sound of Thunder." Do not, and I mean it, *do not*, watch the horrible Ashton Kutcher film by the same name.

http://www.lasalle.edu/~didio/courses/hon462/hon462_assets/sound_of_thunder.htm

After you read Bradbury's story, preferably as soon after as possible, watch one of the following:

The original *Star Trek* episode "City on the Edge of Forever," or
Back to the Future I or II.

***Yes, I know that most if not all of you have seen one or more of these video selections, but please watch them again after you read Bradbury. You *will* see them in a different light.

Write a paper explaining your perception of Bradbury's story and how it was shown in the video you watched. Consider the following questions as you reflect on your reading and viewing:

- How do previous actions affect later outcomes?
- How do the personalities of the individuals involved directly affect those actions?
- Could these same people have chosen differently?
- What might different people have done differently?
(Questions such as these could be incorporated into previous assignments, to open up possibilities for analysis.)

Please note that, while this doesn't seem as though it sits well with the rest of the course, this portion of the class' writing assignment is very important for the next writing assignment.

Minimum 500 words.

Assignment #6: The Scandalous Butterfly

Select a critical moment from the timeline for your scandal you developed in Assignment #3. Imagine that something happened differently at that very moment. Revisit your narrative from assignment #1. Use it for the basis of two new essays.

The first of the two essays should speculate on what would have happened in your scandal had that critical moment played out differently. Begin the essay by describing the change that you are working from. What would have happened to the main players had this happened the way you are changing it? What would the wider consequences have been?

I want this to be a reasonably logical change to the events, not something outlandish; don't have aliens coming down from the sky or sudden nuclear attacks (unless it is reasonable to believe that might have happened). An example of a logical change might be that, just before the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the report from the radar operators is believed rather than dismissed. This might have led to fighter-planes being in the air to meet the attackers and the ships being at alert status rather than surprised. It might also have led to the American public being not as committed to entering the war as the attack would not have been nearly so damaging. On the other hand, it could have led to the war being shorter, as the US Pacific Fleet would have recovered much faster. This example is not a scandal, but you should be able to see what I mean about the importance of changes at critical moments.

The second essay should be an analytical work supporting your speculations in the first essay. Draw from your reading of Thompson to support your predictions of how the scandal plays out. Research the main players; how would they have reacted to this new change?

Minimum 750 words for each paper.