**An Intentional Media Diet**

**#21 Final Response**

* From here on out, your only homework is to print and compile your last entries (15-20) and write a final 2-3 page (double-spaced) response for the semester.
* This final portfolio compilation (including the printed response) is due **when you walk in the door** for the final exam period. During the final exam period, 1) each of you will have 2-3 minutes to share what you have written in your response and what you’re thinking in general about the topics we’ve addressed, 2) we’ll have one last whole-class debrief, and 3) celebrate!
* This final response will be part of your “idea development” and “writing fluency” grade in the class. If you’re hoping to raise your grade, then working on aspects of these that you could improve upon from your TAPS essay is the way to go.

**Approaches**
Spend some time looking through your portfolio and thinking about the topics we’ve addressed. Choose ONE topic/idea and write a 2-3 page response that explores your thinking about this topic. Further research is not a requirement, but if you do research, include a list of all sources you referenced (in list form NOT formal bibliography format).

You can choose how you want to approach this piece. It doesn’t necessarily need to be a formal analytical essay, though you could choose to make it one. It *does* need to demonstrate *depth of thought* and your best *fluency in writing*. What does “depth of thought” mean if it’s not research-based or analytical? Well, return to the “Ways to Elaborate” list in the Course Materials folder and review possible ways of going beyond surface-level thinking. In general, “depth of thought” means you explore different facets of an idea, that you provide relevant and compelling examples, details, evidence, anecdotes, questions, etc. Beyond asking just “What?” ask “How?” and “Why?” and “Why does this matter?” I am your audience, whatever topic and style you choose, and remember that the best writing is like a conversation with the reader (albeit one-sided) and uses paragraphs as the building block for ideas.

It’s *always* a good idea to start with intentional brainstorming of some kind that you have identified as useful for you as a writer. Stream-of-consciousness exploration can be a kind of brainstorming, and it can be a great way to start out once you’ve chosen a path. If you use SOC, you will need to *sculpt* your final piece from what comes of that. Yes, this is writing in the service of thinking, but the final product is writing in the service of communication. Use this opportunity to practice both.

Choosing ONE topic may be challenging given the interconnected and complicated nature of the subjects we’ve touched on. That’s why I recommend starting with brainstorming and SOC to see where it takes you. You may find yourself exploring connected ideas: that’s okay. That might even be a way of approaching your topic with depth of thought. Just identify and avoid full tangents – 2-3 pages isn’t long enough for those, no matter how interesting. Yes, you will have to leave lots of interesting topics that you might care a lot about on the table for now. That’s fine. Those topics are still in your head and in your life and don’t stop here. This response is just a little class exercise during a little blip of time for the purposes of developing your thinking and writing skills. Enjoy it!

We will **not** have time for peer review or teacher review so please find a trusted reader who can provide suggestions to you (not *do* the writing *for* you). Think “reflective feedback” not “editor.”

NOTE! If you would like to shape your earlier work in this class into a PumaTalk, or a video talk that you publish on the web, then you could choose that in place of this final response. If you are choosing this option, let’s talk, because the actual delivery of the PumaTalk would happen after this semester is over.

**An example**

Still feeling a little unsure of how to start? I hesitate to give you a full-blown example... For the chapter teaching presentations, my example presentation resulted (for the most part) in 20 replications of what I did. (Much of that was a problem with the way I laid out the project guidelines, coupled with the general triage nature of your life as a student along with your deep desire (understandable) to meet expectations to earn the best grade possible.) For this response, I really want it to be *yours*. What do you have to say, and how do you want to say it?

Anyway, here’s a combo brainstorming list/SOC for my approach to this prompt if it helps you start on your way:

* I do think I believe (despite many complications) that paying attention to the news is, in fact, a moral imperative, but we didn’t have time to talk about sources of news, or the difference between local, national, and international news, or the problem of disturbing content and desensitization. I have been thinking about how we address this moral imperative with the constraints on our time, and how “following the news” often means the international news, which ultimately distances us from those sitting right next to us, and those in our neighborhood, and those in our local community.
* My six-year-old son has heard some awful things because we often just leave news radio playing in the background. I’ve been thinking a lot about the media-saturated environments we grow up in and live in…
* I personally believe (and I owe the articulation of this belief to Lewis Lapham in a talk he delivered), that of the many revolutions we need right now, a spiritual one is at the core. American separation of church and state (a good idea!) and our culture of consumerism (a less good idea!) has left many Americans without the foundations that religions have provided humanity in the past, namely, daily consideration about our place in the universe with a recognition of the miracle of it all – the miracle that those who put their faith in religion and those who put their faith in science alike can’t explain. What is this world? And who are we, anyway? And what’s this thing about birth and death, which are, essentially, our only two “knowns.” I’ve been thinking about how to address the general difficulty in defining “spirit” and in defining what constitutes a “healthy” spirit that our culture has propagated.
* I am both more hopeful, and exponentially more intrigued about where this is all headed. If someone were to ask me what my biggest fears and biggest hopes are around digital, networked technologies… One of my biggest fears is that those who understand these systems from a very broad perspective will, indeed, control broad swathes of the population (if they don’t already … and every time I hear a commercial for “here’s how you can binge-watch more easily! I am forced to acknowledge that human beings are already being molded by these media in ways I wouldn’t prefer, and that I have been molded just like everyone else in these ways I wouldn’t prefer). My biggest hope is that we discover the true power of networks. That seems to be what this is all about. There’s something in digital networking that we haven’t tapped into yet. Right now we’re using it to consume information, or shop, or…. We really could use these tools in a different way that I sense is immensely powerful … in a way that gives me hope.

From this brainstorming, I would choose one of these, develop it further, probably poke around to see what other people have thought, said, and written, and then write an organized piece about it.