

City University of New York (CUNY)

## CUNY Academic Works

---

Open Educational Resources

City College of New York

---

2023

### Satirical Essay Assignment prompt & calendar

Brenna E. Crowe  
*CUNY City College*

[How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!](#)

More information about this work at: [https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cc\\_oers/447](https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cc_oers/447)

Discover additional works at: <https://academicworks.cuny.edu>

---

This work is made publicly available by the City University of New York (CUNY).  
Contact: [AcademicWorks@cuny.edu](mailto:AcademicWorks@cuny.edu)

# The Satirical Essay

---

4+ pages

Standard Formatting (double spaced, 12pt.)

Heading/Title/Page Numbers

MLA or APA Citations

Draft Due Dates

First Full: Tues. 3/14

Final: Fri. 3/17

For satirists, the pen is quite literally mightier than the sword. **Satire** directly pokes, prods, agitates, and subverts power hierarchies or general clear or hidden absurdities. It functions in just about any artistic medium. The writer might make an audience laugh while also exposing or deflating the power of a particular force at play—if only for a moment. As a literary genre, satire is layered and elusive. Its cultural function is often underappreciated, because **humor** is highly contextual to specific audiences who will understand the **subtext**. It often fails to have the same effect across culture and time. Successful satire will effectively **criticize** and challenge powerful *people, cultural institutions, or illogical-collective-cultural habits or situations*. The writer can be *silly or serious, dead pan or energetic*. The writer might suggest some **sincere** or **sarcastic** solutions—or at least make the chaos a bit lighter with some playful levity.

For this project, you will be building upon your expected learnings. You will choose a specific **audience** to write for, and have specific **intentions** for their reactions and understanding. Your attention to **diction, syntax, and tone** will channel the **voice** and **style**. Your **thesis** might be implicit or explicit—but omnipresent in your piece. It should be clear the piece is satire. It is similar to the rhetorical analysis assignment in that you will **tell a story** and address the **context** of your subject and **unpack** the significance of *your observations* of what big or little things are at stake. You might also **synthesize** your chosen subject with other related concerns while being aware of your own **rhetorical situation**. You might want to mock another genre to structure the essay and you have the option to write smaller pieces so long as your collated final submission is 4+ pages. Use of multimedia (e.g. images, memes, art, videos, etc.) is encouraged.

How will you choose a topic? You are required to use at least **one source** as a basis. We will brainstorm topics you're passionate about, but you can also peruse the internet for inspiration. I recommend only using credible & reputable news sites for base sources, but social media might work for subsidiary points depending on your topic and your intention. You will get to exercise some creativity with the absurdity you address or manifest! You can use the tools of parody, paradox, exaggeration, juxtaposition, metaphor, analogy, double entendre, free associations, clang associations, non-sequiturs, etc.

**You're welcome to draw on your "native," "home," or "other" languages, literacies, and ways of being as you so choose.**

## **Assignment Criteria**

**1. Effective rhetorical choices for a satirical essay and anticipate the assumptions of and appropriately reach the intended audience**

How effectively does the satirical essay tailor its perspective, examples, and language to meet the expectations of the intended audience?

**2. Guide readers to understand the critique/progression of the story.** How effectively is the essay narrowed, organized, and transitioned? How effective and specific is the thesis (whether explicit or implicit)? Does the author make the satirical elements clear?

**3. Demonstrate Exigence.** How effectively does the essay answer the *So what? Who cares?* questions to demonstrate the exigence and to make connections to larger implications?

**4. General Requirements.** Were all requirements for length and due date met?

## Phase 2 Calendar:

### The Satirical Essay

During Phase 2, you will craft a 4+pages of satirical essay(s) that satirizes the frivolity o quotidian interactions or a powerful institution of your choosing. You will develop a specific voice, style, and tone. You will continue to develop the storytelling strategies you practiced in phase 1. Key: \* discussion post/reading response ■ writing for workshop

Wk	Day	HW Due Before Class	In-Class Discussion
5	Tues. 2/21	*** <b>No Class</b> , classes follow a Monday Schedule***  <u>Watch</u> : “The Shapes of Stories” lecture by Kurt Vonnegut	
	Thurs. 2/23	* <u>Read</u> and respond to: “Four Institutional Monologues” by George Saunders <u>Read</u> : “The Statue of Liberty was Built to Welcome Immigrants—That Welcome Must not End” by Dave Eggers	Phase 1 Reflection Intro. to Satirical Essay Brainstorm
6	Tues. 3/1	■ <b>Write</b> a 1-page brainstorming for your essay—provide details about a social issue, injustice, or observation that you find to be important and explain why & what is at stake. Who has the power? (use this explore what you want to write about if you’re unsure) <u>Read</u> : “Adorable, Taxable You” by S.J. Perelman, p. 234	Sketching Arcs Strategies for humor Horatian vs. Juvenalian satire
	Thurs. 3/2	* <u>Read &amp; write a response to</u> : “A Better Place” by David Sedaris <u>Read</u> : Brief History of Attacks on Satirists by Roger Kreuz <b>Sketch</b> an Arc for the story you’ll tell about the subject you are satirizing & <b>post</b> to BB	Sketching Arcs Craft Discussion Prompt Sharing Arcs
7	Tues. 3/7	■ <b>Write</b> a messy draft of your satirical essay <u>Read</u> : “How to Write About Africa” by Binyavanga Wainaina	Workshop Conducting interviews
	Thurs. 3/9	<u>Read</u> : “If Fathers Could Breastfeed” by Namrata Poddar <b>Revise</b> your evolving draft based on free-writes/peer comments	Workshop drafts More on interviews
8	Tues. 3/14	■ <b>Write</b> a <u>full</u> draft of your Satirical essay. Please also <b>upload</b> it to the BB Discussion Forum. <u>Read</u> : “National Jail Contractors” by Ryan M. Moser	Workshop of drafts Peer-review letters
	Thurs. 3/16	<b>Revise</b> your essay based on peer comments and prepare to read your work outloud. <u>Read</u> : “PEN vs. Sword” by Ayad Akhtar, Andrey Kurkov, Patrice Nganang, Salman Rushdie, Yiyun Li	Open Mic/Group Workshop
	Fri. 3/17	<b>Revise &amp; polish</b> the final draft of your satirical essay and <b>Submit on BB</b> .	<b>No class, of course</b>

