

The commentary

Assignment: At this point, you have either watched Before Stonewall or After Stonewall. We watched those films as a way to generate ideas about potential commentary topics. A commentary explains or interprets societal patterns and trends in an attempt to better understand a cultural phenomenon. In a commentary, the writer takes a position and presents an interpretation that readers will find convincing.

Your commentary should include:

- A summary of the subject content (e.g. You should provide for your readers a description of the pattern or trend. What are indicators of this pattern or trend? How do you see these patterns or trends playing out? How do you contextualize (historical, socially, economically, etc.) these patterns and trends? What else is going on beyond these patterns and trends?)
- An indication of your stand or approach
- A highlight of the main purpose of your argument presented and/or conclusions reached

So, how do you decide what you want to write a commentary about? Since the films serve as our launching points, I'll use an example from After Stonewall. While the whole film moved me, I was especially angered at how the health care system ignored the AIDS crisis when it first hit in the late 80s and early 90s. Remember the news clippings that were featured in the film? At first, AIDS was identified as a "cancer that attacked gay men" exclusively. Consequently, federal funding and research was not directed toward finding a cure, developing medicines that could treat AIDS patients, and educating the public. Because there was a direct association with contracting HIV and one's sexual orientation, AIDS became the new plague. For some folks, AIDS was divine intervention—a way to get rid of all the undesirables. For others, particularly members of the gay and lesbian community, the AIDS crisis became a rallying point, a singular cause that brought people together. So, for my commentary, my subject content would be discriminatory practices in US health care. I would point to patterns and trends such as personal testimonies from the film, statistics regarding the number of folks lost during the early days of the crisis, and evidence to demonstrate how discrimination in health care still exists. All of these components would come together in a commentary that is informed, critical, and well-written. If I have done my job well, my stance will be obvious. Hopefully, my passion for the topic and my investment in the writing process can provide my readers with some possible resolutions—ways that we can make sure that everyone has access to adequate health care that is sensitive to their specific needs.

HAudience: Imagine that you are going to submit your commentary to a newspaper and write for that reading audience.

KGuidelines:

- 500 words, double-spaced
- Times New Roman, 12-point font size – no smaller, no larger
- Reflective memo – Your assignment will be considered incomplete without a reflective memo.
- Copies of your draft for the peer-response workshop – Failure to provide extra copies will result in a failing participation grade for that day. Three copies are required: one for me; one for your partner; and one for you.

XTimeline:

- Friday, October 21 – thesis workshop
- Monday, October 24 – peer-response workshop
- Friday, October 28 – polished draft due