

WS 2013, Spring 2021

More Than a Single Story Journal

One of the guiding frameworks for our class this semester is the “single story.” To start the process of deepening and complicating our views of the world, I’m asking you to reflect on the conditions, contexts, and effects that are related to single stories in our culture. The purpose is to give us tools to start noticing, analyzing, and working to change single stories that we might encounter in the world.

We can do this through several steps:

1. [Entry 1](#): reflect on the single stories: what is their power? How do they work? Whose “single stories tend to have more power in a given context?
2. [Entry 2](#): analyze single stories within context: challenge yourself to gain a better understanding of the larger systems and structures that both support the production/reproduction of these single stories and make it hard to change them
3. [Entry 3](#): Analyze the single story: understand how the intersection of multiple systems of power and privilege shapes the meaning and effect of a single story.
4. [Entry 4](#): transform the single story: what changes in individual/interpersonal and social/political spheres can prevent this single story from occurring?

Journal entries address several SLOs for our class because they give you the opportunity to

1. explore a single story in a way that supports learning about privilege and inequality;
2. accurately use concepts that are central to the field of multicultural women’s studies; and
3. apply these concepts to analyze social institutions.

Overall Instructions: These apply to ALL entries

- During a week when you have a journal entry due, you do **NOT** need to respond to the prompt; your “discussion” role for that week is to share your journal entry.
- During a week when you post a journal entry, you **DO** need to comment on 2 peers’ posts. If there are two discussion threads, at least one comment must be in the **non-journal** thread.
- Each entry should be 200-250 words, so they’re a little longer than other discussion posts.
- Each entry needs to discuss specific passages from or parts of **two required texts**.
 - o One text must be from the week you’re submitting the journal entry
 - o The second text can be from any week
- When you refer to texts from our class, use MLA citation style for [in-text citations](#).
- You’re welcome to cite sources not in our syllabus! If you do so, then you need to provide a [full citation](#) in MLA style (use the left menu bar to find examples of different types of citations).
- All entries must be posted by 11:59 p.m. on their due date.

Submit your journal entry

1. Select the discussion thread in the module **for the week when you're submitting your entry**.
2. Locate the first post in the thread and select the "reply" button.
3. In the text box, type "journal entry" at the top.
4. In the text box, paste or type your entry
5. Select "post reply."

Entry 1: Reflecting on Single Stories

Due date varies based on your spice group (find spice group information through the Course Quick Guide in the Week 0 Module)

Entry Instructions

Pick a quote from one required text that is related to a single story or stereotype about an identity category (such as gender, race, or class) and that is assigned during the week when your first entry is due. The quote should be about 25-75 words. It can be a little longer or shorter; you just need to make sure you can fulfill the journal entry instructions using this quote.

At the top of your entry, type or paste the quote. If it's from a reading with page numbers, include the page number; if it's from a video, include the time stamp (when it occurs in the video).

In your own words, **explain what the quote means**. It's okay if you're not quite sure you completely understand what the author is trying to tell us. Do your best to explain the meaning based on the rest of that text, and you can also use our class discussions or other course materials to help you understand.

In at least 200 words, describe how **this quote** along with an idea from **at least one other required text** show or give us a deeper understanding about the impact of single stories. There are many different ways to do this! Some possibilities are:

- focus on a specific example of a single story— something you've experienced or something that's been covered in the media.
- explore the impact on how we perceive others and/or ourselves.
- explore how single stories affect the opportunities/obstacles for people or communities
- explore how single stories affect the way "we" (as a culture or a community) think about identity categories.

In other words, the purpose of the first journal entry is to **explore how single stories about identity categories can shape how we perceive those identities**. For instance, you could discuss an example from a course reading that discusses how certain characteristics become the ones that are seen as "inherent" to that identity. Then you'll explore what the impact of this is: if a certain characteristic or trait or behavior is seen as connected to this identity, what is the impact? And so far this semester we've read about gender in Frye's essay, and the week 3

readings focus on race, so it makes sense to focus on one of those identities in your entry.

Entry 2: Analyzing Single Stories, Or, *What Structures Our Single Stories?*

Due Wednesday, March 3

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie tells us, “Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person” (10:04). Moreover, these “definitive stories” often misrepresent and oversimplify someone’s identity and/or life experiences. This occurs partly because a single story is larger than any individual: single stories are shaped by

1. **structures of thought**— such as a stereotype, a belief system, or an “ism”(sexism, racism homophobia) and
2. **material structures**— such as economic, educational, government, and legal systems.

Entry Instructions

In at least 200 words, for this entry, you’ll explore a structure of thought and/or a material structure in relation to single stories. How do broader social structures (**material structures** or **structures of thought**) oversimplify our understandings of identity. This relates to the concept of “single stories” because single-story ideas **create** and **are an effect of** the simplified ideas about identity?

You can focus on a specific identity category (such as race, gender, sexuality, religion) or focus on the way that “identity” is structured in US society more broadly. Some questions that you could address are

- What “isms” and structures shape a specific single story about an identity category?
- How do the “isms” and structures create social/cultural norms and perceptions that shape single stories?
- How do “isms” and structures make single stories difficult to change?

Remember to integrate specific parts of at least **two required texts** to help explain your ideas about the relationship between these structures and single stories, and **one of those texts must be from week 8** (Lorde’s essay or Alsultany’s essay).

Entry 3: Complicating Identity and Social/Political Issues

Due date varies based on your spice group (find spice group information through the Course Quick Guide in the Week 0 Module)

The systems and structures that shape cultural norms and our perceptions—and, therefore, that create/shape single stories—do not operate in a vacuum. As our course texts and discussions have shown, structures interact with each other. They are intertwined, so they shape our bodies

and experiences simultaneously. Kimberlé Crenshaw explains this deftly and eloquently in her TED Talk through the concept of **intersectionality**.

Therefore, you must use at least one specific idea from Kimberlé Crenshaw's TED Talk, bell hooks's essay, or Audre Lorde's essay in *Women in Culture*. The second text you cite must be from the week you're submitting your journal entry.

Part of analyzing and complicating single stories involves understanding how our world is **more complex** than the "truth" a single story creates. For example, in our class we discuss

- how different identity categories, "isms," and/or systems of power and privilege are operating at the same time to affect how people perceive us and we perceive ourselves, and
- how social identity categories are heterogeneous: there is "difference within" this category (e.g., not all "women" are the same or experience gender in the same way).

Entry Instructions

To start doing this work, entry #3 will explore how multiple systems, structures, and/or social identity categories operate **simultaneously** to shape identity categories and/or political or social issues. **In at least 200 words**, you'll write about how an intersectional approach gives us a more complex— and hopefully more accurate— understanding of the world we live in.

- You could explore how the intersection of multiple structures affects stereotypes, privileges / disempowers people, or privileges / disempowers communities.
- You could discuss how an intersectional framework allows us to understand the formation or impact of inequities related to a particular issue or topic (e.g., economic issues, health issues, educational opportunities, how we remember and record history, etc.)
- You can discuss how you would "apply" an intersectional approach to a specific topic/issue to avoid oppression, injustice, and/or single-story ideas about identity, people, communities, and/or places. In your entry, some examples of what you could focus on are
 - form of injustice (e.g., wage inequality)
 - a topic/concern related to your undergraduate major/minor
 - a strategy used by activists (e.g., changing a law or developing a community garden for a neighborhood)

4. (Re)Telling a Single, Simple Story Creatively

Due Wednesday, April 21

After exploring the stories behind single stories let's move on to transforming them— and the world that creates them! Adichie explains, "Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity" (17:20).

Entry Instructions

In the spirit of moving toward social justice in our world, our communities, and our daily activities, I'm inviting you to creatively "re-create" our world and offer a vision of justice and equity. The **WEEK 15** readings offer some examples of creative re-visions that

- challenge social, political, economic, and cultural aspect(s) of identity and
- disrupt single-story ideas, consider intersections of systems and structures.

These transformative visions challenge simple understandings of our identities and can thus be a tool to critique injustice and demand justice.

Instructions

Make something creative! Your creation should take one of the "forms" used by authors of our required texts. These forms are creative prose (Cisneros), a dictionary entry (Walker), a poem (Anzaldúa), a speech (Truth), a poster (Guerrilla Girls), and a manifesto (Freespirit and Aldebaran). You can focus on **an identity** or a **form of injustice** in your creation and transform it in a way that you choose. You don't need to explore the same topics or ideas in this week's texts. Your creative text should be at least 100 words **unless** you create a poster; the poster doesn't have a specific word requirement.

Write a minimum **150-word statement** explaining why you chose a particular form and how you hope your creation will transform a single story about identity. As with other entries, you must **cite specific parts of at least two required texts**: one from week 15 and one from any week. (And, of course, you're welcome to refer to additional texts!)

Assessment

Your journal entries are worth 20% of your course grade. The [journal entry rubric](#) explains the criteria the GA and I will use to assess what you submit.

Your Journal grade is **separate** from your Participation grade, so during the weeks when you contribute a journal entry, if you submit the entry you automatically receive 7 points for that week's participation grade. Your comments will be graded according to the participation rubric.