

SYNDICATED COLUMNIST ASSIGNMENT

This portion of the summer reading assignment provides students with a measure of choice, and is intended to allow them to spread the work over the course of a few weeks, although this assignment may also be completed in less time by using archived material. Students are to select two columnists from the list below and read a minimum of five columns by the same columnist, writing a rhetorical précis (pronounced “pray-see”) for each column using the guide provided. A brief biography of each columnist is provided (most are quoted or paraphrased from the corresponding newspaper site); students may wish to read one sample column from several writers listed below before settling on the two columnists who will be central to completing this assignment. A diverse selection of columnists has been provided; additional suggestions are welcomed.

List of Syndicated Columnists

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Charles Blow <i>New York Times</i> Saturday | Visual Op-Ed columnist who won first two best in show awards from the Malofiej International Infographics Summit for work that included coverage of the Iraq war. | John Gould <i>Christian Science Monitor</i> deceased; check archives | An American humorist, essayist, and columnist who wrote a column for the <i>Christian Science Monitor</i> for over sixty years from a farm in Lisbon Falls, Maine. He is known for his role as a mentor to novelist Stephen King. Prior to joining <i>The New York Times</i> , Mr. Herbert was a national correspondent for NBC from 1991 to 1993, reporting regularly on “ <i>The Today Show</i> ” and “ <i>NBC Nightly News</i> .” He had worked as a reporter and editor at <i>The Daily News</i> from 1976 until 1985, when he became a columnist and member of its editorial board. |
| David Brooks <i>New York Times</i> Tuesday & Friday | He has been a senior editor at <i>The Weekly Standard</i> , a contributing editor at <i>Newsweek</i> and the <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> , and he is currently a commentator on “ <i>The Newshour with Jim Lehrer</i> .” He is also a frequent analyst on NPR’s “ <i>All Things Considered</i> ” and the “ <i>Diane Rehm Show</i> .” His articles have appeared in <i>The New Yorker</i> , <i>The New York Times Magazine</i> , <i>Forbes</i> , the <i>Washington Post</i> , the <i>TLS</i> , <i>Commentary</i> , <i>The Public Interest</i> and many other magazines. | Bob Herbert <i>New York Times</i> Tuesday & Saturday | |
| Art Buchwald <i>Washington Post</i> deceased; check archives | A humorist and satirist, Buchwald poked fun at much of what was going on around him in his illustrious career that spanned more than five decades. | Arianna Huffington <i>The Huffington Post</i> | Co-founder and editor-in-chief of <i>The Huffington Post</i> , a nationally syndicated columnist, and author of twelve books. She is also co-host of “ <i>Left, Right & Center</i> ,” public radio’s popular political roundtable program. In 2006, she was named to the <i>Time 100</i> , <i>Time Magazine</i> ’s list of the world’s 100 most influential people. |
| Gail Collins <i>New York Times</i> Thursday & Saturday | Gail Collins joined the <i>New York Times</i> in 1995 as a member of the editorial board and later as an op-ed columnist. In 2001 she became the first woman ever appointed editor of the <i>Times</i> editorial page. She published the book “ <i>America’s Women: 400 Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines</i> .” | S. Amjad Hussain <i>Toledo Blade</i> | S. Amjad Hussain is a columnist on the op-ed pages of the daily <i>Toledo Blade</i> and a professor of surgery at the <i>Medical College of Ohio</i> . He is a clinical professor of surgery at the <i>Medical College of Ohio</i> and the president of the <i>Islamic Center of Greater Toledo</i> . |
| Maureen Dowd <i>New York Times</i> Wednesday & Sunday | Winner of the 1999 Pulitzer Prize for distinguished commentary, Dowd... has covered four presidential campaigns and served as White House correspondent. | Molly Ivins <i>Fort Worth Star Telegram</i> deceased; check archives | Ivins concentrated on politics and social justice issues. She was a columnist for numerous newspapers including the <i>New York Times</i> , but most recently for the <i>Fort Worth Star Telegram</i> . |
| Thomas Friedman <i>New York Times</i> Wednesday & Sunday | Mr. Friedman was awarded the 1983 Pulitzer Prize for international reporting (from Lebanon) and the 1988 Pulitzer Prize for international reporting (from Israel). | Garrison Keillor <i>Baltimore Sun</i> Wednesday | “...this generation’s Mark Twain, a magical storyteller whose compelling use of language distinguishes his column from all others.” Syndicated in numerous national publications, not just <i>The Baltimore Sun</i> . |

| | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p>Ellen Goodman <i>Boston Globe</i> retired; check archives</p> | <p>Pulitzer Prize winning columnist, author, speaker [who] has long been a chronicler of social change in America, especially the women's movement and its effects on our public and private lives.</p> | <p>Charles Krauthammer <i>Washington Post</i> Friday</p> | <p>Krauthammer writes on foreign and domestic policy and politics. Winner of the 1987 Pulitzer Prize for distinguished commentary, the 1984 National Magazine Award for essays and the 2004 Bradley Prize.</p> |
| <p>Verlyn Kinkenberg <i>New York Times</i> not scheduled</p> | <p>His work has appeared in many magazines, including <i>The New Yorker</i>, <i>Harper's</i>, <i>Esquire</i>, <i>National Geographic</i>, <i>The New Republic</i>, <i>Smithsonian</i>, <i>Audubon</i>, <i>GQ</i>, <i>Gourmet</i>, <i>Martha Stewart Living</i>, <i>Sports Afield</i>, and <i>The New York Times Magazine</i>.</p> | <p>Kathleen Parker <i>Washington Post</i> Thursday & Sunday</p> | <p>Kathleen Parker never took a journalism class in college, but...has worked at a variety of large and small newspapers, covering anything from California cuisine to bass fishing contests in the rural South. Now, she serves on the USA Today's Board of Contributors and her twice-weekly column is published in 350 different newspapers.</p> |
| <p>Nicholas Kristof <i>New York Times</i> Sunday & Thursday</p> | <p>A two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, Kristof has lived on four continents, reported on six, and traveled to more than 140 countries, plus all 50 states, every Chinese province and every Japanese island. Mr. Kristof has taken a special interest in Web journalism and was the first blogger on <i>The New York Times</i> Web site; he also twitters and has a Facebook fan page and a channel on YouTube. A documentary about him, "Reporter," premiered at Sundance Film Festival in 2009 and will be shown on HBO.</p> | <p>Leonard Pitts, Jr. <i>Miami Herald</i> Sunday</p> | <p>Pitts writes about pop culture, social issues and family life. Pitts is a five-time recipient of the National Headliners Award and was awarded the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for commentary among many other accolades.</p> |
| <p>Paul Krugman <i>New York Times</i> Monday & Friday</p> | <p>Winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics, Krugman is professor of Economics and International Affairs at Princeton University. He has taught at Yale, MIT and Stanford.</p> | <p>Frank Rich <i>New York Times</i> Sunday</p> | <p>Before joining <i>The New York Times</i>, Mr. Rich was a film and television critic at <i>Time Magazine</i>. Earlier, he had been film critic for <i>The New York Post</i> and film critic and senior editor of <i>New Times Magazine</i>. His latest book, <i>The Greatest Story Ever Sold: The Decline and Fall of Truth From 9/11 to Katrina</i>, was published by Penguin Press in 2006.</p> |
| <p>Michelle Malkin <i>San Diego Source</i> Wednesday</p> | <p>Michelle Malkin has appeared on "The O'Reilly Factor," "Hannity and Colmes," "The McLaughlin Group" and "20/20," and is currently a Fox News commentator. Today, Michelle Malkin's syndicated column appears in Over 100 papers nationwide.</p> | <p>Anna Quindlen <i>Newsweek</i> weekly</p> | <p>Writes "The Last Word" column in <i>Newsweek</i>; was a columnist at the <i>New York Times</i> from 1981-1994. Author of numerous fiction and non-fiction books.</p> |
| <p>Peggy Noonan <i>Wall Street Journal</i> weekend editions</p> | <p>Her essays have appeared in <i>Forbes</i>, <i>Time</i>, <i>Newsweek</i>, the <i>Washington Post</i>, the <i>New York Times</i> and other publications. Noonan was a producer at CBS News in New York, where she wrote and produced Dan Rather's daily radio commentary. She also wrote television news specials for CBS News.</p> | <p>Brent Staples <i>New York Times</i> not scheduled</p> | <p>Editorial writer for <i>The New York Times</i>. He holds a PhD in psychology from <i>The University of Chicago</i>. His memoir, "Parallel Time: Growing up in Black and White," was the winner of the Anisfield Wolff.</p> |
| <p>William Safire <i>New York Times</i> deceased; check archives</p> | <p>As editorial and public affairs director at WEEI-AM, the CBS owned station in Boston, she won the Tom Phillips Award for broadcast commentary. In 1978 and 1979 she was an adjunct professor of journalism at New York University.</p> | <p>George Will <i>Newsweek</i></p> | <p>A speechwriter for President Richard M. Nixon and Pulitzer Prize-winning political columnist for <i>The New York Times</i> from 1979 until his death. He wrote "On Language," a <i>New York Times Magazine</i> column that explored written and oral trends, plumbed the origins and meanings of words and phrases, and drew a devoted following. Until becoming a columnist for <i>Newsweek</i>, Will was Washington editor of the <i>National Review</i>, a leading conservative journal of ideas and political commentary. Five collections of his <i>Newsweek</i> and newspaper columns have been published: "The Pursuit of Happiness and Other Sobering Thoughts"; "The Pursuit of Virtue and Other Tory Notions"; "The Morning After: American Successes and Excesses 1981-1986"; "Suddenly: The American Idea Abroad and at Home 1986-1990."</p> |

Also consider choosing a columnist from the Comprehensive list at this site, *Arts and Letters Daily*, a service of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*: <http://www.aldaily.com/#columnists>

The Rhetorical Précis

In 1988, Margaret Woodworth reported on a reading/writing method that demonstrated significant success with her students at various levels, particularly in their reading comprehension and preparation for using source materials in their own academic writing. That method, which Woodworth calls “the rhetorical précis,” will be used to complete this Syndicated Columnist Assignment.

In a four sentence format, the rhetorical précis offers a short account of an article, essay, or resource that does more than summarize its content.

Sentence 1:

Name of writer, [optional: a phrase describing the author], the genre and title of the work, date in parentheses, a rhetorically accurate verb (such as “asserts,” “argues,” “suggests,” “implies,” “claims,” etc.) and a THAT clause containing the major assertion (thesis statement) of the article or essay.

Sentence 2:

An explanation of how the writer develops and/or supports the thesis, usually in chronological order.

Sentence 3:

A statement of the writer’s apparent purpose, followed by an “in order” phrase indicating the change the writer wants to effect in the audience.

Sentence 4:

A description of the intended audience and the relationship the writer establishes with the audience.

Sample:

Sheridan Baker, in his essay “Attitudes” (1966), asserts that writers’ attitudes toward their subjects, their audiences, and themselves determine to a large extent the quality of their prose. Baker supports this assertion by showing examples of how inappropriate attitudes can make writing unclear, pompous, or boring, concluding that a good writer “will be respectful toward his audience, considerate toward his readers, and somehow amiable toward human failings” (58). His purpose is to make his readers aware of the dangers of negative attitudes in order to help them become better writers. He establishes an informal relationship with his audience of college students who are interested in learning to write “with conviction” (55).

Notice that Woodworth’s example follows her pattern exactly. The first sentence identifies the author (Baker), the genre (essay), the title and date, and uses an active verb (asserts) and the relative pronoun *that* to explain what exactly Baker asserts. The second sentence explains the first sentence by offering chronological examples from Baker’s essay, while the third sentence suggests the author’s purpose and WHY (in order to) he has set out that purpose (or seems to have set out that purpose—not all essays are explicit about this information and readers have to put the pieces together). The final sentence identifies the primary audience of the essay (college students) and suggests how this audience is brought into/connected to the essay’s purpose.

The rhetorical précis is useful for students to master as they are often asked to read a great deal of information in college and are expected to retain what articles, essays, book chapters, and books are about. This method makes for an excellent annotation of such texts and helps in memory retention.

To recap, for this portion of the summer assignment, students will:

- (1) Select two syndicated columnists from the list provided;
- (2) Read five columns from each of the two columnists;
- (3) Compose a four sentence rhetorical précis for each column using the above provided instructions, resulting in ten total rhetorical précis.

****REMINDER: This portion of the assignment must be typed in 12 point Times New Roman font.****