

Take-Home Component of the Final Exam

According to Benjamin Schwarz, Christian Lander's blog, "Stuff White People Like," offers "tightly focused, stylishly written, precisely observed entries [that] eschew the genre's characteristic / (though Lander in fact writes nearly all of them) and adopt a cool, never snarky though sometimes biting, pseudo-anthropological tone." His blog has received so much attention, critical and popular, that 150 of his blog entries are being published. Interestingly, these entries will not be edited: they will be published as they exist on his blog.

For this portion of the final exam, imagine that you have been consulted as an editor by Lander, who is reconsidering whether the entries should be published in their current form. Use blog entry #44—"Public Radio"—to build your case. First, correct any errors and offer any author's notes you feel are appropriate. Then, write Lander a letter in which you suggest keeping the entries as they are or editing them for style and errors. Consider issues such as genre, audience, purpose, and tone. (60 points)

① Summer: Who was that? It sounded like a girl.

Seth: Did it? Yeah. Well, sure. Because I'm listening to the radio. And This American Life is on. And so there's a girl talking.

Summer: Is that that show where those hipster know-it-alls talk about how fascinating ordinary people are? God.

Leave it to a show about stereotypical white people to actually explain how real white people act. The ^{previous excerpt ②} quote above is from the television show "The O.C." and the character of Summer is making reference to the Public Radio show "This American Life". White people have an uncanny ability to make the ordinary exciting and ^{there's} there is no better forum than public radio to best showcase this.

White people ^{listening to} love stations like NPR (which is equivalent to listening to cardboard), and they love shows like This American Life and Democracy Now. ^{All} This confuses immigrants from the third world. ^③ They see the need for radio as a source for sports, ^{music} top 40 radio, and traffic reports, but they don't quite understand why people who can afford TVs and have

access to Youtube, would spend hours listening to the opinions of overeducated arts majors.

To explain this love for Public Radio, one only needs to summarize several previous posts on this website. Let's use my friend Craig as an example. Craig has a high paying ^④ nine-to-five job so he feels guilty about all the problems in the world. To make himself feel better, he likes being socially aware of things. ^④ Post #18: However, he spends most of his time indulging in the arts and going out for dinner, so he has little time to devote to this. He finds solace in The Daily Show. ^③ Post #35, however, he decided that life would be better if he did not have a TV. ^④ Post #28: Craig found an adequate replacement in Public Radio.

Craig loves Public Radio because it gives him an opportunity to download podcasts onto his ipod. ^④ Post #40: More important, ^③ was the fact that the download was free, because Public Radio is a non-profit enterprise. ^④ Post #12: After Craig listens to people like Amy Goodman and David Sedaris, ^③ Post #25, he feels like he is an expert ^④ Post #20 on the issues that they talk about, like polygamy in third world or how awesome it is to watch an old lady pick apples. He brings up these topics to his bosses when they're having dinner or playing golf, and the next thing you know, he's landed that promotion. ^④ All white people's opinions are developed from Public Radio. So if you want to sound smart in front of White People, just bring up a topic that was discussed on Public Radio. ^④

Take-Home Final notes

Mar 20, 2023 · Yiu-On Li ·  WRIT 151A

Hi Mr. Schwarz,

Your writing is incredibly funny and insightful. I delight in reading your observations of the idiosyncrasies of white people, and I look forward to seeing your blog posts published as a book.

I have reviewed your Post #44, “Public Radio,” and have made various marks and suggestions regarding punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and other such matters. In doing so, I have relied on *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th ed. (chicagomanualofstyle.org) and *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (merriam-webster.com), which are common authorities when it comes to humanities-related publications.

Based on my review of this particular post, I would highly recommend that you consider editing, in similar fashion, the rest of the posts you intend to publish. The potential issue is not one of comprehension: your ideas and the logical relations between them are already strong. Rather, my concern relates to the smaller details: comma splices, run-on sentences, capitalization, and similar items.

While readers may be willing to overlook (or may not even notice) these issues when reading a blog post on the internet, where they are accustomed to informal, no-cost writing, the situation changes when readers must make a conscious decision to spend money on a physical book, which will occupy physical space on their desk or in their bag. In the latter case, the details matter.

Think about buying a book as you would buying a laptop online. The computer arrives on your doorstep and you bring the package inside your house, but then you notice that one of the corners of the box is dented, the graphics are fading, and some dirt is smudged on the side. The computer may still work fine, but your first impressions of the product have been blemished, and these impressions may color your experience with your new computer for some time, if not permanently.

The same is true of a book or any piece of writing: The words, sentences, and paragraphs are the boxes for your ideas. If these boxes are not shaped and colored as readers expect them to be, then they may be less—or not at all—willing to

engage with the ideas inside. This is perhaps unfair, but it is human nature to judge by the eye first and the mind second. And for book readers—who may be less technologically savvy than blog readers—the mind will not get as much of a chance to overrule the eye, because it is more of a barrier to access a book than a blog.

I hope you will consider what I have written here and consider engaging copyediting services for the rest of your posts. Should you wish, I am happy to review the rest of your writing, but if you ultimately go with someone else, that is fine too.

Your posts have incredible potential as a book, and I look forward to seeing where you go with them.

Best,
Yiu-On

General comments

- In some places, I have shortened word pairs into contractions to match the informal tone that you have used in your piece.

Specific comments

1. Consider formatting this exchange as a block quote by indenting the whole section, and then by indenting each line that contains the speaker name. See *Chicago* 13.9 and 13.48.
2. Here, I have suggested “previous” instead of “above” in consideration of the medium: On a printed page, there is no guarantee that something will be located above a certain piece of text. Instead, it may be located on a previous page. Additionally, I have suggested “excerpt” instead of “quote,” because the exchange at the beginning may be considered to constitute several quotes.
3. Consider using a more modern term like “developing nations” instead of “Third World.”
4. In the final draft of your book and in all instances in your piece, consider referencing chapters or page numbers instead of post numbers.