This essay is required for all students in English 101 at Xavier University. You will submit this paper to your instructor for a grade; after final grades have been submitted, the writing program director will remove names from the papers, and a committee of instructors will read your essay to understand how well students in English 101 are meeting the course goals and outcomes.

You will work on this assignment in English 101 over several class periods, discussing the required readings, locating additional sources, and peer reviewing your drafts. Please read this assignment sheet carefully to make sure that you understand all of the requirements.

**Assignment Outcomes**

Students who complete English 101 and this assignment will demonstrate the ability to:

- Respond appropriately to different rhetorical situations, varying your approach, format, and structure in recognition of the shifting needs of audience, purpose, and context
- Use Standard Edited English conventions in ways that are suitable for your rhetorical purpose
- Integrate your own ideas with the ideas of others, citing the latter ethically and clearly
- Observe the rules of academic honesty and intellectual property
- Use rhetorically appropriate source information to corroborate, expand, and alter personal knowledge
- Engage responsibly with topics that have cultural meaning
- Acknowledge and show respect for different views/opinions in your writing

**Assignment Context**

Election seasons bring renewed debate about the role of citizenship and voting amongst the populace. Young people may be voting in national elections for the first time and comprise a significant portion of eligible voters, and yet are a contested demographic in both campaign tactics and commentaries about election practices. According to a 2012 study conducted by the US Census Bureau,

1 “in every election since 1964, young voters between the ages of 18 through 24 have consistently voted at lower rates than all other age groups...[and]...overall, America’s youngest voters have moved toward less engagement over time” (2).

Why are younger voters less engaged? Are they less engaged, or is that an erroneous assumption? Is voting the only valid measure of participation in the body politic? Or do young people show their engagement in other ways?

With an election year approaching, this assignment asks you to think about the role of citizenship, voting, and engagement with the political process—what it is now and/or what you think it should be—as we move toward a national election. Many initiatives have been enacted in recent years to persuade young people to vote, and yet many still decry the millennial generation as politically uninformed or apathetic. In this essay, you will weigh in on this public debate with your own thoughts, experiences, and research about the role of younger voters in voting, citizenship, and political engagement.

**Writing Prompt**

The themes and questions below are intended to help you think about the issue, and you should respond to one of them—or a related theme that you identify—with your own argument. In your essay, you must make a claim and support it with evidence (from the required readings, from your own research, and even from your own experience). Your audience for this essay is an educated, public audience—the same audience that the authors address in their writing.

- **Citizenship and Engagement**: Dalton argues that participation in political processes can be divided into categories of duty-based activities (e.g., voting, party affiliation) and engaged citizenship (e.g., protest, boycotts, community activism). He sites differences in participation patterns based upon

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education, age, and other factors, noting that young people may contribute politically in ways other than voting. Do citizens have a duty to participate in either or both of these types of political activity? Should people vote? Or is it valid to participate politically in other ways?

- **Media and Politics**: Klotz describes how popular culture and media influence voters during presidential elections, and how this influence may vary by age group. How does media influence perceptions of candidates and voting in general? Are there differences in how candidates are perceived across mediums, i.e., between television, internet, newspapers, etc.? What ethical and/or political implications might be at work in the types of media outlets that potential voters choose? How do different types of media shape political perceptions and how do voters navigate this array of complex information?

- **Perceptions of Voting**: Various surveys and polls have shown that young adults vote less frequently than other age groups of potential voters. What factors contribute to the choice to vote or not? Why might young people choose to avoid voting? Do candidates have an obligation to focus on all age groups or demographics when campaigning and making political choices? Or should they focus primarily on groups of people they assume are mostly likely to vote? What might happen if a higher percentage of young people voted? Are there ways to encourage or discourage voter participation?

This assignment may be interpreted in a variety of ways. You will begin with the required sources to become acquainted with the issues. Through class discussions and other activities, you will develop a specific focus and claim for your essay.

**Source and Research Requirements**

You are required to read all of the following texts, and your paper must explicitly refer to and include information/ideas from at least two of these sources, all of which your instructor will provide for you:


(* Note: Please visit the web site for the Johnston article rather than review it in print. It is an interactive web site where additional information can be found by hovering over images.)*

You must also explicitly refer to and include information and/or ideas from at least one additional source that you locate through a library database. We recommend using Search@XU and/or Academic Search Complete, which indexes scholarly and public writing. While this source does not have to be scholarly, it must be credible and appropriate for your argument. You may find that other sources—such as personal experiences, web sources, census information, and interview—also serve as appropriate evidence.

**Formatting and Citations**

The minimum length for this essay is 1000 words, and the maximum length is 1500 words. This essay must conform to all aspects of MLA (2009) formatting; you will need parenthetical citations within your paper and a Works Cited list with at least three entries (at least two of the sources above and at least one of your own sources).

**Evaluation Criteria and Due Dates**

Instructors will provide you with due dates for each component of this assignment. Instructors will also provide you with the evaluation criteria they will use to assign a grade to this essay.