

Pair Workshop on Introductions

Purposes: To see the rhetorical elements of a scholarly introduction in action; to recognize a range of forms that these elements can assume; to become more familiar with how the introduction presents an academic argument as a conversation

1. **WR example:** Mark up the paragraphs on the next page to identify the rhetorical elements of an introduction. Then discuss:

- What do you notice about the first line?
- What do you notice about how the intro sets up the context for the essay's key terms, concepts, and players?
- Does the intro raise a question or identify a problem? Paraphrase it.
- Does response to this question or problem seem provocative and arguable? Does it have consequences? What are they?

2. **Peer review:** Read your partner's introduction and do the same thing: mark up the elements and talk through the set of questions above.

Individual Reflections

How has this exercise helped you think in new ways about your draft? What part of your introduction do you want to focus on as you revise? Jot down some thoughts and notes so you will be ready to revise your introduction at home.

I. Introduction from Chris Meyer's ["The FSA Photographs: Information or Propaganda?"](#)

During Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidency, the Farm Security Administration, a part of his New Deal bureaucracy, produced a multitude of well-known photographs documenting the impact of the Great Depression on rural America. This photographic record of the Depression, which provided work for photographers as well as illustrated the need for often vigorously opposed New Deal programs, has been the subject of substantial controversy regarding its objectivity: was it simply information, a mirror in which America could have a look at itself, or did it constitute propaganda? This question was particularly crucial during the 1930s, when two world powers—Germany and the Soviet Union—were increasingly infamous for their governments' efforts to control the flow of information. To answer it, it is necessary first to clarify exactly what propaganda is, then to examine the FSA photographers' methods and products, as well as their historical context. Because the issue is partly a semantic one, and reasonable people can disagree on the meanings of words, it is difficult to provide a conclusive answer; however, given the combination of the FSA photographers' documentary methodology with the manner in which the photographs were used, it is safe to say that they were propaganda. But they were not *just* propaganda; that is to say, they bore the identifying marks of propaganda, but they were not in the same class as totalitarian propaganda. Rather, they were a legitimate form of political communication.

II. Introduction from Kylie Umehira's ["All Hammed Up: How *Hamilton: An American Musical* Addresses Post-Racial Beliefs"](#)

On August 6, 2015, *Hamilton: An American Musical*, which tells the life story of Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton, premiered on Broadway at the Richard Rodgers Theatre. Theater critics, journalists, and civilians alike held a practically unanimous opinion about *Hamilton*: that it is one of the best pieces of musical theater in this generation. It was praised not only for its well-crafted songs, relevant political rhymes, and unprecedented artistry, but also for its intentional non-white casting. Most of the actors in *Hamilton* are African-American, Hispanic, and Latinx, causing the actors in the musical and the musical itself to receive lots of media attention. This praise influenced many journalists and reviewers to make broader claims about the current state of American society. *Hamilton* sparked a national dialogue about race in America. Its positive representation of minority actors led many to believe *Hamilton* marked the end of a whitewashed American media, supporting the post-racial narrative that many attribute to President Barack Obama's election and reelection. *Hamilton* has even been called a sign of the "twilight of white America" (Walsh 457). Despite these claims, the myth of a post-racial America is exactly that: a myth, which current scholarship about *Hamilton* fails to address. Through analysis of reviews, existing literature about *Hamilton*, and music from the show itself, I will disprove the claim that *Hamilton* indicates that American society is post-racial. Overall, I will analyze *Hamilton: An American Musical* and current scholarship about the production to provide insight into why Americans continue to pursue the post-racial narrative, the internal and external effects that representations of minorities in art can have on larger political conversations, and the importance of inspiring the "Hamiltons" of tomorrow in American media today.